

## SME Advisory Group

Thursday 20th September 2018

South Block, Government Buildings, Merrion Street, Dublin 2

### Minutes

#### Attendees:

Minister of State Patrick O'Donovan - Chair		Paul Quinn - OGP
Jim Deane - OGP	Christine Murray - DBEI	Sven Spollen-Behrens – SFA
Gillian Ross - CIF	Aidan Sweeney - IBEC	Elisha Collier O'Brien - Chambers
Tonia Spollen Behrens - EI	Neil Kerrigan – EI	Jason Coyle - OGP
Nora Bermingham - OGP	Joan Grogan - OGP	

#### Apologies:

Grant Gilmore - ITI	Margaret Hearty - ITI
John Shine – CCPC	Sean Downey - CIF
Declan Hughes - DBEI	Neil McDonnell - ISME

#### 1. Minutes of previous meeting and Actions Arising

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. Programme for Government Review

The relaunch of the Tender Advisory Service took place in July, meeting a commitment in the Programme for Government in relation to supports for SMEs. The video for promoting the service is under production.

The *Programme for a Partnership Government* published in May 2016 included a commitment to conducting a consultation on the merits of establishing a Procurement Ombudsman. Following on from previous discussions with the Group on the matter, a paper on the merits of such was circulated to the Group. Again, it was reiterated that this is a complex matter and needs to be looked at proportionately and pragmatically to get the balance right. It is important that full consideration is given to the impact of delivery of goods, works and services and on businesses that have been successful in competitions. The Group were asked to reflect on the paper and consider the impact for

their members and to contact the OGP should they require any clarification. Submissions were requested from the representative bodies in advance of the next meeting scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> December where it would be discussed further, following which a proposal would be sent to the Minister. MOS advised that consultation should take place as this is part of the Programme for Government and he would have to report on progress to the Taoiseach's Department. It was confirmed to MOS that the Procurement Executive would also be consulted on this issue.

### 3. Governance - Interim Public Sector Procurement Reform Board

The Group was advised that the existing Interim Board and the Procurement Reform Steering Group were dissolved and replaced by a new single Interim Public Sector Procurement Reform Board which had met in May and September. The Board is chaired by Maurice Quinn, Secretary General of the Department of Defence, and comprises a mix of members at Secretary General, Assistant Secretary General and equivalent levels. The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform has recently appointed two external members, Mr. Des Armstrong and Mr. Dónall Curtin.

### 4. Minister of State's Proposals

MOS said he had met with the OGP to discuss progress on the implementation of the procurement reform programme and the four sectors - Local Government, Health, Defence and Education. Following these meetings with the individual sectors, he proposes to ask the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to consult directly with Government Ministers to obtain their views on progress on the implementation of the procurement reform programme to date, and any recommendations that they and their Departments may have for improving or refining the existing procurement model. He requested the representative bodies make submissions in this regard also.

### 5. Social Considerations Information Note

The OGP advised the Group the Social Considerations Information Note has been completed. The Information Note is to assist Policy Units in the various departments in the appropriate use of social considerations in procurement, and makes clear that the impact on SMEs must be a key factor in any deliberation in this regard. The OGP will establish an Advisory Group to advise departments of the procurement path but social considerations should only be included where it is appropriate.

### 6. Communication Strategy Update

The OGP updated the Group on the good work to date and the positive impact it was having. A new animation video is being produced on how to use eTenders and a case study video with a company is

planned. The Group members are also contributing to the TAS video which is currently being made. The next InterTrade Ireland Breakfast Briefing on *Selling to Government* is being held in Waterford in the following week.

IBEC suggested there should be a sectoral approach to the Meet The Buyer events in 2019. EI suggested the same approach for the Go To Tender events also.

#### 7. A.O.B.

The cancellation of tenders had been discussed at the previous meeting and again the Group were asked to bring any specific issues to the attention of the OGP.

The matter of Purchase Order data not being available in some sectors had also been raised at the last meeting. The OGP advised that this is not under their remit, but is under the Government's Public Sector Reform and their commitment to openness and transparency in this area. All departments' and public bodies' are expected to publish all Purchase Orders over €20,000 on their websites. If the Group are aware of issues in specific areas they should bring this to the attention of the OGP who will raise it at the Procurement Executive.

CIF had raised the issue of risk transfer at the last meeting. Engagement on the Medium Term Strategy for construction procurement has now commenced. There is a commitment to addressing the issue of risk as part of this root and branch review. IBEC stated that this is an issue that can also impact on the goods and services sector.

OGP advised that there should be more clarity with regard Brexit by October/November and this would be fed back to the Group. They were also advised that Businesses should look at the risks posed to them regarding Brexit, and that Representative Bodies should inform their members of the supports available to them from Government.

OGP confirmed that the OGP Public Service Spend and Tendering Analysis Report for 2016 is due to be published shortly and its findings are in line with previous years.

CIF advised that they will be holding a Construction Procurement Event in the Tullamore Court Hotel, Co. Offaly on 15<sup>th</sup> November. Further details can be found on their website and all are invited.

EI advised that the next Meet The Buyer event for Social Housing Bundle 2 will be held in Charleville Park Hotel, Co. Cork on 23<sup>rd</sup> October and extended an invite to all. Again, further details can be found on their website.

OGP advised they would publicise the event on their website.