

SME Advisory Group

Thursday 7th December 2017

South Block, Government Buildings, Merrion Street, Dublin 2

Minutes

Attendees:

Minister of State Patrick O'Donovan - Chair		Paul Quinn - OGP
Jim Deane, OGP	Declan McCormack, OGP	Linda Barry - SFA
Neil McDonnell - ISME	Sarah Freeman - Chambers	Catherine Curran - DBEI
Tonia Spollen Behrens - EI	Harry O'Rahilly - CCPC	Sean Downey - CIF
Aidan Sweeney - IBEC	Dermot Sellars - OGP	Derek Flanagan - OGP
Joan Grogan - OGP	Jason Coyle - OGP	Maura Howe - OGP

Apologies:

Margaret Hearty - Intertrade Ireland	Marguerite Burke - EI
Grant Gilmore - Intertrade Ireland	Enda McDonnell - EI

1. Minutes of previous meeting

Minister of State Patrick O'Donovan welcomed the representatives. The minutes of the last meeting were taken as read and will be published on the OGP website.

2. eInvoicing Update

Declan McCormack (OGP) spoke to the Group with regard to the eInvoicing Strategy. He explained that the Digital Single Market is key to modernising public administrations across Europe and unlocking innovative ways, through digitisation, for improved collaboration among all stakeholders. Ireland is embracing digital technology and eInvoicing is further progress in this regard. The eInvoicing Directive obliges all public bodies to accept eInvoices by April 2019. However, to avoid costs or burden on SMEs, it will be optional for suppliers to submit eInvoices at this time. The eInvoicing Programme will facilitate the adoption of a standards based, sector-led eInvoicing model in Ireland and will provide a 'Connect Once – Connect to All' option for suppliers while respecting the diversity of the public sector. This initiative is aligned with European and national eGovernment strategies. There will be two strands to this, (1) a Framework being set up by OGP to ensure compliance and (2) communicating the requirements which will be a multi-channel campaign.

The Minister enquired as to how it is being received and likely take up and was advised that the SME sector were generally happy with the approach and the likely take up would be in the order of 20/30%.

3. External Tender Advisory Service (TAS) Review

The OGP confirmed that the final report of the External Review of the Tender Advisory Service had been circulated to SME Advisory Group Members. The short term recommendations were to increase the knowledge and awareness of the service and to consider changing its' name to be more reflective of what the service provides. Long term recommendations were to improve data capture and analysis of queries received. It also detailed the benefits of the service i.e. it gave an added opportunity to be heard during the tender process and was an informal resolution mechanism and an alternative to the Remedies Directive. OGP requested the members of the group to issue their feedback by 7 January. It was hoped to publish the report in the New Year following this consultation process.

4. Communication Strategy Update

The OGP advised that the Communication Strategy was at the final stage. A schedule of Breakfast Briefings had been arranged for 2018 with the first one taking place in January which was being hosted by SFA in the IBEC offices. Videos and Case Studies had also been compiled and the Videos will be launched at the Briefing in January. The OGP confirmed to the Minister that a meeting had been scheduled with the Government Strategic Unit in mid-December.

5. Cancellation of Tenders

The OGP thanked the Group for their feedback with regard cancelled tenders and requested information on any specific cases. The OGP advised that based on an analysis of the eTenders portal that out of 700 competitions, 15 had been cancelled.

6. A.O.B.

The issue of raising the advertising threshold from €25,000 was discussed again and the Minister acknowledged there were mixed views. He confirmed he wanted to bring this proposal to a close after Christmas and expected a decision on this issue at the next meeting of the Group.

EI advised the Meet the Buyer event for the construction of the new children's hospital which was held in October was well received by both buyers and suppliers.