

Barriers to Bidding
Summary of key business survey findings
September 2018
Suffolk Growth Programme Board

Narrative:

The survey generated a higher than anticipated response level and it can, therefore, be considered a representative study by company size and market sector of the business community across Suffolk.

It was pleasing to see that comparatively high percentages of respondents had tendered for public sector contracts and of these over half were successful.

Possibly as a result of the randomised order in which the barriers to tendering were arranged, no stand out single reason or cluster of reasons emerged.

The one caveat, based on the higher than expected figures for those who tendered for borough and district contracts and the predominance of contracts being in the low thousands, is that there might be an under-representation of companies who had bid for larger contracts, especially to Suffolk County Council.

Key facts:

- Field work conducted between 29 June and 24 August 2018
- The survey was promoted via email and a web link, with numerous reminders over the fieldwork period
- 391 responses in total
- A representative spread of organisations by size that maps well with the Suffolk business base (Q1)
- A broad spread of business sectors represented, with the largest being construction and development, business consultancy and management, training and education, ICT, tech and digital and advanced manufacturing and engineering (Q2)
- 160 organisations (41%) had begun the tender process for public sector contracts in the last five years (34% completed the process, 7% started but did not complete) (Q5)
- 64 of these had tendered within the last 12 months (Q6) (NB: two-thirds of respondents skipped this question)
- Overall, 66 organisations reported that they had been awarded a contract (Q7) (NB: this may be an underestimate as once again two-thirds of

respondents skipped this question even though it was not a time-specific question, suggesting many might have assumed the question related only to the last 12 months)

- Respondents tendered to a wide range of public sector bodies, with 54% doing so to Suffolk County Council and 36% to a borough or district council (Q8)
- 18% reported tendering to 'other'. On examination, these fall into three main categories: separately listed public sector bodies - usually councils, sub contracts for providers of services to public sector bodies and out of county public sector organisations (Q8)
- Most respondents either skipped or replied N/A as to the value of the tender. Of those who did report a figure, most were in the low thousands, with the upper limit recorded as £500k (Q9)
- There was no one overwhelming individual barriers or group of barriers identified, suggesting that there is a broad based perception of a range of challenges that have been or could be encountered in tendering for public sector contracts (Q10)
- 159 organisations suggested they'd be interested in attending a workshop about overcoming barriers to bidding (Q11), with the vast majority leaving their contact details for our follow-up