

New app for Scottish businesses

How do businesses ensure they never miss a new sales lead? They get an app. That's the solution being launched today by Scotland's main public sector procurement body.

Public Contract Scotland (PCS), the Scottish Government's purchasing portal, is launching the world's first app specifically designed to alert business to new contract opportunities from the public sector – a market worth £9 billion annually.

The PCS procurement app will allow businesses to access contract notices as they are posted and will work with Apple iPhones and iPads, with plans to roll out to other mobile phone models. App users will be able to access information more easily and faster than by browsing on the mobile web, as well as search notices by category, commodity and date.

The new app will work alongside the PCS portal – both of which are free of charge – to offer users a level of functionality that is unequalled in other centrally-provided systems. The launch of the app further demonstrates how Scotland is leading the way internationally in harnessing technology to make public sector purchasing more efficient.

The PCS portal is a key part of the Scottish Government's Public Procurement Reform Programme which aims to drive up standards in public sector procurement.

Speaking at the National Procurement Conference in Glasgow today, Nicola Sturgeon, Deputy First Minister, said:

“Driving forward efficiency in public sector procurement enables the delivery of improved public services at a reduced cost, and has a direct impact on the Scottish economy.

“The portal, and now the PCS app, make contract opportunities even more accessible to suppliers; are helping to make public sector procurement more transparent and competitive; and play key roles in achieving efficiency improvements.

“In a challenging economic climate, it is more important than ever that we make best use of available resources, and deliver greater value for money in public procurement.”

The launch of the app recognises the importance of SMEs to the public sector, which make up 80 per cent of current suppliers and account for 45-50 per cent of spend to contracting organisations across the country. For SMEs, which often don't have dedicated teams focusing on tender submissions, and where staff responsible for winning new business are often required to be out of the office, the ability to monitor potential new deals on the move has real benefits.

Launched two years ago, PCS has over 48,000 registered suppliers and published 11,000 business opportunities between August 2009 and July 2010. It is estimated that each registered supplier saves over 400 pounds per year in time and resources searching for public sector business opportunities advertised through other channels, the overall efficiency saving is estimated at more than 36 million pounds over three years.