

AM Bid launches first digital platform

AM Bid, Scotland's largest bid and tender company, has created its first digital platform designed to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) rebound from the challenges of the pandemic.

The bid specialists have spent the past year working on the Ultimate Tender Coach, an online modular training programme that unlocks the secrets of successful UK public tender writing and development.

Throughout the programme, it offers industry insights, outlines how the public procurement process works, but more importantly, provides the knowledge SMEs need to navigate it, and to develop compelling tender responses that will help them win more business.

It is aimed at businesses that are currently bidding for public contracts and not winning them, or not winning enough of them, or those that want to bid for them but don't understand the process or what it takes to develop a winning tender.

AM Bid founder and business development director Andrew Morrison, managing director David Gray, and bid development director Philip Thomson have combined their 40+years public sector bidding experience to provide SMEs with the tools and expertise to create more effective tender responses.

The company, which launched in 2014 and operates in more than 25 sectors, has achieved an independently audited industry-leading bid success rate of more than 80%. The firm created the platform in response to findings of a nationwide report it commissioned into the challenges faced by businesses when it comes to bidding successfully in the public sector.

The latest research, detailed in the report *Navigating the Public Procurement Minefield*, reveals that over 90 per cent of UK SMEs surveyed think the public sector should be more accommodating and do more to remove the tendering barriers they face when bidding for public sector contracts.



David Gray

David Gray, AM Bid managing director, said: “This reflects our initial research which showed the vast majority of SMEs find the public procurement process challenging, so we created Ultimate Tender Coach to help them. We’ve crammed over 40 years of successful public tender winning experience into a digital learning programme that will help them win contracts they’re very capable of delivering.”

“During the pandemic, it was clear that businesses developed an increased appetite for digital learning but the challenge most SMEs have is finding the time for it. In response, we’ve created a flexible learning programme that people can work through at their own pace, fitting their learning around the demands of running their business. We’re also offering weekly coaching calls and a private members group, to build a community of SMEs committed to winning more public contracts.”

Our latest report comes as the UK Government is preparing the next stages of its Transforming Public Procurement strategy, which aims to speed up and simplify the procurement processes faced by bidding parties and to reshape public procurement for generations to come.

Westminster wants £1 in every £3 of public procurement money spent with SMEs by 2022, a level which would represent a huge leap from the current rate of around 12 per cent of the estimated £292 billion spent by government on private sector services annually.

From a raft of proposals contained in the Green Paper, which closed for consultation earlier this year, a new, more flexible approach to procurement is planned with the aim of making it easier for SME businesses to win more public contracts.

The survey of UK SMEs drawn from a diverse range of sectors and service lines revealed that over 90 per cent of SMEs agreed that for the Government to achieve its ambition of a more inclusive procurement landscape, barriers need to be removed from SMEs to create a more level procurement playing field.

Among the barriers cited by SMEs were the overall complexity of the procurement process (44%) and the lack of publicity for opportunities (41%) which were both highlighted by over two-fifths of respondents. Also, over a third were dissuaded either by finding the process too time consuming (37%), difficulty meeting mandatory qualifying criteria (35%) or by finding the process too costly based on being unsuccessful in the past (34%). While one fifth (20%) were concerned that the incumbent supplier would simply be reappointed.

“SMEs have given Government a clear signal that they want to be involved in tendering and winning work from the public sector but also that they want the barriers removed. They want Government to do more,” added Mr Gray.

“The perception that public contracts are a closed shop can be a deterrent to businesses. They want to bid for contracts and are prepared to do so but there are so many perceived barriers in their way; some throw the towel in even before they start.

“Government must use the opportunity of its procurement reforms to level the playing field for small businesses to help build a fairer procurement landscape where businesses of all sizes have equal opportunities and stand a greater prospect of winning lucrative and bankable contracts.

“The Ultimate Tender Coach will give those SMEs the training and guidance they need to develop compelling bids and win more public contracts.”