

SME Working Group
Monday 11th July, 12 noon
Leinster House (Room 741)

Minutes

Attendees:

Minister of State Eoghan Murphy, Chair

Jim Deane, OGP

Ronan O'Reilly, OGP

Derek Flanagan, OGP

Aidan Sweeney, IBEC

Caroline Sweeney, Intertrade Ireland

Grant Gilmore, Intertrade Ireland

Ian Martin, SFA

Ian Talbot, Chambers Ireland

Maeve Cronin, DJEI

Maria Gavin, Enterprise Ireland

Mark Fielding, ISME

John Shine, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

Sean Downey, CIF

1. Introduction

The Minister of State welcomed the representatives and reaffirmed the Government's commitment to support SME access to public procurement opportunities.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 3 November 2015 were agreed. The group also agreed that, to aid openness and transparency and comply with the Lobbying legislation, all minutes from meetings of this working group from now on should be published on the OGP website.

3. Outline of Procurement policies contained in the Programme for Government

The Minister of State outlined the commitments included in the Programme for a Partnership Government (Section 3, Protecting Local Services, m) Government Procurement and Smaller Businesses) including quarterly meetings of this Group to provide for proactive engagement with SME representative bodies. The Minister asked the representatives to consider how best to

progress these matters including the consultation on the merits of establishing a procurement Ombudsman.

4. Transposition of EU Directives and Next steps

The Minister of State advised the group that there were three new procurement Directives. Two of these repeal existing Directives from 2004 in the public procurement and utilities sectors and a third Directive establishes a new regime to cover Concession contracts.

- Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement. This Directive has been transposed by SI 284 of 2016 – Award of Public Authority Contracts Regulations;
- Directive 2014/25/EU on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors. This Directive has been transposed by SI 286 of 2016 – Award of Contracts by Utility Undertakings Regulations; and
- Directive 2014/23/EU on the award of Concession Contracts. This Directive establishes a new regime for concession type contracts so the transposition process has taken longer. It is intended that transposition will be completed by end 2016.

The OGP is updating its general procurement guidelines to take account of the new directives and a more comprehensive suite of guidance will be developed over the medium term.

5. Tender Advisory Service Report

There was an update given on the review, conducted by the OGP, on the Tender Advisory Service after its first year of operation. The report will be finalised over the coming months and will be presented to the working group for its consideration.

6. Highlighting Public Procurement Opportunities (Meet the Buyer etc.)

The group discussed creating industry specific or themed ‘Meet the Buyer’ events to increase awareness and competitiveness in tendering. There was discussion on consortium building and how important it was to have an education and awareness programme to support the uptake of this facility in public procurement. Enterprise Ireland discussed their Small Business Innovative Research initiative and how it will coincide with Horizon 2020. A brief discussion took place on how the Local Authority sector engages with the market. The group was advised that the next “Meet the Buyer” event will be held in Cork on 19 October 2016.

7. A.O.B.

The Minister of State mentioned the challenges facing the new Government including the need to keep the opposition deputies informed of developments.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be arranged for October.