



## The Social Business Toolbox

### 6) 10 Tips for selling to the public sector

By Kevin Jebson of Jazz Marketing Limited.

According to a recent National Audit Office report, an estimated £1.7 billion was spent on food service procurement in the public sector in 2005, providing around one billion meals. 58% was spent on schools, 29% on the NHS and 13% on prisons and the armed forces. Spend per meal was highest in hospitals and lowest in schools. Could you be a supplier? Source: Food Statistics Pocketbook 2008

There is huge market potential for social enterprises to sell to the public sector. However if you haven't done it before you must make sure you research the market thoroughly and ensure you have the capacity to deliver. If you can answer all the questions below you should be in a good position.

1. Ask yourself, why do I want to supply the public sector, and how come I haven't tried it before?
2. Do you have access to appropriate skills and resources to support the tendering process? And does the timescale seem achievable?
3. Find out just who the customer is – is it the NHS, schools, or even the MOD. Identify the organisations you want to work with and contact them. Direct. Call your local council and ask for the head of procurement. Be prepared to be flexible.
4. Find out where the contracts are advertised? Get your business on to an approved supplier list.
5. Speak to other suppliers and wholesalers who supply the public sector to share best practice.
6. Find out about the tender/ contract process. Does the opportunity fit in with your business plan and is your business ready for it? Remember that being local/regional may give you an edge.
7. Will you need to consider setting up collaborative arrangements? You may need to identify producers of similar products in your area to find volumes to supply a full contract, or, alternatively, you can identify current suppliers who already have public sector contracts to enquire about becoming a secondary supplier to them.
8. Add value to your tender by offering education opportunities e.g farm visits and product tastings. Become farm assured as this is increasingly becoming a tick-box requirement for local authorities.
9. Stay up-to-date with tender opportunities. If you don't win, ask for feedback, it will help you perform better next time. Don't give up!! It can be a long slow process.
10. Can you afford to supply the public sector, often the payment terms on offer can be a big disincentive to supplying this market sector?

For more information, please email  
[richard.snow@plunkett.co.uk](mailto:richard.snow@plunkett.co.uk)

Telephone 01993 814388

[www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk](http://www.makinglocalfoodwork.co.uk)