



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Procurement Policy

February 2025

Policy Owner: Head of Procurement,

Approved by: SMT 28 February 2025

Review Schedule: Biennial

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Next review due: February 2027

Introduction

1. This policy sets out the key principles and objectives that govern the procurement of goods, services, and works by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (Assembly Commission). It ensures that all procurement activities are carried out:
 - in compliance with relevant legal frameworks, such as; the Procurement Act 2023 and the Procurement Regulations 2024, policies and good practices; and
 - in a manner that embraces our corporate values, achieves value for money, promotes fair competition, and supports wider government objectives such as sustainability, social value, and economic growth.
2. This policy applies to all colleagues who are making purchases to support or deliver their business needs.

Procurement Office Vision

3. The Procurement Office will support the delivery of the Corporate Plan through the provision of transparent, sustainable, and value-driven procurement practices that foster innovation, ensure fairness, and enhance public trust, while achieving optimal outcomes for the community and maximising the efficient use of public resources.

Role of the Procurement Office

4. The Assembly Commission operates a delegated model of procurement whereby directors have delegated authority to award contracts up to an estimated total value of £50k (excluding VAT). Above this value, all procurements must be led by the Procurement Office.
5. The Procurement Office will provide support and advice to all colleagues as required.

Key Principles

6. In the procurement of goods, services or works, we will:
 - i. **Be Professional and Ethical**
We will act with integrity in all activities that we undertake. We will deal with all those involved in our procurements with impartiality and objectivity. We will ensure that suppliers and their supply chains comply with human rights standards, particularly in regard to modern slavery and labour exploitation.

ii. Be Compliant with Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

We will carry out all procurement activities in compliance with UK law and consider relevant policies and good practices, such as:

- The Procurement Act 2023
- The Procurement Regulations 2024
- Relevant directives from the World Trade Organization's Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)
- Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy and associated notes
- The Cabinet Office Sourcing Playbook
- Managing Public Money Northern Ireland

iii. Deliver Value for Money

We will seek to deliver quality goods and services and will award contracts based on the best value for money. Unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary, we will apply the best combination of quality and cost over the lifetime of the product or service. We will work with suppliers to identify efficiencies and continuous improvements to the goods and services we procure.

iv. Collaborate

We will work collaboratively with colleagues to ensure that they can secure the best solutions to meet their needs in a timely manner. To help drive value, we will also collaborate with other public bodies or sectors to explore shared services and joint procurement initiatives.

v. Be Transparent and Accountable

We will act in a fair, open and accountable way. We will publish all applicable tender notices and associated contract information for all contracts awarded with a value equal to or exceeding £50k (excluding VAT). We will ensure that all procurement decisions are well-documented and accessible for audit and review.

vi. Provide Fair Competition

We will ensure all our contracts will be subject to a competition unless there is a valid reason not to. To maximise access to our contract opportunities, all those with an estimated total value equal to or exceeding £50k (excluding VAT) will be published on our website and promoted on our social media channels. We will take measures to ensure that we apply proportionality in what we do. No supplier will be advantaged or disadvantaged over another and consistent and relevant evaluation criteria will be applied to all bids.

vii. **Maximise Public Benefit**

We will support the Executive's commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 and will embed economic, environmental and social considerations into procurement decisions, where appropriate to the contract. We will encourage suppliers to operate ethically and sustainably and promote innovation in green technologies and low-carbon goods.

viii. **Support our Community**

We will encourage the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and social enterprises (either directly or indirectly in our supply chain) in public procurement to promote innovation and economic growth.

ix. **Manage Risk**

We will conduct risk assessments for all major procurements. We will identify risks, develop contingency plans and monitor risks throughout the procurement lifecycle.

x. **Engage with Suppliers**

We will continue to engage with suppliers and potential suppliers to best understand the market. We will use the information gathered to inform what we do (e.g., prepare the business case, draft specifications, develop procurement strategies, explore contract management approaches, etc.).

xi. **Manage our Contracts**

We will apply proportionate and effective contract management arrangements for all our contracts. This will help ensure the continuous delivery of quality goods, services and works that we expect.

We will pay all valid, undisputed invoices within 30 days of receipt. We aim to reduce this timescale to 10 days in line with the Department of Finance's prompt payment initiative. Our suppliers will be required to apply the same timelines for paying their subcontractors involved in delivering the contract.

We will have clear dispute resolution processes and mechanisms for handling grievances from suppliers.

xii. **Continuously Improve**

We will continuously improve by regularly reviewing and updating our procurement policy and procedures. We will encourage feedback from stakeholders and implement best practices.