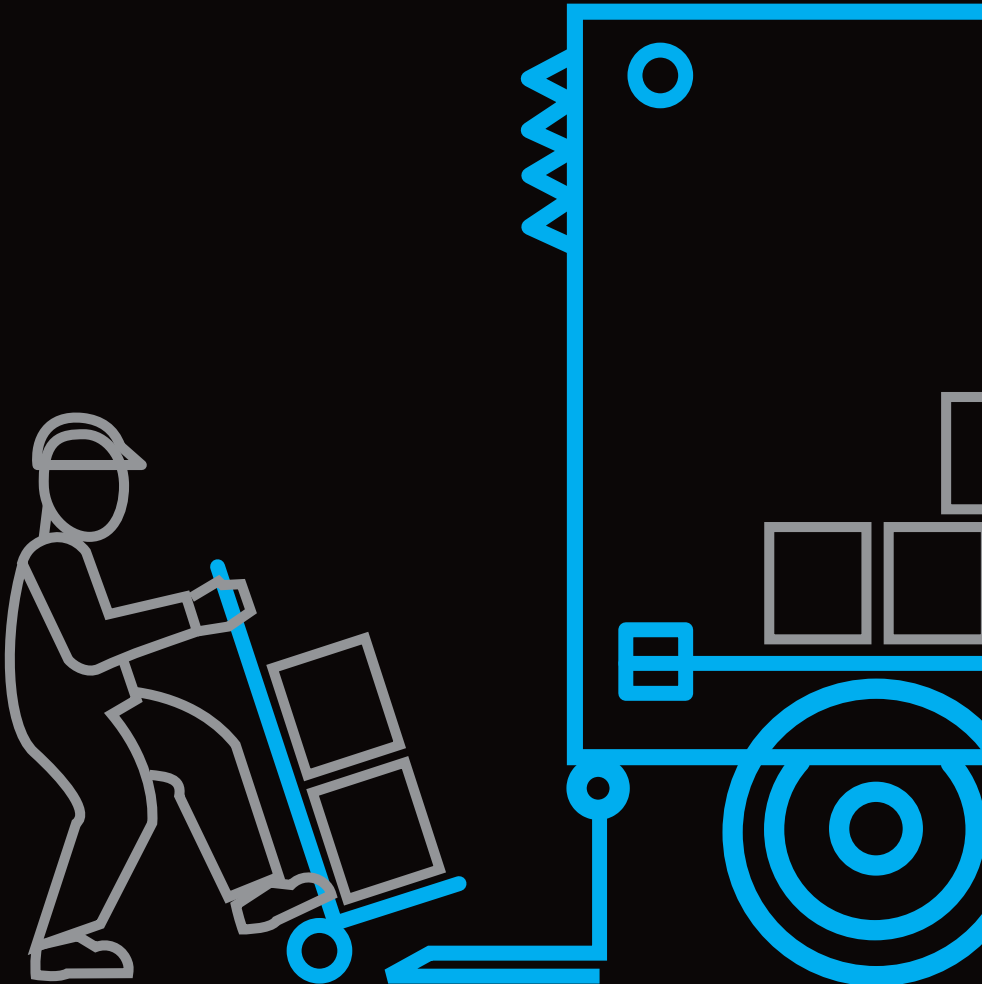


# How to do business with Falkirk Council

A guide for suppliers



## Overview

This guide gives practical advice to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and the Third Sector on tendering for Falkirk Council contracts, including where to find contract information, preparing to apply, making the application and writing your tender.



### A great opportunity

Falkirk Council is continually looking for ways to improve its processes and make contract opportunities easier to access. The existence of high quality and cost-competitive suppliers is a vital ingredient through which to achieve value for money in procurement expenditure. No matter what size your business is, there may be opportunities to become a supplier to the Council.

### Procurement legislation

Public procurement takes place within the framework of EU Directives that are based on five key principles which always apply to public sector procurement, regardless of contract value:

- Equal treatment - *giving everyone the same chance to win the contract irrespective of their nationality or whether they are known to the Council or not.*
- Transparency - *stating requirements upfront and sticking to them.*
- Proportionality - *setting requirements with reference to the needs of the contract in question.*
- Mutual Recognition - *giving equal validity to qualifications and standards from all Member States, where appropriate.*
- Confidentiality - *respecting the confidentiality of any information received regarding tenders and tenderers.*

These are implemented in the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 which aim to encourage competition and prohibit the public sector showing any preference for suppliers on the basis of size or location in the tendering process.

## Where to Find Contract Opportunities

### **Public Contracts Scotland**

[www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk](http://www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk)

Public Contracts Scotland's advertising portal represents a free and easy way to access details of the Council's contracts and public sector contract opportunities across the whole of Scotland.

The portal enables suppliers to gain access to a wide range of contract opportunities in Scotland free of charge. In addition it provides an email alert of contract opportunities to registered suppliers.

### **Falkirk Council Purchasing Website**

[www.falkirk.gov.uk/purchasing](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/purchasing)

To view current Falkirk Council contract opportunities, there is a link to the Public Contracts Scotland website within the Council's purchasing website. The website also contains help and advice.

### **Local & National Press**

Periodically contract opportunities are advertised in local and national press.

### **Subcontracting opportunities**

Many of the highest-value contracts can go to large, well established organisations, but smaller or newer organisations may become engaged in these contracts through sub-contracting, partnering/consortia or consultancy work.

Falkirk Council publishes the names of successful suppliers on [www.falkirk.gov.uk/purchasing](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/purchasing) within the 'Tenders Register' section and clicking on the specific contract.



## Preparing to apply

While Falkirk Council is keen to do business with small and medium sized organisations and the Third Sector, we have to be sure that we are using the supplier that best meets our requirements.

### The right credentials

Winning the contract will be easier if you are prepared and have the right information to hand before you make your application. Broadly speaking, this means being ready to demonstrate your financial stability, business acumen, relevant experience, a track record in the relevant area and a strong understanding of the contract requirements. In many cases, customer references will be an essential requirement of any application.



If in doubt, call or write to the named contact in the contract advertisement to clarify exact requirements for each contract.

### Important documents

Be aware that any application will need to be supported by a number of documents. Preparing these documents now and keeping them together can save lots of time when applying for contracts. The documents required to support most tenders include:

- employers' liability insurance certificate
- public liability insurance certificate
- written evidence of your social & environmental, health and safety, equal opportunity and quality assurance policies
- if you work in an industry where external assessments are normal or expected evidence of your technical ability
- if appropriate any trade or technical brochures about your company

### Freedom of Information Act

Remember that Falkirk Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act, which makes most tender information available to the public (or your competitors) on request. If your application includes information that is commercially sensitive, you can sometimes apply for an exemption to prevent it being disclosed. However, you will need to make this clear on any documentation you submit.

## Making the application

### Step 1: Read the advertisement

Make a note of the closing date for bids on any contract advertisement, and try to prepare your tender document or initial expression of interest as far ahead of this date as possible.

If there is a contact name and number on the advertisement, consider telephoning the person to check you understand the requirement, and that your business can meet the needs of Falkirk Council.

### Step 2: Pre-qualification

In some cases, suppliers have to be qualified before they can submit a tender. This requires interested suppliers to complete a "Pre-Qualification Questionnaire" (PQQ), principally used to assess the financial, technical and/or professional capability and capacity of suppliers. It does not relate to how suppliers would fulfil the requirement.

It's important to provide all the information that you are asked for - the material you submit will form the basis of deciding whether or not you are invited to submit a tender.

### Step 3: Invitation to Tender

This is an invitation to submit an offer to Falkirk Council in writing. At this stage you will be provided with the specification of the requirement and you will be asked how you would deliver it if your bid is successful.

The assessment criteria will usually be listed on the contract notice or invitation to tender, and may include items such as delivery, price and customer support. If the criteria are ranked, concentrate on the most important first, but make sure you provide information for all the requested criteria.

There is generally a period during which questions can be asked regarding the tender. Usually questions have to be submitted in writing and answers are shared with all those who expressed an interest.

The aim is to show that your organisation represents the best possible Value for Money. So include information about the expertise of your employees, product quality, proven reliability and your ability to manage and reduce potential risks.



## Writing your tender

Make sure you leave plenty of time for writing and submitting the tender. There are often unexpected problems, so allow more time than you think you will need.

If questions are set, then make sure you answer them all thoroughly, even if you have to repeat yourself. Sometimes tender documents are split up and given to different assessors. Assessors may not be able to take your other answers into account, so might deduct points from answers that seem incomplete.

When answering questions in a formal tender process, always try to give details of how you would actually do the work. Wherever appropriate, relate this back to previous experience to show that you really can deliver. Use a number of experiences to evidence how wide your knowledge is.

If there are no set questions, consider very carefully what to write. Look through the tender pack. There will almost certainly be a specification which details exactly what is expected. Structure your response based on this, saying exactly how you would deliver each aspect.

### Examples of information

provided include the following:

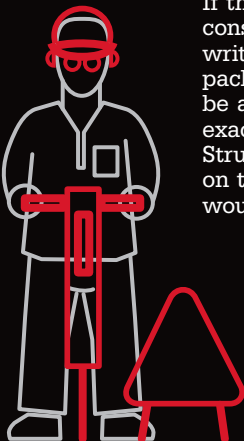
- a detailed description of the work you propose, showing how you will meet the key criteria
- a proposed timetable for the work, including key milestones
- details of pricing and any after-sales support you would offer
- explanation of how potential problems and risk will be managed

### Presentation

Follow the rules:

- If a format has been given, then stick to it.
- If the tender pack gives you a word limit, then don't go over: people actually do count them!

Make sure the document is easy to read. Give assessors a document that is well laid out, in a logical format. It will be easier for them to see how you meet the specification and therefore allocate the points you deserve.



## Key points to remember

Outlined below are some important tips to consider when competing for Falkirk Council contracts:

- Investigate and only bid for work that you are sure you can do.
- Make sure you know, early on in the procedure, what format you will have to use to fill in the tender documents. You also need to know what timescales you are working to and whether interviews will be likely.
- Plan and cost the full extent of delivering the contract to ensure that you have taken full account of overheads and resource implications.
- Always provide the information you are asked for and make sure you accurately answer all the questions. If you cannot do so, check whether your bid will be acceptable before you send it back. If you are not sure of anything, ask us in good time.
- Plan your bid around the timetable Falkirk Council gives you to make sure you can meet all deadlines.
- Remember that at the Invitation to Tender stage you are being evaluated on how well you would be able to deliver the works, goods or services required, in line with the criteria given. You will want your response to be better than that proposed by your competitors.
- Remember, your bid will be evaluated only on the information you provide as part of the tender process.
- Be patient, as the procedure from the first advert to awarding the contract can take months.
- Delivering the contract is one of the best ways of ensuring that you keep the contract as it helps build your reputation for contract delivery.



### Feedback

It is important that suppliers seek and receive constructive feedback to help improve performance in future bidding exercises.

## Further Information

### Central Purchasing

Falkirk Council  
Suite 5, The Forum,  
Callendar Business Park,  
Falkirk FK1 1XR  
Tel: 01324 590818 or 590819  
email: [purchasing@falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:purchasing@falkirk.gov.uk)  
[www.falkirk.gov.uk/purchasing](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/purchasing)

## Other useful contacts

### Business Support Team

Falkirk Council  
The Falkirk Stadium, Westfield,  
Falkirk FK2 9DX  
Tel: 01324 590964  
[www.falkirkonline.net](http://www.falkirkonline.net)

### Falkirk for Business

Newhouse Business Park,  
Newhouse Road,  
Grangemouth FK3 8LL  
Tel: 01324 665 500  
email: [info@falkirkforbusiness.org](mailto:info@falkirkforbusiness.org)  
[www.falkirkforbusiness.org](http://www.falkirkforbusiness.org)

### Business Gateway

Tel: 0845 609 6611  
[www.bgateway.com](http://www.bgateway.com)

## Other key Council contacts

### Infrastructure, Construction and Transportation Services

Falkirk Council  
Development Services,  
Abbotsford House,  
Davids Loan, Bainsford,  
Falkirk FK2 7YZ  
Tel: 01324 504950

### Housing Property Maintenance /Improvement

Falkirk Council  
Corporate & Neighbourhood  
Services,  
Suite 5, The Forum,  
Callendar Business Park,  
Falkirk FK1 1XR  
Tel: 01324 590800

### Care Services

Falkirk Council  
Social Work Services, Brockville,  
Hope Street, Falkirk, FK1 5RW  
Tel: 01324 506400

The guidance in this document is intended to be informative and useful. It should not be taken as a statement of the law and suppliers should take their own legal advice as necessary. In issuing this advice the Council does not commit to enter into any contract with individual businesses or group of companies.

