


# Are Socio-Economic and Environmental Value Deliverable in Public Procurement?





From the supplier perspective, it is important to check and respond appropriately and work with the public sector to help them apply sustainability where it is most effective and efficient to do so

## Executive Summary

The public sector landscape has changed following years of austerity and it is now more important than ever to ensure value for money, with greater emphasis now firmly on procurement achieving more than merely purchasing – every pound spent must do the greatest good and achieve the maximum possible return. Consequently, public procurement is now widely seen as the vehicle through which other goals can be achieved, including social value, economic benefit, and environmental targets, to help build a better, fairer, and greener society. But how can suppliers demonstrate this?

Our latest report explores the challenges posed by the inclusion of these elements in a procurement exercise, how they should be applied within a procurement exercise, and how you should respond to these as a supplier. The report considers what is meant by socio-economic and environmental value. In the context of this report, this is based on the definition of 'sustainable procurement' as defined by the United Nations Environment Programme, using this as shorthand to explain the other elements.

Public sector organisations are under constant pressure to deliver more for less and evidencing the socio-economic and environmental benefits via public procurement when spending taxpayers' money is something many organisations have come to rely on. The publication of PPN 06/20 and accompanying social value model for Central Government further demonstrates its growing importance.

However, whilst it is logical that public sector buyers spending large amounts of money should seek to deliver socio-economic and environmental value, legal parameters set out in

Regulation 18 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 mean that buyers need to take great care when designing social value requirements into any procurement exercise.

From the supplier perspective, it is important to check and respond appropriately and work with the public sector to help them apply sustainability where it is most effective and efficient to do so. This need for collaboration is one of the core reasons why early market engagement is crucial – and the team at Cadence can support you to do this well.

The report also considers whether and how success against social value goals can be measured and how sustainability should be incorporated into the procurement cycle by both buyers and suppliers. It is increasingly evident that suppliers can play a key role in incorporating sustainability by collaborating with buyers at an early stage to jointly identify ways in which benefits can be incorporated and measured. Applying socio-economic and environmental criteria to a procurement can be challenging for all parties. Buyers need to ensure they are following legislative best practice and not making an exercise more complex than it needs to be while, for suppliers, early engagement and demonstrating their ability to provide socio-economic and environmental benefits needs to become an integral part of any bid.

The report concludes that including socio-economic and environmental benefits in a compliant bid is key to success for suppliers but that the key is early engagement. Suppliers can engage early with buyers, allowing them to collaborate and identify benefits as early as possible in the process. At Cadence, we work with businesses of all sizes to ensure suppliers are at the forefront of decision-makers' minds not only with regards to future opportunities but also by influencing buyers through providing sight of solutions they may not even know existed long before an exercise commences.

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## Introduction

While the fundamental aim of public procurement is to buy goods, works and services for the public sector, the reality has become increasingly complex. The public sector is regularly exhorted to greater efficiency, while the years of austerity saw large areas of the sector experience significant budget reductions. These factors have led to an ever-increasing desire for greater value for money, and for procurement to achieve more than merely purchasing. As part of the quest for value for money, for every pound spent to do the greatest good and achieve the maximum possible return, public procurement has come to be seen and used as a vehicle through which other goals can be achieved, including social value, economic benefit and environmental targets. All these are important aspects of local and central government and the wider public sector's drive to build a better, fairer and greener society – but are they deliverable by suppliers through the highly regulated medium of public procurement?

In September, the new Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 06/20 detailed Central Government's requirement to take account of social value when awarding contracts. This included the launch of a new model to deliver social value through the government's commercial activities. Central government organisations should use this model to take account of the additional social benefits that can be achieved in the delivery of its contracts, using policy outcomes aligned with this government's priorities. Early indications show that local government, whilst not required to do

so, are also adopting this new social value model, which further demonstrates the importance of demonstrating your social value credentials.

If you have submitted bids or proposals to the public sector, you will no doubt be aware that you need to submit a compliant bid or proposal to get your offering in front of a potential customer. However, if you want to submit a winning bid, you often have to go further than that and positively differentiate your bid from your competition.

At Cadence, we know social and economic value and environmental benefits are of huge importance to our customers, which is why we have partnered with the Procurement Advice and Support Service (PASS) to look at socio-economic and environmental value in the context of public procurement.

## About this report

In this report, Phil Kinnell, Senior Consultancy and Training Manager, at BiP Solutions' Procurement Advice and Support Service (PASS) Procurement considers our understanding of what is meant by socio-economic and environmental benefits in the context of public procurement. The report explores the challenges posed by the inclusion of these elements in a procurement exercise, how they should be applied within a procurement exercise, and how you should respond to these as a supplier.

# What is meant by socio-economic and environmental value in this context?

Before we're able to consider the question in the report's title, it's important to establish what is meant by the social, economic and environmental aspects of public procurement, and the varied language that describes many aspects of the same or very closely related topics.

Probably more than any other area of public procurement, these aspects have suffered from the addition of new terminologies and definitions. If a clear and unambiguous understanding of what is being discussed is not relatively easy, then it's never going to be possible to maximise the use of public procurement as a lever to delivering these elements. A great example of this are the terms **Social Value**, **Community Benefits** and **Wellbeing** – three different terminologies used by the UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Assembly covering broadly the same topic.

To provide some common language and a baseline for the purposes of this report, the United Nations Environment Programme's definition of 'Sustainable Procurement', is procurement which sets out to "achieve the appropriate balance between the three pillars of sustainable development – i.e. economic, social and environmental – when procuring goods, services or works at all stages of the project". If you're looking for some inspiration or focal points, it's useful to look at the [17 UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), or more specifically the following subset that the UK Government are trying to feed into: [Goal 1: No poverty](#), [Goal 2: Zero Hunger](#), [Goal 3: Good health and well-being](#), [Goal 4: Quality education](#), [Goal 5: Gender equality](#), [Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth](#), [Goal 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure](#), [Goal 10: Reduced inequalities](#), [Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities](#), [Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production](#), [Goal 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions](#), [Goal 17: Partnership for the goals](#).

This report uses the term Sustainable Procurement as shorthand to include all the other elements; please see some examples of these below:

- **Economic aspects** can be those where a purchase is made from an SME, or a sheltered workshop or employment programme. However, it's quite often easier to speak about the social and economic aspects together as they're often inextricably linked.
- **Environmental aspects** can apply where a purchase can be made with a reduced environmental impact (e.g. laptops that use less power through their life, or a multi-function device in an office that uses less toner or ink, or vehicles that have a lesser environmental impact).

To augment the above UN definition, the Scottish Government's description of their Sustainable Procurement Duty is helpful: "A process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis and generates benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society, the economy and the environment".

If there were a single universal set of descriptors and definitions it would greatly benefit not only public sector organisations and their suppliers but their supply chains and all of us as taxpayers.

A number of similar but different terminologies are likely to exist as this aspect of public procurement continues to develop. If buyers use any terminology or jargon in a procurement exercise that you as a supplier don't understand or that could have multiple meanings, you should ask them to define these terms within the context of the procurement exercise to which they are being applied, to enable you to respond appropriately.

**For many contracting authorities, value for money means both saving money and securing sustainable benefits**

# Why does it matter?

Is the role of the public sector not simply to deliver public services and get value for money for us as taxpayers? It's fair to say that for many contracting authorities, maximising value means both saving money and securing sustainable benefits.

Governments and most other public sector bodies like to promote these benefits as well as value for money within their public procurement policy and legislation. At any point, but especially since the financial crash in 2008, our public sector organisations are under constant pressure to achieve more for less.

This is further compounded by the pressure on the public sector to help stimulate the economy whilst making these savings. Where budgets for getting people back into work, providing services to the community and similar projects have been squeezed or have disappeared, organisations have looked to, and in many cases been

able to rely on, procurement to help deliver these services. From the point of view of buyers' compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015, this should be where sustainability goals are 'relevant to' and 'linked to the subject matter of the contract'.

Fundamentally, where contracting authorities are spending taxpayers' money, they have a fantastic opportunity to incentivise or require business practices that deliver socio-economic and environmental benefits to our communities. One of the difficulties buyers face in striving to achieve their sustainable procurement goals is that they almost always know less about your marketplace and what you can deliver than you do. This can lead to situations where buyers may unintentionally apply arbitrary requirements which you as a knowledgeable supplier may see as ineffective, counterproductive and which may add cost and reduce the overall value of the procurement.

# What challenges are there to achieving these socio-economic and environmental benefits?

The core aim of public procurement legislation and policy is to maintain effective competition and to secure the required goods, works and services on the best terms. The reason that the UK, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Governments all have policies promoting socio-economic and environmental value in parallel with this competition and value for money is their shared understanding of the benefits that may be realised.

For many contracting authorities, maximising value means both saving money and securing social, economic and environmental value. This is often more pronounced in local authorities which, by their nature, tend to have closer ties to the communities that they serve, often giving greater impetus to the delivery of socio-economic and environmental value through their procurements.

It is in many ways logical that, with such large amounts of public money being spent, public sector procurers should seek to deliver socio-economic and environmental benefits. However, it is not quite as simple as that.

One of the core reasons for the existence of public procurement legislation is to underpin trade, so that any company from any country party to a trade agreement may bid for public sector opportunities in any other country that is party to the same agreement; that is why the current (EU-based) UK legislation places limits on what may legally be accomplished by regulated procurements. Specifically the principles of procurement, as set out in Regulation 18 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, require that contracting authorities "treat economic operators equally and without discrimination and shall act in a transparent and proportionate manner", and that the "design of the procurement shall not be made with the intention of...artificially narrowing competition. For that purpose, competition shall be considered to be artificially narrowed where the design of the procurement is made with the intention of unduly favouring or disadvantaging certain economic operators."

These legal parameters mean that buyers need to tread a very careful path when designing social value requirements into their procurement exercise to ensure that they remain compliant with the regulations while achieving their goals. The legal parameters are further compounded by context, the policy and motivations of contracting authorities, which means that a one size fits all approach is not possible, or indeed advisable.

For a supplier, the challenge of achieving these socio-economic and environmental benefits is firstly to check that you understand and respond appropriately to these elements, which are increasingly common in public sector procurement exercises; and secondly, is to work with the public sector in a proactive way to help them apply sustainability where it is most effective and efficient to do so. That is something that the public sector cannot do alone.

This collaborative approach can be instigated by the public sector where they engage the marketplace for advice when they are forming their specification and approach to procurements, but it is advisable to be as proactive as possible by engaging the public sector through existing relationships or via effective early engagement solutions such as those delivered by the team at Cadence.

The faster moving sustainability is in your business sector, the greater the importance of engagement on sustainability. Not only will early engagement ensure that you're positively conditioning buyers to help them run more compliant and effective procurements, but – importantly – it will show them that your business is one that is passionate, knowledgeable and effective in terms of the delivery of sustainability through the provision of your goods, works or services.



## Can we and should we measure success?

The way in which we measure success is important, and this is often well served by applying a financial measurement, for instance a specific percentage of the contractual value being put towards a good cause.

As many practitioners of sustainable procurement and their organisations have sought to measure success, this has in itself led to further challenges. Socio-economic benefit in particular is not something that easily lends itself to objective measurements of success such as the value of the benefits in pounds.

Procurers can make their task easier by thinking about the socio-economic and environmental outcomes that they would like to see as the result of or as a by-product of a procurement, as when they have clear objectives it's easier to chart a path to get to them. Sustainability in public procurement is not particularly well served by measuring it financially, as this

objective measurement of a subjective topic can inadvertently drive different and imperfect outcomes and potentially makes procurements more open to challenge.

Ideally suppliers and contracting authorities should collaborate prior to, or early in, the procurement process to jointly identify proven and natural opportunities to embed proportionate socio-economic and environmental value that's linked to the subject matter of the contract. While this is often instigated by public procurers, it is possible, perhaps advisable, for suppliers to proactively engage buyers to positively influence future specifications and in doing so reduce the number of potential competitors when the buyers conduct their procurement. Where you have the resources and the market is of significant importance to your organisation, this approach can be a useful precursor to the more traditional strategy of finding, winning and delivering public sector business.

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# Where should sustainability be considered within the procurement cycle?

The short answer to this question is “wherever it is most effective to do so”.

There is considerable flexibility for contracting authorities to include social, labour law and environmental criteria in the stages of the procurement process and during contract performance. While there are more elements within the procurement than are considered below, for these purposes the following four elements are a good starting point:

- **In the specification** – Buyers can consider how their specification can be written to unlock socio-economic or environmental benefits, what criteria should be used to evaluate these aspects and what weighting should be given to them (obviously only those that are linked to the subject matter of the contract, that may be scored objectively and which will not result in any restriction or distortion of competition). Specifications may also ask for Labels (Regulation 43 – PCR 2015) as a means of proof that the deliverables meet the specified environmental characteristics. Labels could include, for example, environmental issues (e.g. energy use of appliances). The delivery of contracts may also be reserved for delivery by sheltered workshops or sheltered employment programmes (Regulation 20 – PCR 2015).
- **At the selection stage** – Buyers may ask for experience in terms of delivering socio-economic and environmental aspects of prior contracts, and can also ask whether the potential suppliers comply with the relevant legal requirements designed to protect workers and the environment.



- At the award stage** – Award criteria may include environmental and / or social aspects that relate to any aspect and any stage of a life-cycle of the requirements as long as they relate to the subject matter of the contract, namely the works, supplies or services provided under the contract. For example the award criteria for a printer may include the following costs: acquisition price, cost of consumables (ink), electricity consumption, maintenance costs, cost connected to dismantling and recycling, plus factors for user-friendliness, level of noise emission, use of recyclable materials for the production of the printers, involvement of persons from a disadvantaged group in the production process, length of warranty, and after-sales service. At the award stage you may use social criteria but this has only explicitly been allowed since the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 entered into force, and caution should be applied to the use of social criteria here...the [Beentjes](#) and [Nord Pas de Calais](#) cases remain useful cautionary tales. However, environmental criteria may often be more easily used to good effect to determine the most economically advantageous tender. An excellent example of the application of environmental criteria in public procurement is the [Concordia Bus](#) case for the provision of urban bus transport services. In this case the City of Helsinki successfully defended their award of the contract to the tenderer who submitted the most economically advantageous tender, and **legitimately took into consideration ecological criteria** such as the level of nitrogen oxide emissions or the noise level of the buses. This was on the basis that these criteria were **linked to the subject-matter of the contract**, and did not confer an unrestricted freedom of choice on the authority, were expressly mentioned in the contract documents and the call for competition, and complied with all the fundamental principles, in particular the principle of non-discrimination.
- As a condition of contract** – Fair trade requirements (Fair and Ethical Trade as opposed to the Fairtrade brand name) related to the contract subject matter may be included as a contract award criterion, including the requirement to pay a minimum price and price premium to producers. Another common requirement which can be found (although not exclusively) in large construction contracts, is a requirement for a certain percentage of the successful

contractor's workforce to come from disadvantaged groups such as the long-term unemployed, together with the creation/completion of apprenticeships, etc. However, clear legal definitions of 'disadvantaged workers' have yet to be provided.

Obviously, many of the decisions about where and how to include sustainability in a procurement exercise are made long before the traditional point at which suppliers get involved – the publication of the contract notice. However, early engagement allows suppliers not only to build relationships with buyers but, within limits, to shape the specification of the contract and other decisions surrounding the procurement exercise, putting them in a stronger position when the procurement is published. And this is where Cadence can support you. Through a combination of our databases and market intelligence, we know where the opportunities are, and more importantly who the key decision-makers are and how best to engage them. This ensures your business is positioned as an organisation that considers the social value implications in the products you create and the services you deliver, putting you one step ahead of the competition.

If you can see where your organisation already delivers positive socio-economic and environmental benefits in the above elements of the procurement cycle, then make sure that you're explaining them fully in your responses so that you're able to effectively differentiate yourself from the other bidders, thereby increasing your chances of turning a compliant bid into a winning bid.

Almost every time a contracting authority spends taxpayers' money, the authority has an opportunity to incentivise or require business practices that provide or enhance socio-economic or environmental benefits. Further, more detailed examples of the social aspects can be found in the EU's [Making socially responsible public procurement work: 71 good practice cases 2020](#), and also in the [Buying for Social Impact – Good Practice From Around the EU 2019](#) publication. Similarly, the document [Buying Green – A handbook on green public procurement](#) covers many useful areas in terms of the environmental aspects of public procurement. Reviewing these documents may be helpful when you are trying to figure out what your organisation can do to be more competitive in this aspect of public procurement.



# Does contract value have an impact on whether sustainability should be applied?

It is possible to apply social, economic or environmental value to most contracts, regardless of value. However, unless there is a clear and proportionate path to doing so, most contracting authorities concentrate their resources and effort on embedding sustainability in their larger contracts where there is often more scope for its application. That is why public sector policy and the strategies of contracting

authorities often set a threshold above which sustainability must be considered.

This should not stop you as a supplier providing sustainable solutions as part of your bid, irrespective of the value of the opportunity, as long as this does not make your bid less competitive.

# What examples are there of sustainable procurement?



Reduction of carbon emissions/provision of energy-efficient devices or vehicles



The staff of suppliers undertaking volunteering within communities



Targeted recruitment and training e.g. jobs, training, work experience, job shadowing opportunities, apprenticeships and work experience for young persons and unemployed individuals



Promotion of certain supply chain subcontractors (SMEs, social enterprises, supported businesses, Third Sector Organisations)



Supported employment for people with disabilities or other disadvantaged groups



Community enhancement – resources provided for community facilities (e.g. playgrounds, habitat enhancements, environmental improvements) and initiatives (e.g. energy efficiency)



Promotion of job opportunities through local agencies



Outreach and education opportunities within the community to those associated with or impacted by the types of service provided e.g. promoting careers in construction and trades or care and support to local schools



Training, job development and enhancement for suppliers' existing workforce



Community consultation, engagement and strengthening of community relations



Mentoring – suppliers offering support and guidance to local organisations and individuals



Supplier's using community venues and other community services



Equal opportunities in terms of the supplier's staffing and access to services.



Sponsorship of or partnership with local organisations

Further examples contained in Annex A of the UK government's recent Procurement Policy Note [Taking Account of Social Value in the Award of central Government Contracts](#)

# How difficult is it to apply sustainability to public procurement?

The truth is that adding social, environmental and economic criteria and requirements can reduce the attractiveness of contracts and the ability of some suppliers (often smaller and newer ones) to compete for public sector opportunities.

The general requirement to make sure that any sustainable requirements are linked to the subject matter of the contract seems to be the one that gives most procurers pause for thought. With few procurement functions having surplus capability and capacity, potentially adding complexity and risk to procurement exercises is understandably not an attractive proposition.

Care needs to be taken to ensure that the law is not, even inadvertently, breached. Regulation 18 of the [Public Contracts Regulations 2015](#) and Regulation 19 of the [Public Contracts \(Scotland\) Regulations 2015](#) both prohibit anything that is intended to unduly favour or disadvantage potential suppliers, thereby narrowing or distorting competition.

Competition is the main tool in any procurer's toolkit, and while the consideration and application of sustainability throughout the procurement life-cycle should ideally be considered from the outset of all procurement exercises, this consideration often remains secondary to competition and value for money.

It's not that procurers don't care about sustainability. It's simply that non-economic aspects of procurement should be proportional; should not be added into the mix where they are unrelated to the subject matter of the contract; and should not have the effect of making the opportunity less attractive or opening it up to challenge.

The issue with trying to determine the above is subjectivity. In other words, no matter how well-meaning an action is, it is possible it will have unforeseen and unintended consequences. As an example: a contracting authority is running a regulated procurement which will involve the construction of a building, and the procurement team decide to add in a clause to the contract which requires 5% of the winning bidder's workforce to be drawn from the long-term unemployed or other

disadvantaged groups. If two companies bid for this, Company A (who have all of their staff in place) and Company B (who will need to take on more staff), then this contractual requirement will enhance Company B's position and may cause more issues for Company A. This requirement could negatively impact both Company A's chance of winning and the ease of delivery of the contract.

Notable commentators such as Albert Sanchez-Graells have stated that *"The 'strategic' use of public procurement as a regulatory tool can well create barriers to the internal market, diminish incentives for business participation, and reduce the overall effectiveness of this essential mechanism for the proper functioning of the public sector. Consequently, only by avoiding distortions of market dynamics can procurement contribute to economic growth. Other policy goals are best left to specific regulatory regimes of general application, such as standardization, labour, environmental or tax legislation."*

With the above challenges from the procurer's point of view in mind, how can suppliers successfully apply sustainability to their bids for public procurement exercises? Where you are presented with questions or requirements for method statements, you should endeavour to answer these to the best of your and your organisation's ability. However, where there are no explicit requirements in the documents that tackle social, economic or environmental aspects, then it is advisable to include all the sustainable benefits that you're able to provide where relevant in your answers. Even where there are specific questions, referring to your sustainable ethos throughout all your question responses shows that your organisation is not only able to deliver the required outputs and outcomes, but that you can do that in a way that would also provide sustainable benefits, thereby enhancing your chances of winning. In addition, bid evaluation can often be split between multiple evaluators, with each individual only seeing certain questions. Including references to sustainability throughout could help you to impress multiple evaluators, again enhancing your bid's chances of success.

# So, are socio-economic and environmental value deliverable in public procurement?

The short answer to this is yes. However, it's impossible to know what the cost of this is to suppliers, and to us as taxpayers, as these elements are included in the costs of procurement exercises and their specific cost and impact are rarely objectively quantified.

Would it simply be better to have the public sector deliver all these benefits as part of their wider delivery of services to the public?

Would all the contracts that include sustainability and require community benefits be more attractive, and attract greater competition if they did not have these elements embedded in them, providing taxpayers with a better deal?

All current and potential suppliers to the public sector can take on what may seem a daunting task to the uninitiated, by turning any perceived weaknesses or obstacles into strengths. If your organisation embeds social, economic, and environmental benefits into your business model and effectively communicate these through procurement exercises or your wider engagements with the public sector, then you will become more competitive and therefore more capable of beating your competitors.

On the public sector side, all contracting authorities should continue to resource training and support for all staff responsible for procurement exercises so that, expertise and time permitting, public sector procurement exercises can continue to lead the way in promoting and delivering positive socio-economic and environmental outcomes as part of relevant procurement exercises.

So while this report has set out to provoke thought and debate on the socio-economic and environmental aspects of public procurement, the answer to the question posed by the title is that these are eminently deliverable, but not necessarily in every procurement.

While it would, in theory, be possible with infinite resources and time to deliver sustainability through virtually every procurement, this does not reflect a reality where the results may be affected by:

- **The motivation, expertise and experience of procurement staff, budget holders and other key stakeholders to make sustainability an integral part of their procurement strategy and processes (beyond what is required by the relevant legislation)**
- **The relative capability and capacity of the procuring organisations, the maturity of supplies and wider supply chains in this field**
- **The provision of relevant training and tools to enhance the capability and capacity of procurers and budget holders**
- **The nature of the procurement**
- **The time available**





# How can suppliers win more public sector opportunities?

One of the most common questions asked by organisations wishing to win public sector business is how can they increase their chances of success and win more business? The answer is: deliver a compliant bid, that keeps you in the running and then add in socio-economic and environmental benefits to your solution that are closely linked to its delivery to increase your chances of winning. In marketplaces where there are a large

number of suppliers that provide broadly similar solutions and where it's challenging to differentiate them, this takes on even greater significance. Whilst it's simple to articulate, it is true that it's seldom easy to deliver. The checklist below is designed to stimulate discussion around this topic and help you to improve and articulate the socio-economic and environmental benefits that you're able to deliver:

- Determine what your organisation already delivers that could strengthen a bid in terms of socio-economic and environmental benefits
- Create case studies that show the socio-economic and environmental benefits you've already delivered and use these in your bids and proposals
- Create/develop links with local charities/community groups to help deliver socio-economic and environmental benefits and articulate these in your bids and proposals
- Develop your supply chain to work with local, third sector or social enterprise groups, and try where possible to ensure that the goods, works and services that you buy come from ethical and sustainable sources and that you're able to explain this in your bids and proposals, and that you can back this up
- Create programmes to deliver apprenticeships, work experience, employment of the long term unemployed, provide flexible working opportunities, etc.
- Staff training and development – show that this is part of your core ethos and that you will apply or increase this through the delivery of the opportunity that you're bidding for
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy – if you don't already have one, create a CSR policy now that encapsulates everything that you're doing in terms of the delivery of social, economic and environmental benefits, and that you're carrying out your business in an ethical way
- Look at legal cases, case studies, past bids and above all positively engage the buyers

While the above list provides some pointers, where you have a specific customer in mind, you should do your research on them. If you're submitting a tender or proposal to them, you can engage with them through clarification questions at the outset of the procurement exercise and make sure that you tailor appropriate answers that are a good fit for the question.

Most contracting authorities publish their policies and strategies on sustainability, a good strategy would be to find out what's important to that particular buyer and try to show them how you can support the delivery of their aims, by echoing them through your bid responses and wider communications.

When you're adding in these elements, you should offer commitments that are as tangible and measurable as possible (such as a move to reducing your current carbon footprint from a known current level to a lower future level within a certain timescale, and that you'll explain how you intend to accomplish this and that you will update them on your progress towards this goal). If you make specific offers or promises they may end up forming part of the contract, and you don't want to set your organisation up for an avoidable breach of contract, or damage to your reputation from the buyer's perspective.

## Final Thoughts

One of the main challenges in the area of sustainable procurement is that of imagination, both when procurers create a procurement project or when suppliers respond to it. The greatest chance of success often comes where both look collaboratively at the outputs and outcomes, and focus on how these can be delivered in a way that enhances the

socio-economic and environmental benefits and minimises any negative impacts of the procurement. For further information and advice, please do get in touch with BiP Solutions' Procurement Advice and Support Service (PASS) or the team at Cadence Marketing to find out more about how we can support you.

## Who we are

At BiP Solutions, we have brought buyers and suppliers together for over 35 years and have helped countless organisations to gain both an understanding of social value and to demonstrate this effectively to public sector buyers.

### About Cadence

Cadence, a BiP Solutions service, is a full service B2B and B2G marketing agency with an unwavering commitment to delivering results. Its portfolio of digital marketing services is designed to support companies with a defined growth strategy, while its unrivalled database of public sector contacts enables you to engage with buyers in a precise, targeted way. While Tracker helps you identify opportunities, Cadence helps you build relationships with the people behind them.

Cadence constantly updates its contact databases, guaranteeing that you will be engaging and building connections with the right buyers and influencers. Within the public sector space, no-one is better at helping

businesses realise Government's ambition of early market engagement with prospective suppliers.

There is no 'one size fits all' business at Cadence – instead a personalised approach is taken to fully understand your business and what makes it tick. Cadence's range of services includes:

- **Lead generation**
- **Market research and surveys**
- **Webinars**
- **Data services**
- **Promotion**

## To find out more, get in touch:

Book a meeting: [Calendly.com/cadence-marketing](https://calendly.com/cadence-marketing)

Telephone: **0845 557 1324**

### About PASS Procurement

BiP Solutions' PASS (Procurement Advice and Support Service) provides expert training and consultancy across the public and private sectors. PASS procurement consultants present at over one hundred conferences and events each year as well as delivering in-house training and consultancy for both public and private sector clients. PASS training sessions are designed to cover the legal requirements of public procurement in a non-legalistic manner, using real life examples to help simplify the rules. Thousands of organisations, public and private, have already benefited from PASS best practice tendering events/ advice. Whether you work within public sector procurement or

tender for public sector contracts, PASS can help you improve your efficiency and effectiveness.

To find out how PASS can assist you, please visit [www.passprocurement.co.uk](http://www.passprocurement.co.uk) for further information on our training and consultancy services.

Alternatively, please contact us on 0141 270 7666 for consultancy, or 0845 270 7055 for training or event enquiries or complete the [Contact Us](#) form on the site and one of the team will be able to provide you with further information.

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