



## Metropolitan Police Service: Compete to win

From helicopters and horse blankets, to CCTV systems and court room training, the procurement of goods and services for the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) is a huge undertaking.

### Background

With more than 53,000 personnel to cater for, landing the right contract at the right price can be a challenge. As is ensuring that all London businesses, whatever their size, can tender for the work – a key part of the Mayor's Economic Recovery Action Plan.

The introduction of CompeteFor is an elegant solution. Made mandatory by the MPS in May 2011, this free web-based portal matches buyers with suppliers and offers the potential for significant long-term savings, as well as boosting opportunities among small and diverse businesses.

### Key themes

CompeteFor is an easy-to-use system available to all businesses and organisations in the UK. It was created by the London Development Agency to increase awareness and access to opportunities for the 2012 Games. There are now more than 150,000 businesses registered on CompeteFor, 43,000 of them from London.

Since its launch in January 2008, the system has become a key means for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to learn about opportunities at both public and private sector organisations in London.

Using CompeteFor is simple. Suppliers complete a business profile where basic information on their company's products or services, ownership, and financial background is provided. By indicating their areas of interest, registered suppliers are routinely alerted by email of relevant business opportunities.



'This project has not only offered MPS great efficiencies in terms of resource, value for money and transparency of spend across the organisation, but has made a significant impact on the number of public sector contracts being opened up to competition across London and beyond.'

**Chris Bell,**  
Buyer Engagement Manager,  
London 2012 and CompeteFor



The MPS, along with other members of the Greater London Authority (GLA) group has been using CompeteFor since January 2009 and, since May 2011, it has advertised all contracts between £500 and £50,000 (all other contracts are tendered out by MPS Procurement Services).

Through the establishment of an e-learning module and one-on-one training, more than 550 members of the MPS can now use the system.

Since May the MPS has become one of CompeteFor's most active users. 'It's been used for the purchase of cycle maintenance, cameras and lots of police training', Fay Howard, Supplier Diversity and Environmental Manager notes. 'The system randomly throws in two other suppliers in the same category to prevent cherry-picking. Potentially those are two companies the MPS have never done business with previously.'

The MPS, like other public bodies in the current economic climate, is focused on engaging with SMEs. Despite making up 99 per cent of businesses in the UK, SMEs account for only about 40 per cent of business turnover. CompeteFor offers under-represented businesses a better chance to tender for contracts.

SMEs and diverse businesses can offer competitive advantages over larger organisations. Lower administrative overheads and management costs can be passed onto the client, and there is generally greater flexibility through shorter management chains and approval routes.

The increase in competition has led to some impressive savings. Fay offers the example of pole cameras purchased for special events, where the competitive route of using CompeteFor resulted in a £9,500 saving. A new supplier – charging 32 per cent less per course – was also found for an Interview Training Course, resulting in potential savings of £13,500. Thanks to CompeteFor total savings at the MPS Crime Academy reached £14,000.



'So far, I have been delighted with the results – over 80 per cent of contracts have been awarded to small to medium-sized enterprises in the first three months of mandating the system.

'In addition, the visibility and transparency provided by using this system allows procurement to check our internal regulations are being followed.'

**Anne McMeel,**  
**Director of Resources, MPS**



## Outcomes

During June 2011, in the month since CompeteFor became mandatory, 117 opportunities were posted on the system – around five per day.

Of the awarded contracts, 93 per cent went to SMEs with 80 per cent going to companies that employ less than 50 people, and 19 per cent went to women-led organisations. This trend continued into August, demonstrating that CompeteFor has successfully opened up the MPS supply base to new London businesses.

The information provided by suppliers on CompeteFor also helps to improve procurement targets as management information, including the size of the company and a breakdown of diversity among its employees, is made available to the MPS.

Based on figures from other public sector organisations using CompeteFor, the MPS estimates a total saving of five per cent on all listed procurement opportunities.

‘Being a SME we were a little reticent about taking part in a new e-procurement program. In the past we have found that electronic procurement programs have tended to favour large multinational organisations.

‘Whilst working with the Metropolitan Police we agreed to participate in a sourcing event for the supply of equipment and found the whole process quick, easy and informative.

‘As a result of the invitation to sign up to the CompeteFor service we have been successful in being awarded orders to supply the Metropolitan Police with equipment to ensure that they are ready for the London 2012 Olympics.’

**Stuart Arkell,**  
**Managing Director,**  
**Dart Systems Ltd**