

# A Supplier Development Service for the East Midlands

**A feasibility study prepared for emda**

Business to Business & Larch Consulting

April 2009

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# **A Supplier Development Service for the East Midlands**

Feasibility Study

This report demonstrates the case for a Supplier Development Service for the East Midlands; and sets out the recommended model for the service.

**Business to Business & Larch Consulting  
April 2009**

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## **1 Executive Summary**

Business to Business and Larch Consulting were commissioned by East Midlands Development Agency (*emda*) to undertake a feasibility study to objectively assess the need for a Supplier Development Service (SDS) in the East Midlands. The SDS is one of the key recommendations from the Regional Procurement Opportunities Plan recently completed for *emda*.

Research was undertaken into previous and current programmes of this type and an initial model developed. Following review and discussion with the Consultation group in January 2009, the model was then put to wider consultation with SMEs, suppliers and other stakeholders across the region.

This research, coupled with the feedback from the consultation process showed that:

- A Supplier Development Service in the Midlands is workable
- It will increase the capacity of businesses in the region
- Uptake from suppliers will be good
- Buy-in from buyers and other stakeholders will be high

This report demonstrates the case for a Supplier Development Service for the East Midlands and sets out a proposed model for the service.

## 2 Background and Brief

Business to Business and Larch Consulting were commissioned by East Midlands Development Agency (*emda*) to undertake a feasibility study to objectively assess the need for a Supplier Development Service (SDS) in the East Midlands.

### 2.1 The Brief

The tender brief required background research into current and previous similar programmes to evaluate the case for an SDS in the East Midlands region; development of an outline model; market testing of the model via consultation with suppliers, buyers and other stakeholders; final recommendations on the most appropriate model for the region. A detailed methodology for the research is set out in Section 3 of this report.

### 2.2 Context and Business Case

The New Economics Foundation's LM3 model<sup>1</sup> provides perhaps the most robust and renowned case for encouraging the use of local suppliers. The model measures how the income into an area circulates and multiplies within the local economy (the 'multiplier effect'). This in turn then enables public sector bodies to deliver regeneration outcomes and budgetary savings targets by developing solutions to local problems that promote local economic linkages.

The Glover report<sup>2</sup> states "*Improving SME participation in public procurement is best achieved by making the market work effectively to allow SMEs to compete effectively for contracts*". This emphasises the need for equality of opportunity, and transparency and simplicity in procurement processes.

The Regional Economic Strategy (RES)<sup>3</sup> for the East Midlands states "*Careful use of public procurement can help stimulate changes in businesses involved including growth, increased diversity, innovation to processes and products and increased demand for skills. Businesses, particularly SMEs and Social Enterprises will need to be supported to ensure they are in a strong position to take up the opportunities in public sector supply chains.*"

The establishment of an SDS will therefore play a key role in reaching SMEs and third sector organisations (TSOs) and delivering the necessary business support to ensure the region's businesses have the requisite capacity and skills to identify, bid for and win new business, particularly given the challenges of the present economic climate.

A structured and formalised capacity building programme enables targeted approaches to engage with and support black and minority ethnic businesses (BAMEs) which are a significant force in the region, and currently disproportionately under-represented in the supply chains of large organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information [www.neweconomics.org/gen/tools\\_lm3.aspx](http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/tools_lm3.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> For further information [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/pbr08\\_economicengine\\_2390.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/pbr08_economicengine_2390.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> For further information [www.emda.org.uk/res/default.asp#Downloads](http://www.emda.org.uk/res/default.asp#Downloads)

In addition to diversity targets, the Government's stated ambition is to be amongst the European leaders in sustainable procurement by 2009 is a key policy driver feeding into a Supplier Development Service. Sustainable Procurement has as one of its themes a responsibility for economic, social and environmental development. The proposed programme could be closely linked to the sustainable procurement agenda in using public sector supplier chains to effectively engage with SMEs and "diverse" suppliers. Good Sustainable Procurement practice encourages the development of the "diverse suppliers" to bring innovation and value into Supply Chains.

Supporting and enabling SMEs in the region to work with public sector and large commercial organisations - with payment to regular timescales, and with longer term contract arrangements - will help these SMEs better weather the impact of the economic recession.

On 29 January 2009, *emda's* Board endorsed proposals for a wider project, the Regional Procurement Opportunities Plan for the East Midlands which will:

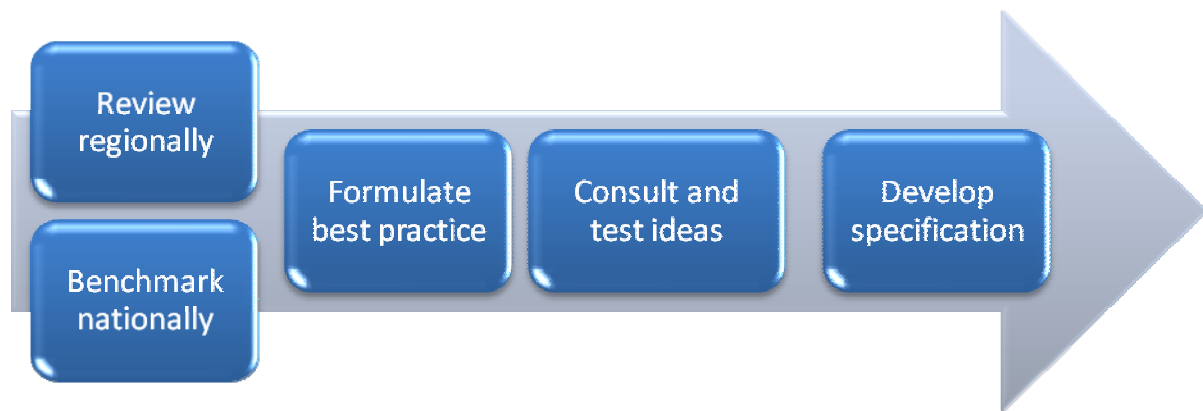
- Establish an **East Midlands Procurement Forum**. This should include representatives from businesses and the main regional bodies who would be able to influence development of regional procurement policies and practices and the development of the regional procurement opportunities plan.
- Establish an **East Midlands Public Procurement Initiatives Co-ordination Office**. This will be set up to support the East Midlands Procurement Forum in achieving its objectives. The service would promote communication between all stakeholders, manage a budget for training needs, and for research and consultancy - to ensure that regional action is joined-up.
- Provide a **Regional Supplier Development Service**. This will be provided to support and provide visibility for the region's suppliers. The service should seek to map the supplier base and streamline access to potential public sector contracts.

The Regional Procurement Opportunities Plan also highlights the specific aim of facilitating the entry of TSOs into the public supply chain.

Other subsets of the SME community that will be supported by this programme include: BAME (black and minority ethnic businesses); women owned enterprises; businesses owned by people with a disability; businesses run by older people, the social excluded and other hard-to-reach groups; micro businesses and sole traders.

A Regional Supplier Development Service for the East Midlands would therefore address many of the national and regional objectives.

### 3 Approach



#### 3.1 Background Research

Initial desk research was undertaken to build up an evidenced based best practice model, drawing on key previous and current regional supplier development programmes conducted around the UK. These included:

- DTI's SBS funded SME Procurement Training Project (National)
- Regional Supply Offices (East and West Midlands)
- Trade Local SME Procurement Pilot (Haringey, London)
- Buying A Better London
- Local Supplier Development Project: Welsh Assembly Government
- Procurement Development Programme (London)
- London Value Chain Programme
- Go Public Programme (South East)
- Built To Compete Programme (South East)
- Fit To Supply Programme (part of Supply London)
- Profit Through Procurement: South West RDA
- Supply London

Relevant initiatives including the Glover Report, the work of the New Economics Foundation, the Regional Economic Strategy for the East Midlands and the Business Support Simplification Programme (BSSP) were also taken into consideration.



For each programme account was taken of:

- Purpose and Aim of programme
- Funding body and partners
- Start and Finish Dates
- Geographical area covered
- Delivery body
- Delivery Methodology
- Scale (in terms of no. of participants) and typical profiles
- Target audience (e.g. SMEs, BAMEs/ Third Sector/ Women Owned etc)
- Key outputs, outcomes and lessons learned
- Return on Investment

The research undertaken demonstrated a clear case for a supplier development service in the East Midlands, and enabled the identification of the key ingredients of effective supplier development initiatives.

The outcome of this part of the work is detailed in Section 4: The Case for a Supplier Development Service in the East Midlands.

### **3.2 Outline Model for Consultation**

The findings of the research were used to identify the key features of a successful programme, and to develop an outline model for the service. This was presented to the *emda* Project Group on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009 for comments and feedback.

The model was then put to consultation across the region, using a number of approaches.

#### **3.2.1 Focus Groups**

Six focus groups were held around the region. SMEs who attended were able to find out about the proposed model, provide feedback and make suggestions for changes or enhancements. The groups were:

- |             |                                       |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2 Feb (am)  | Leicester (Peepul Centre)             |
| 2 Feb (pm)  | Northants (Holiday Inn, Crick)        |
| 3 Feb (am)  | Nottingham (Village Hotel)            |
| 3 Feb (pm)  | Derby (Derby Conference Centre)       |
| 10 Feb (am) | Lincs (Norton Lodge Hotel)            |
| 10 Feb (pm) | Nottingham (Nottingham Gateway Hotel) |

The period in which the consultations took place saw the worst winter weather for twenty years. This undoubtedly had an impact on attendance at the sessions, particularly the Leicester meeting, as schools in the city were closed and many

smaller roads impassable. However, attendance across the events overall was in excess of 75 companies.

A summary of the findings of the consultation sessions can be found in Section 5.

### **3.2.2 Survey**

In addition to the face to face consultation sessions, questionnaires were developed for suppliers, buyers and stakeholders. In order to facilitate the distribution and collation process the questionnaires were developed using an online facility. Key areas of focus on the questionnaires were:

- Whether it is believed that a Supplier Development Service would help grow small businesses
- Areas where a Supplier Development Service would be helpful
- How support can be delivered most effectively
- Use of online systems for advertising and sourcing opportunities
- Determining whether the proposed model would work

The questionnaires were completed by email or by telephone. Analysis of the responses is included in Section 5.

### **3.2.3 Stakeholders**

A number of one-to-one conversations (face-to-face and telephone) were also undertaken with other stakeholders including representatives from business support organisations (Federation of Small Business, LEO Local Enterprise Organisation, Nottingham Chamber and organisations supporting the third sector); buyers from local authorities (including Nottingham City and County, Mansfield, Bolsover and others); and key organisations in the region including Rolls Royce and PepsiCo. A detailed list of stakeholders who were consulted is provided in the Appendix 5.

## **3.3 Development of Final Model**

The feedback received from the consultation exercise was used to refine and enhance the model. The changes made based on the consultation exercise:

- Incorporated suggestions that will improve the proposed service to suppliers
- Changed the way some elements of the model are described, making it easier to understand for small suppliers
- Changed some of the detail about the way the model is presented, making it more attractive for suppliers

- Increased the proposed linkages between the three key elements of the Regional Procurement Opportunities Plan, so there is better dovetailing of the model with the rest of the RPOP

The proposed final model is described in Section 6.

## **4 The Case for a Supplier Development Service**

In accordance with the original tender specification, the key aim of this project was to objectively assess the need for a Supplier Development Service in the East Midlands. This section outlines the business case for establishing an SDS taking into account both the intellectual case and the possible financial implications in terms of the likely return on investment in terms of business won by participating businesses against the public sector investment in the service.

### **4.1 Building on Previous Success**

The research undertaken on previous supplier programmes supports the case for a Supplier Development Service. All of the eleven programmes assessed were successful to a greater or a lesser extent in engaging with supply chains and supporting diverse suppliers in bidding for work from the public and private sector.

The SBS funded SME Procurement Training Project 2005 – 2006 generated a significant amount of new business for a relatively small amount of government spending with a return on investment of £26 per £1 of investment spent. This potential for significant Return on Investment is supported by the High Growth Programme Pilot in the East Midlands, which to date has delivered £15 per £1 of investment.

Research conducted on the Supply London project revealed that 21% of businesses stated they had benefited from an increase in turnover as a result of the programme, and 25% stated they had benefited from increased productivity. One in four businesses said they had been successful in pre-qualifying. Between December 2006 and March 2008, the programme has resulted in over £20 million of new business for an investment of less than £1 million.

The above examples illustrate that supplier development programmes can deliver a proven return on investment as well as meeting outputs in terms of increasing the turnover and productivity for diverse suppliers.

One notable lesson learnt from the Supply London Programme was the need to target both the supply and demand side of the market. This was also the clearest outcome from the consultation work. The Regional Procurement Opportunities Plan sets out a strand of activity to work with buyers across the region, identifying ways of removing barriers and improving opportunities for local companies to compete fairly for a place in their supply chains. Stimulation of the demand side is essential to ensure that, at the end of the programme, SMEs who have worked hard to increase their skills are not frustrated by closed procurement doors.

Evidence from previous programmes such as Go Public has demonstrated the apparent lack of cohesion within the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and the resultant difficulties in engaging with TSOs, however as the level of available grant funding decreases and increased number of TSOs find themselves in the unfamiliar territory of a competitive tender process, building tendering capacity is vital to the survival of these organisations.

## **4.2 Market Failure**

A counter argument is that a Supplier Development Service presents nothing new to diverse suppliers as there is already support available, and that therefore enterprising suppliers could buy in help and support as required. However businesses found it difficult to find free, or indeed chargeable, support in this area. The publicly funded support available was sporadic and commercially available one to one support was prohibitively expensive.

To date, the market has failed to meet the requirement for support in a way which is consistent in quality, available to all SMEs and TSOs across the region, and simple to identify.

This was evidenced from the consultation exercise. Few respondents had heard about support available in the region at the moment. Some were aware of the help available but then found they were not eligible (due to location, or sector, or other criteria). Workshop based information, usually on how to identify opportunities and improving understanding of the process, often then engendered a need for more in-depth one-to-one support which was hard to identify.

At the face to face consultation sessions, businesses frequently commented that commercial companies sometimes targeted them with workshops on doing business with the public sector - but these were expensive and there was not enough knowledge to feel confident about making an appropriate choice. Businesses are reluctant to invest money and valuable time without reassurance as to provenance, quality and the specialised nature of the support.

Of the organisations that had heard about support, few had taken it up. None of the businesses consulted felt that the current provision (where they had been able to identify any) was completely appropriate and sufficient.

A handful of businesses were completely disillusioned with their attempts to work with the public sector, feeling that the process "is designed to filter out smaller companies like ours" or "is a closed shop - you just can't get in". This can be seen as a further indication of the support that is needed to explain the best way to identify and assess opportunities, and circumnavigate the current procurement procedures.

There was therefore strong support for a regional-wide, formalised, quality-assured programme including some tailored one-to-one business coaching for tender opportunities.

Comments from the consultation and survey on the current support available from the market can be found in the Appendix 3.

### **4.3 Cross-Regional Churn?**

A second argument against regional supplier development initiatives is that no new spend is created, merely a churning of spend between suppliers and across regions. However, previous initiatives (particularly those involving both buyer and supplier side) demonstrated that SME-friendly procurement approaches do indeed create new, smaller contracts from much larger aggregated spend. The **nef** work on the Local Multiplier effect also demonstrates that a £ is worth most to the UK economy when spent locally, particularly during a recession which is hitting traditional industries hard in the East Midlands.

### **4.4 Public vs Private Sector**

The research shows that the Supplier Development Service should have a strong focus on public sector procurement, as there are strong drivers for the public sector to engage with SMEs; both internally driven through their own business plans and externally/policy driven for instance the Glover Report. The implementation of the other strands of the Regional Procurement Opportunities Plan will also have a significant impact on public sector buyers engaging with programmes such as these.

Previous studies such as Buying a Better London (BABL) have highlighted the difficulties in getting the public sector to use their buying power to influence private sector purchasing teams. Other programmes have noted that SME suppliers did not always understand that the skills required to tender for public sector work do not differ significantly from the requirements of large corporates.

However, consultation with Pepsico and Rolls Royce has indicated positive feedback about the Supplier Development Service. These companies would be keen to support appointable local suppliers. They envisage using the service to engage with new suppliers, and would attend Meet The Buyer events. In a recession where many companies will fail, large organisations will be keen to expand their contacts within their supplier markets in order to identify potential alternatives and to reduce risk of supply chain failure. This presents an important opportunity for SMEs to forge new relationships in the marketplace.

Given that business opportunities exist throughout the supply chain, the training and support provided will be focussed on ensuring diverse suppliers in the East Midlands possess the requisite capacity and core skills to be deemed good

suppliers by procurement teams in any type of large organisation whether it be public or private.

#### **4.5 Alignment to Solutions for Business portfolio**

The Business Support Simplification Programme (BSSP) has been the most significant development in national business support policy over the past three years. The aim of the BSSP was to provide clarity of support for customers and deliver efficiencies that will enable more resources to be devoted to delivery. The Solutions for Business portfolio developed through the BSSP highlights 30 distinct products for supporting businesses to start, survive and succeed. The proposed SDS model as a whole fits most neatly within the 'Innovation Advice and Guidance' product category. However, certain elements of the service could also be located under one of two additional product areas - Business Collaboration Networks and Networking for Innovation.

In terms of regional objectives, the proposed SDS fits within Objective Five of the regional business support strategy – Creating Opportunities (Assisting businesses to access procurement and supply chain opportunities).

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This research, coupled with the feedback from the consultation process showed that:

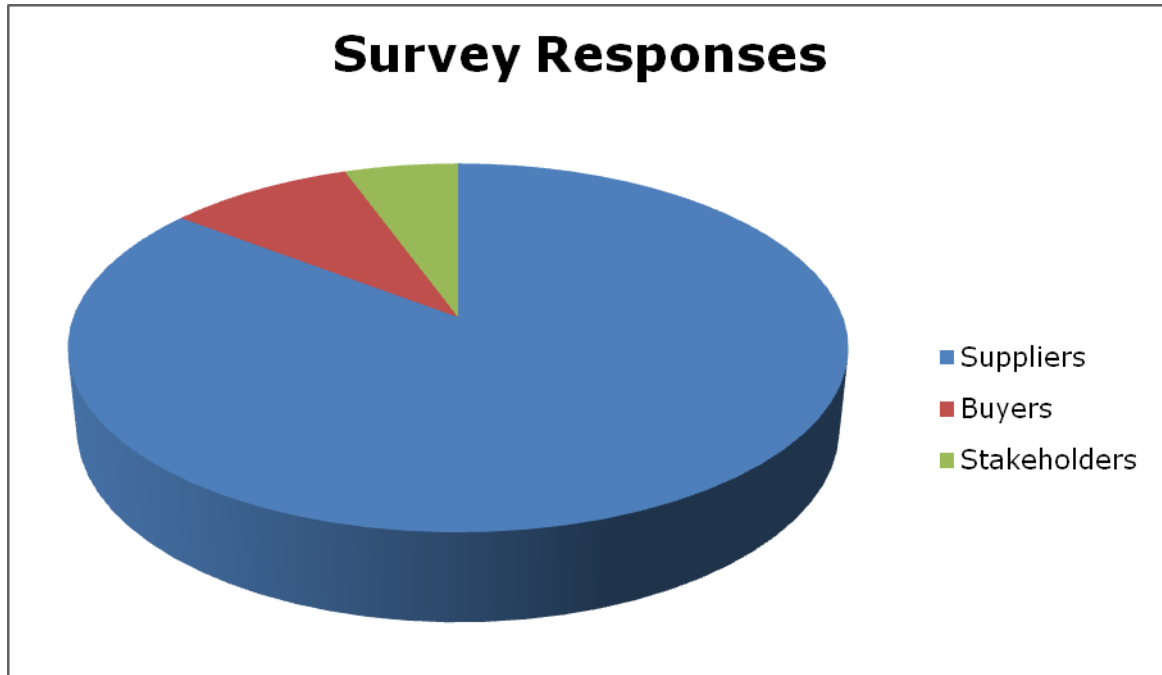
- A Supplier Development Service in the Midlands is workable
- It will increase the capacity of businesses in the region
- Uptake from suppliers will be good
- Buy-in from buyers and other stakeholders will be high

There are no obvious regional constraints or barriers that suggest an SDS would not be successful in the East Midlands particularly when considering that previous Understanding Public Procurement programmes in the East Midlands have already delivered a return on investment of £70 per £1 invested.

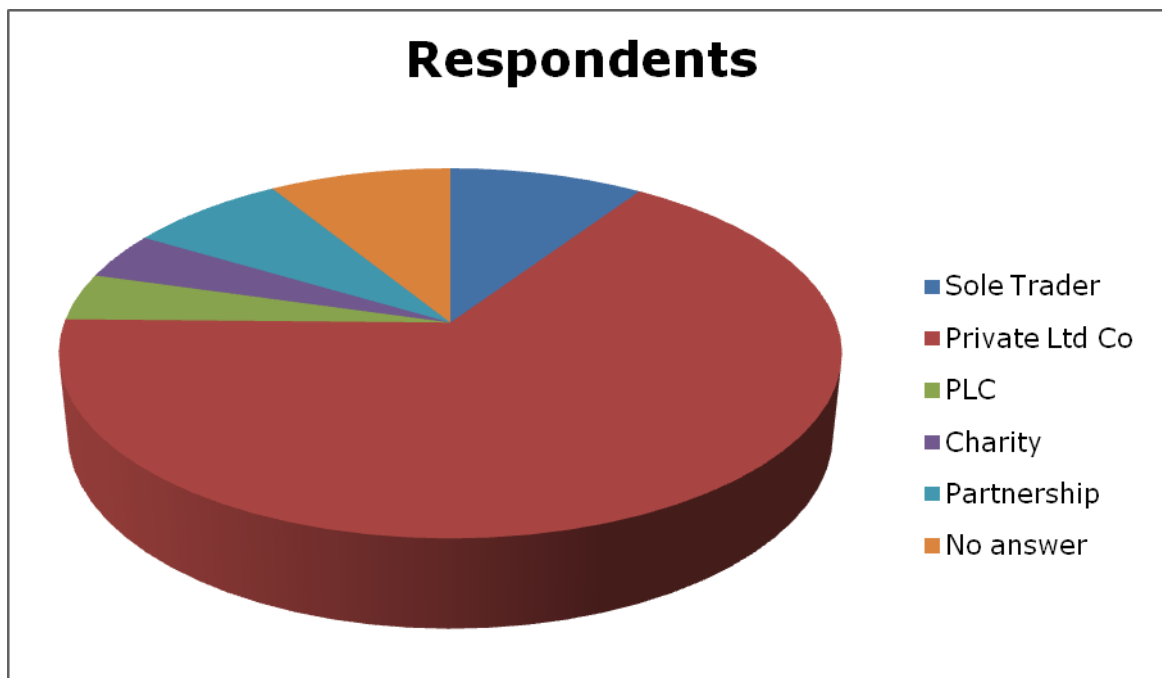
## 5 Summary of Consultation

### 5.1 Type of respondent

The breakdown of surveys received was 170 from suppliers, 18 from buyers and 11 from other stakeholders.

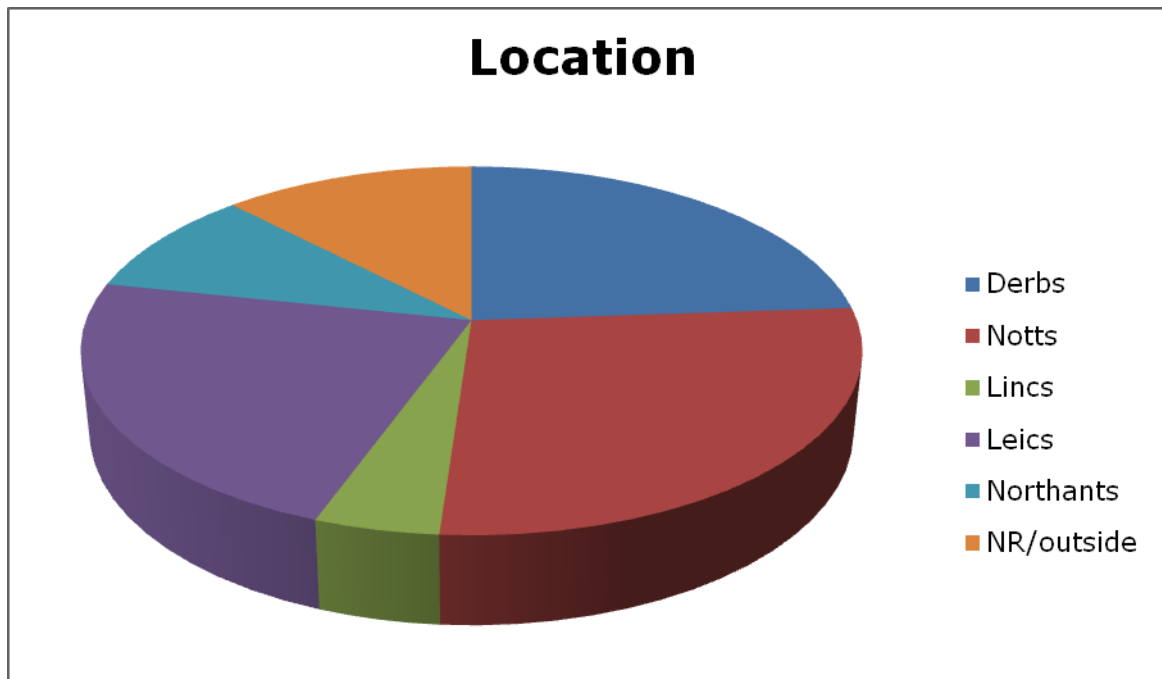


Respondents were drawn from a range of business types.





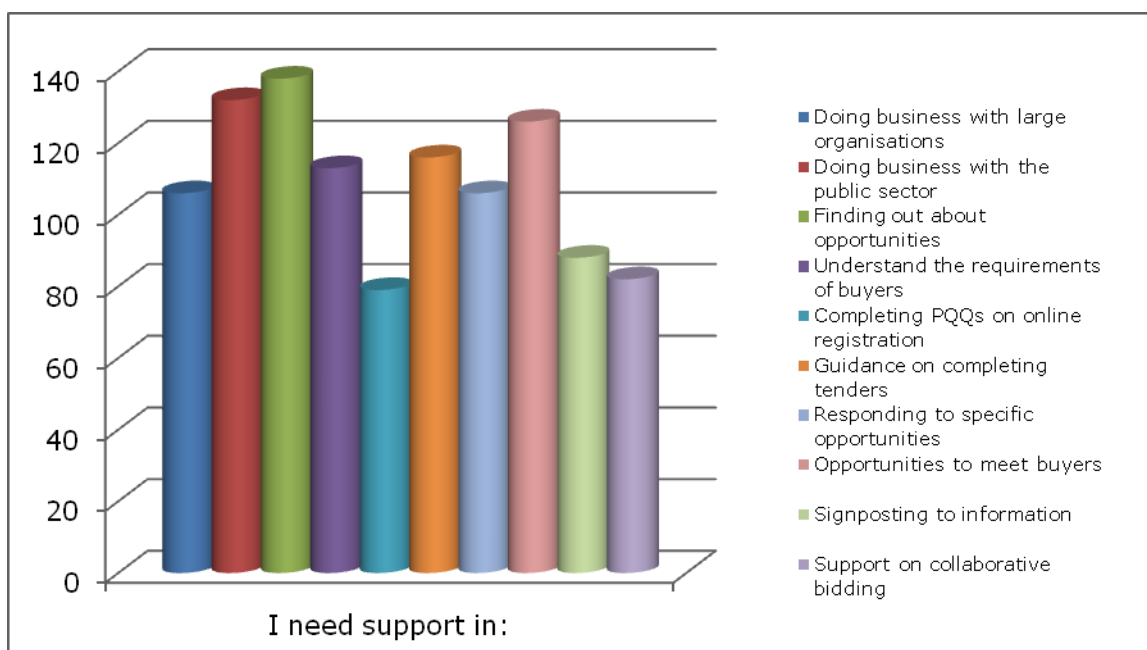
Respondents came from across the region (and a small number from outside the East Midlands).



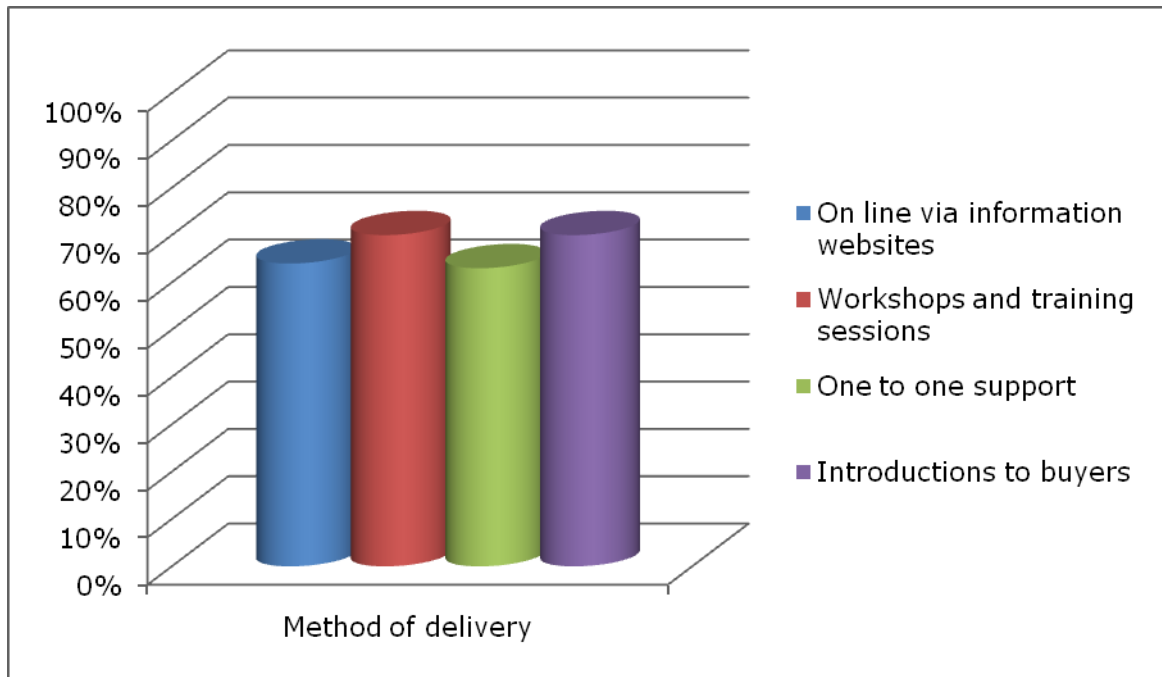
## 5.2 Key themes

The service was well received by suppliers (84% think it would definitely or probably help them). Buyers and stakeholders (with more knowledge of how a programme like this can achieve meaningful results) were even more convinced at 95% and 100% respectively.

Suppliers were most interested in doing business with large organisations (the outcome), finding out about opportunities and meeting buyers. However all areas of support that were suggested were well received.



All of the delivery methods were well received.



A fuller analysis of the questionnaire responses can be found in Appendix 1.

The focus groups brought out more in-depth comments. By far and away the most common theme running through all six sessions was the importance of a parallel initiative to work with buyers (as already recommended in the RPOP) and communication between these two programmes.

### 5.3 Comments and Suggestions

Threads drawn from the consultation sessions included:

- Buyers need to change too
- It's hard to find out where to get started with becoming fit to supply
- We haven't been able to find help elsewhere
- The bid process is time consuming for SMEs
- It's hard to find out about opportunities
- We want to meet buyers face to face
- We'd like to see online resources such as a bid decision tree, examples and templates
- We need help in collaborative/joint bidding
- We need a model which is flexible rather than prescriptive
- The coaching needs to be from experts in this area

- There should be feedback to the other RPOP initiatives
- This level of support is only worth our time investment if it is of high quality
- We need help to decide whether or not to bid for opportunities

Overall once the model had been explained and explored, the vast majority of attendees at the consultation sessions were enthusiastically supportive.

## 6 Supplier Development Service: Potential Model

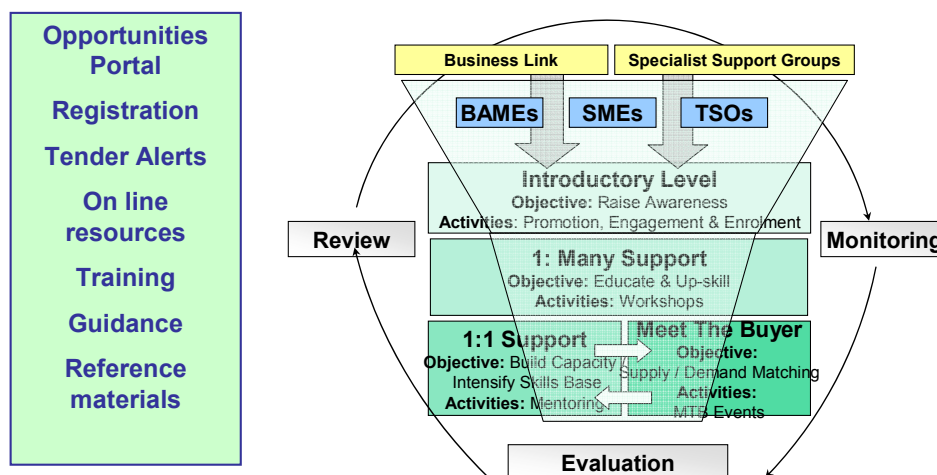
Once the consultation sessions were complete, the initial model was enhanced and finalised as set out below.

### 6.1 Features of the Model

From a supplier perspective, analysis of previous programmes highlights the need for simplicity and flexibility, and this was underlined by the findings of the consultation work. Initial research revealed that face-to-face sessions and other forms of one-to-one support invariably achieve the best results in terms of building organisational capacity, but are costly to deliver and reduce the overall number of suppliers that can be assisted. However there is clear feedback, from suppliers, buyers and other stakeholders that this element of such a programme is one of the most significant benefits that can be offered.

The initial approach was developed (following review of best practice elsewhere) as a 'funnel' approach similar to that adopted in the DTI's SBS supplier programme.

### Proposed Model Overview



The model as articulated above shows the elements of process, and is a helpful way to consider the programme from a management and administration point of view. When articulating and promoting the service to the "public" and wider business support audience, it may be more helpful to show the four elements of support as equally weighted, illustrated differently in the diagram below.



## 6.1.1 Accessing the Service

### 6.1.1.1 Example 1: Referral from Business Link

A SME is already in a relationship with Business Link (or another business support organisation). Their Business Advisor recognises that the public sector would represent an attractive opportunity for the business, and is confident that the SME would meet the eligibility criteria for the programme. The SME progresses through the support from the information sessions, through some training workshops and then receives one-to-one coaching in response to a bid opportunity identified at a Meet the Buyer event.

### 6.1.1.2 Example 2: Following on from Procurement EM

A medium sized company has already attended Procurement East Midlands workshops in the past, has worked hard to develop their policies and has now pre-qualified for a sizeable contract. They need advice quickly on how best to respond to the tender and do their organisation justice. They start one-to-one expert support as soon as possible.

### 6.1.1.3 Example 3: A social enterprise

A small voluntary organisation finds out about and attends a Meet the Buyer event as they provide a hard-to-buy support service to councils and the buyers have indicated they are keen to identify new suppliers. They realise as a result of their discussions with buyers that they need to learn much more about the tender process, and begin attending the information and workshop events.

#### **6.1.1.4 Example 4: BAME start-up**

An enterprising new start-up is hungry for information and support, and finds out about the programme through internet searches. However the County Supply Chain Advisor recognises they are not really ready to get the best from the programme and refers them to Business Link in the first instance. They will then engage with other start-up support, as well as perhaps sector-specific help and even the High Growth programme, before coming back to the Supplier Development Service at a later stage.

#### **6.1.2 Promotion, Recruitment and Engagement**

Under this model, suppliers undergo an initial assessment to ensure suitability for the programme. Some organisations will not yet be ready for the programme, and will be better supported by Business Link (for instance pre-start-ups and new start-ups).

Direct experience and research on other supplier programmes has shown the difficulty that can be encountered in reaching certain supplier groups particularly diverse suppliers including BAMEs and TSOs. Therefore the proposed model anticipates that companies will be identified both through the Business Link and other specialist business support agencies in the region.

It is imperative to the success of the service that marketing and promotion are given careful consideration and targeted appropriately. Stakeholders (mostly from business support organisations) said that thorough promotion of the new service, including workshops/presentations/launch event for business support organisations to attend would be important to ensure that the support was widely known about by the people that would be key to making referrals, particularly for hard-to-reach groups.

The public sector, and many large commercial sector organisations, require their suppliers to demonstrate relevant experience; financial standing and business probity. This is most commonly evidenced by 2 years of financial history (often 3 years), full policies developed and embedded in the business practice of the organisation; and appropriate contract references for formal tendered projects (usually 3 references). Businesses most likely to meet these basic selection criteria are:

- Currently trading
- 2 year trading history, with financial records
- Turnover exceeding £100,000 (this would enable a company to bid for contract of £25,000)
- Minimum of 5 employees
- Less than 25% of their business deriving from tendered contracts with the public sector

It is suggested that organisations that most closely match these criteria should be given first priority for one to one support - however **no business should be excluded from support if it is ready to supply and needs support to respond to a significant opportunity**. High growth potential start-ups would be one obvious exception to these general exclusions. Workshop attendance should be open for all businesses.

Supporting businesses with a turnover of below £100,000 could still deliver public sector contract wins, but the maximum possible scale of these (cf. the proportionality rule) in relation to the cost of support would make it difficult to achieve a sensible level of return on the investment.

Businesses and TSOs will be referred to the Supplier Development Service principally by Business Link, but can also be referred by other routes eg. BAME business support organisations, social enterprise networks or other business support initiatives in the region. A budget has been recommended for launch, marketing and continued awareness for these referring organisations. In turn, businesses that contact the programme and do not match the readiness criteria will be referred to Business Link and/or other relevant support programmes.

Individual organisations should also be able to find and approach the support without a referral from a business support agency. The web is an ideal platform from which to market and disseminate information, from both equality of opportunity and sustainability perspectives.

Once businesses are signed up to the programme they would be invited to an Introductory event explaining how the programme works, setting the scene and helping companies decide how to get the best from the programme. Each year, it is suggested that there will be regular Introductory Workshops across the region. These workshops are the first step in supporting diverse suppliers, explaining the potential opportunities and the steps to becoming fit to supply.

However the proposed model also allows for suppliers who will not engage with the service in such a linear way. For instance businesses may first come to the programme for help when they have identified a tender opportunity which needs to be pursued; or may only need some of the offerings available from the menu of services.

### **6.1.3 Workshops**

It is suggested that the workshops offered range from a mix of general and sector/industry specific workshops covering common approaches to procurement as well as specific areas such as identifying opportunities, understanding contract notices, completing PQQs, bid writing and collaboration. These workshops should be available to all participants.

One-to-many sessions such as this are the most cost-effective way of sharing information and knowledge that will be needed by many of the participants on the programme. The survey showed it is was also popular with the businesses consulted. An additional benefit of such workshops is the opportunity to share skills and experience, and form relationships with other organisations – perhaps with collaborative bidding in view.

These workshops should be integrated with the existing SME Awareness workshops delivered by Business Link.

#### **6.1.4 One-to-one Support**

The proposed model shows a smaller number of organisations will go on to receive one-to-one support in the form of coaching. It is envisaged that this will include a half day diagnostic followed by a further half day of support to improve readiness to tender. It is suggested that up to a maximum of five days of focussed support be made available to companies.

Typically this support includes help with:

- PQQ and registration
- where to look for opportunities
- how to decide whether to bid for a particular opportunity that has been identified
- planning a bid
- coaching throughout the development of a bid or tender
- practising a bid presentation

Eligibility for this in-depth support would be subject to an assessment which would look at current turnover and staff levels and the amount of work already undertaken with the public sector. The amount of support should not be limited to any individual company, but delivered on a cost versus potential impact basis.

For this part of the support, it is suggested that businesses are asked to sign a Commitment to ensure that they get the best from the coaching. This will include a commitment to meet agreed appointments, and to undertake agreed preparatory and follow-up work. They could also be asked to pay a notional amount (£250 for 5 days of support) as evidence shows this significantly reduces wasted time, and increases both results that are achieved, and the value that a business attaches to the support. Not all businesses will want or need the full five days of support, and would therefore be charged proportionately to the support received.



The coaches (County Supply Chain Advisers) would also build relationships with suppliers, key procurers and budget holders in their area facilitating access to procurement opportunities.

#### **6.1.5 Meet the Buyer Events**

It is suggested that Meet the Buyer events are held each year. These would create opportunities for suppliers and buyers to meet face-to-face: one of the most effective tools to creating new local supply chain relationships.

The suggested format for each Meet the Buyer is a one day event where local suppliers benefit from the opportunity to present their products and services directly to public and private sector purchasing organisations. Face to face appointments, pre-arranged between buyers and suppliers take part during the event. Such events are generally preceded with a pre-event briefing to ensure that the sales skills of participating companies are refreshed and that businesses have all the necessary background on the participating buyers.

Similar events in the East Midlands have generated over £3m of new business for participating suppliers.

Invitations to Meet The Buyer events should be geared to match the procurement requirements of the buyers attending each event.

#### **6.1.6 Opportunities Portal**

There are a number of functioning IT systems already in the market for supplier registration (Source East Midlands and the localised sub-sets; Supply2gov; and CompeteFor). A budget for IT initiatives and development is required, to direct suppliers and purchasers towards the appropriate sites, and to create appropriate referral mechanisms to the SDS from the local and regional opportunities sites.

It is also suggested that the Supplier Development Service will need its own web pages within the *emda* site hierarchy, explaining the programme - with supporting information for both target businesses and referring organisations.

Evidence collated from previous programmes, e.g. the Welsh Assembly Supplier Development Project has highlighted the difficulties in using technology to its best effect. However it became clear from the consultation exercise that SMEs would like to see a significant depth of on-line resources to accompany the face-to-face support. Specifically templates, examples and workbooks were felt to be helpful. Some businesses wanted these things in addition to the other parts of the programme; others felt that they might prefer a "blended learning" approach which would allow them more flexibility.

Key features of the online portal are:

- Supplier opportunities including smaller contracts
- Tender alerts
- Online registration which reduces the PQQ stage
- Background information on the whole programme
- Delivery body
- Signposting to other resources
- Information on effective PQQs/registration and tendering
- “Whether to bid” decision tree
- Guidance on collaborative bidding
- Templates, examples and illustrations (policies, PQQs and tenders)

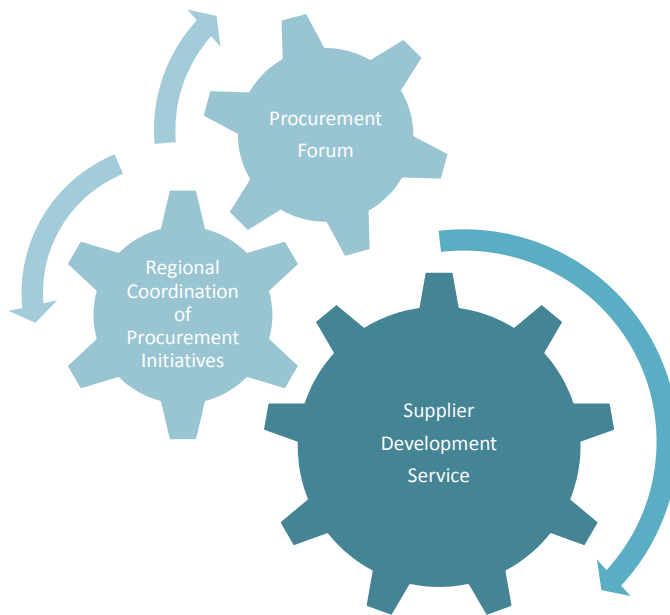
It would make most sense, and make these resources most easily accessible to the people that need them, to access them from an improved supplier portal. With the veritable plethora of supplier portals and supplier lists already in existence and the Glover report recommendation to rationalise tender portals it is important not to duplicate these systems.

With this in mind it is recommended that the best option is to invest in improvements to the current Source East Midlands website to provide supplier registration, tender alerts and supporting resources - all well promoted and available in a single place. Many helpful resources have already been developed elsewhere in the public sector and could probably be updated and refreshed rather than needing to be generated from new.

Consideration should also be given to opening up Source East Midlands for commercial organisations who are interested in sourcing locally. The success of the CompeteFor Olympic opportunities database in London indicates that commercial sector firms can often see clear benefits in engaging with local suppliers.

#### **6.1.7 Dovetailing with the RPOP**

This programme will be most effective if it takes place in close dialogue with the other two key elements of the Regional Procurement Opportunities Plan.



Feedback from the SMEs engaged with here will be key to informing the work of the Procurement Initiatives Coordination Office and the Procurement Forum. There should be continuing formal and informal two way communication and dialogue between the elements of the programme.

The latest generation of business support programmes include an element of active supplier matching. In this programme the Supply Chain Advisors who provide the coaching will also be responsible for liaising with the other aspects of the RPOP.

Buyers also need to be educated in how to engage more effectively with SME suppliers. It is envisaged that this would take place within the Regional Co-ordination element of the RPOP (rather than within the Supplier Development Service itself).

It is likely that buyers already involved with other RPOP initiatives will be most responsive to matching initiatives, as they will be known supporters of SME engagement into supply chains.

#### **6.1.8 Mapping the Regional Supply Chains**

Part of the brief for the Supplier Development Service is to develop a map of the supply base. To create a relevant supply base map the buyers requirements are required - this will need to take place in collaboration with the RPOP Regional Co-ordination initiative. Separate costs have not been built in for this in the model – however it has been assumed that the Programme Manager, with additional information provided by the Supplier Advisors; and further information through analysis of the opportunities on Source East Midlands would facilitate its creation.

## **7 Delivering the Service**

### **7.1 Delivery Model**

In order to deliver the programme as set out over the three year lifespan, the following organisation structure will be required.

*A Supplier Development Programme Manager* responsible for leading, planning, managing and reporting on the service.

*Five County Supply Chain Advisers*, one for each of the five counties, responsible for delivering the programme in their area. A major element of this team's work is to provide the 5 days of one-to-one support with the businesses that progress through the programme. The County Supply Chain Advisers will also build relationships with suppliers, key procurers and budget holders in their area facilitating access to procurement opportunities. These advisors will also have a sector specialism relating to one of the key business sectors in the East Midlands (for instance healthcare/biosciences; transport; construction; food and drink).

Supplier matching will also be undertaken by the Supply Chain Advisers, building relationships between key buyers and suppliers.

Over a three year period, businesses will become eligible for the programme in Year 2 that were not ready in Year 1 and so forth; equally some businesses will cease to be within the criteria either due to growth and business success, or indeed, due to a different strategic direction being taken. There is therefore a continuing requirement to offer a Supplier Development Services for the relevant cohort of businesses in any given year.

It is unrealistic to anticipate that a Supplier Development Programme could become self-sustaining in some way, the rate of business start-up will continue to develop young businesses without the necessary skills and, furthermore, in the medium term, it is unrealistic to believe that Procurers will become so adroit at engaging with SMEs that they no longer require support and persuasion.

### **7.2 Costs**

For completeness, the full table of costs appears on the next page.

### 7.2.1 Table of costs

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Programme Manager</b> (£50,000 salary with x 1.6 multiplier applied)	£80,000	£80,000	£80,000	This is based on market salary and standard industry multiplier
<b>County Representatives</b> (1 for each of 5 counties, £40,000 salary with x 1.6 multiplier applied)	£320,000	£320,000	£320,000	Based on market salary and standard industry multiplier
<b>Promotion and Engagement</b>	£35,000	£20,000	£20,000	Indicative cost based on PR and marketing campaign to raise awareness – through business support intermediaries (eg. Business Link, FSB, Chambers, IoD) and harnessing e-channels
<b>IT &amp; Web Support</b>	£50,000	£20,000	£20,000	Indicative budget for upgrading Source E Mids– dependent on Source E Mids continuing to be owned and operated under current arrangement. Fee for upgrading only. This cost could change dramatically dependent on ownership & operating arrangements.
<b>Introductory Workshops</b> (3 p a in each of 5 regions, at £2,500 each)	£37,500	£37,500	£37,500	Based on current costs for B2B/s Procurement E Mids programme in 2008. Assumes that Programme Manager or County Reps will present the sessions. All marketing undertaken by email.
<b>Regional Workshops</b> (20 regional sessions at £3,000 each)	£60,000	£60,000	£60,000	See above. £500 allowance for an external speaker ½ day.

<b>Meet The Buyer</b> (2 major events at £30,000 each)	£60,000	£60,000	£60,000	Based on B2B costs for delivering these events for Procurement E Mids.
<b>Programme Evaluation</b>	£5,000	£5,000	£15,000	Based on current market rates.
<b>Programme Cost</b>	<b>£647,500</b>	<b>£602,500</b>	<b>£612,500</b>	
<b>Profit figure of 10% linked to performance of outputs</b>	<b>£64,750</b>	<b>£60,250</b>	<b>£61,250</b>	
<b>Cost with Profit</b>	<b>£712,250</b>	<b>£662,500</b>	<b>£673,750</b>	
<b>Projected Offset Income</b> (180 businesses per year paying £250 for one-to-one support)	<b>£45,000</b>	<b>£45,000</b>	<b>£45,000</b>	
<b>Net Total Cost</b>	<b>£667,250</b>	<b>£617,500</b>	<b>£628,750</b>	

These costs are at 2009 rates. VAT at the current rate will be applicable to some of the cost elements.

### 7.3 Scalability

The costings above have been based on the minimum scale at which the programme could engage with a sensible number of SMEs within each of the counties and with buyers; and achieve outcomes proportionate to the investment.

It is possible to operate something on a smaller scale but this would be limited in scope and reach and could not include any significant element of one-to-one coaching, buyer engagement or enhanced supplier registration system. This would be similar in outcome to the current Procurement East Midlands initiative, which is based on medium and large scale one-to-many events and is not a Supplier Development Service to meet the aims and aspirations of the RPOP; or the needs of SMEs and stakeholders that were consulted for this project.

The programme can be scaled upwards, and becomes slightly more cost effective as the scale increases (some costs are fixed and some are variable - an illustration with 2 Representatives in each County is provided in Appendix 4. The cost increases to just below £1m per annum).

### 7.4 Outputs and Return on Investment

The proposed service would concentrate on achieving an impact on the East Midlands regional economy and providing a high level return on investment (ROI). It is suggested that, in order to achieve this, the SDS could provide intensive support to businesses that have the potential to succeed.

The service should provide an achievable ROI of 20:1 that is comparable to other similar activities. This would also compare very positively to other *emda* supported projects such as the 15:1 achieved by the High Growth programme pilot. The service could target the repatriation of spend to the region and local spend for local businesses. It must however be aware of creating a 'churn' of business in the region.

The impact output measurement methodology for the service will need to address the time lag between the intervention and the attributable output generated. The service will need to be persistent with its beneficiaries, keeping in regular contact to ensure all attributable outputs are recorded.

#### 7.4.1 Potential outputs linked to *emda* core outputs

Output No.	Output Name
T6	Skills – Number of people assisted in their skills development (individuals, min. 6 hours)
T4	Business Support – Number of businesses assisted to improve their performance (min. 2 hours)

Outcome No.	Outcome Name
T1	Job Creation – Number of jobs created or safeguarded
£38M	New Sales (ROI 20:1)
25%	Percentage of companies successful in winning business
	Value / number of opportunities generated
	Value of business won

**Note:** The Return On Investment figure is based upon previous programmes, which have run during a period of high economic growth. In the current recession, there will be more competition for this work from existing established businesses; and there will be flat or decreasing spend from many public sector bodies and large commercial organisations. Therefore consideration should be given to reducing the targeted ROI. Other outcomes should be set with the economic situation in mind at the time of the programme launch. The job creation specification states that a job can be counted if it has not existed with that employer before the intervention. With redundancies becoming commonplace, jobs may have existed before, what if a company wins business and wants to re-employ to a position?

## 7.5 Is a Pilot Programme Required?

The consultation exercise indicated clear demand for the service, and successful similar programmes have already been undertaken in other regions. Therefore a pilot to assess demand and uptake and/or to assess the model is not indicated in this case.

The Procurement EM programme in 2008 could be considered as a pilot to assess the likely demand in the East Midlands for procurement support: all events were over-subscribed.

## 7.6 Procuring the Service

There are a number of delivery options for the Supplier Development Service. These include:

- In-house delivery
- Mixed mode, with some or all staff posts created in-house, and outsourcing of other programme elements
- Full outsource of the whole programme

**In house** delivery has some advantages in terms of direct selection and control of the staff. However there are a number of significant disadvantages including time and cost of recruitment and selection; increase in *emda* headcount;



requirement for management and oversight; resource-intensive event booking and management requirements; administration-heavy.

**Mixed Mode Delivery:** establishment of in-house posts for the Programme Manager and the County Representatives has some of the disadvantages listed above, with an additional procurement burden for the ongoing sourcing of the other elements of the programme.

A **full outsource** of the programme is the most efficient way to secure the appropriate skills, experience resources both for the full time posts and for the intermittent requirements (organising events, promotion, web development and so forth). This approach is recommended - and is reflected in the way the programme budget is structured.

It is recommended that a contract is let for the length of the programme, tendered competitively via the OJEU Restricted Procedure. (the grant/deferment of costs route was considered, but this can prove to be poor value in the event that costs are incurred but outputs/outcomes are not achieved). This enables appropriate contract incentives, penalties, remedies and termination clauses linked to the supplier's performance.

Headline selection criteria should include:

- Demonstrable experience of delivering the key elements of the programme (one-to-one advice; workshops; meet the buyer events; web and materials development)
- Successful outcomes achieved from the programmes run
- Demonstrable experience of administering and managing a programme of this size and scale
- Knowledge understanding of the issues facing SMEs in accessing supply chains; SME, TSO, BAME culture and value
- Knowledge and understanding of the economic landscape (public and private sectors) in the East Midlands
- Appropriate understanding of equal of opportunity and diversity in respect of this programme
- Approach delivery and management (method statement)
- Anticipated outcomes and ROI
- Added value and innovation
- Cost

The relative weightings of these factors will depend on whether the project is tendered with a total budget envelope stated at the time of bidding.

## 8 Conclusion and Legacy

It seems clear from the evidence presented that there is a strong business case for the creation of a Supplier Development Service for the East Midlands, particularly in the current economic climate.

So what are the long-lasting benefits of an investment of this kind?

One important legacy is the likely ongoing attainment of the outputs (jobs created and secured, GVA, new sales developed from competitively tendered contracts) that successful clients of the service will continue to achieve over the longer term. This can easily be measured by continuing to track these businesses for a period after the programme has completed.

A greater understanding of the economic impact of regional spend; and the embedding of sustainable procurement practices with buyers should lead to an enduring change in buyer behaviour that will continue to have an economic impact.

The creating and safeguarding of jobs, particularly during the current economic climate, has a wider positive impact on local and regional economies - particularly for micro-businesses and sole traders at the end of these supply chains.

Important, but perhaps most difficult to measure and capture, is the growth in skills and capacity of organisations that have been supported through the programme. A business that becomes fit to supply may not win significant new regional or local contracts during the life of the programme (depending on the point at which they entered the programme, and the procurement cycle of their products or services), but evidence shows that there are nonetheless medium and long term benefits to becoming tender ready.

## 9 Contact Details

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## 10 Appendix 1 – Survey Overview

### 10.1 Introduction

In addition to the face to face consultation sessions Questionnaires were developed for suppliers, buyers and stakeholders. In order to facilitate the distribution and collation process the questionnaires were developed using SNAP – a comprehensive survey software package that enables participants to complete the questionnaires 'on line', and then automatically imports data back into the SNAP database where it can be easily analysed and interpreted through a range of tabular, statistical and graphical analysis options. Key areas of focus on the questionnaire were:

- Whether it is believed that a Supplier Development Service would help grow small businesses.
- Areas a Supplier Development Service can help with.
- How support can be delivered most effectively.
- Use of online systems for advertising and sourcing opportunities.
- Determining whether the proposed SDS model would work.

### 10.2 Results

#### 10.2.1 Questionnaires Received - Headline Figures

The table below outline the headline figures in terms of questionnaires received measured against the equality and diversity data collated.

	Buyers	Stakeholders	Suppliers
<b>Total Questionnaires Received</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>170</b>
Gender			
<b>Male</b>	13	9	112
<b>Female</b>	5	2	51
<b>Unknown</b>	0	0	7
Age Group			
<b>Age Group 20-30</b>	1	0	7
<b>Age Group 31-45</b>	12	3	61

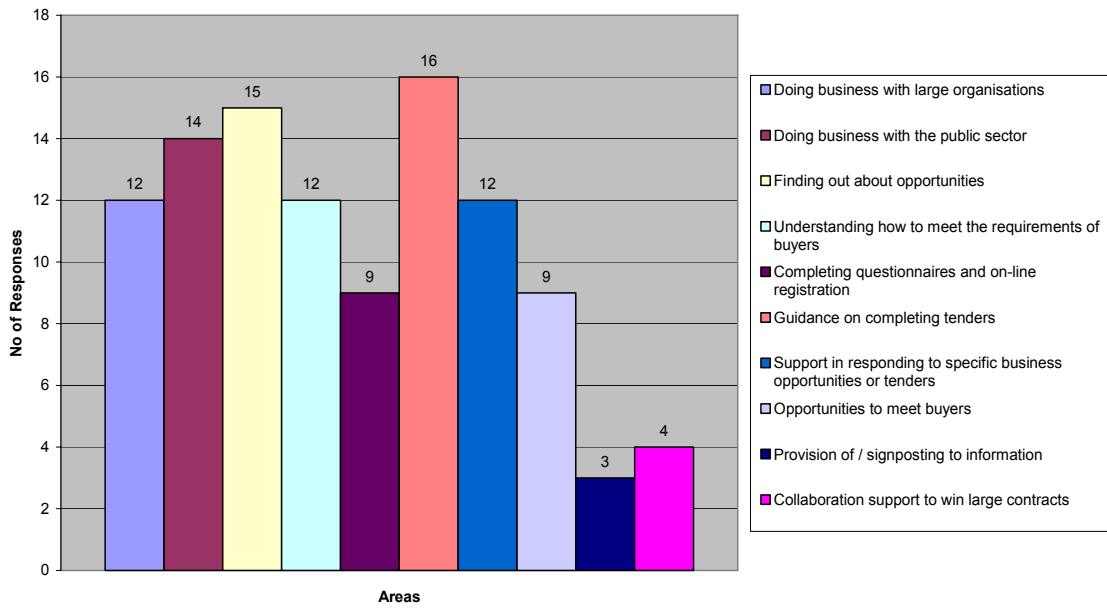
	Buyers	Stakeholders	Suppliers
<b>Age Group 46-65</b>	5	8	86
<b>Age Group 66+</b>	0	0	8
<b>Declined to answer</b>	0	0	8
Disability			
	0	0	3
Ethnicity			
<b>White</b>	17	11	148
<b>Mixed</b>	0	0	0
<b>Asian / Asian British</b>	1	0	4
<b>Black /Black British</b>	0	0	5
<b>Chinese or other ethnic group</b>	0	0	0
<b>Declined to answer</b>	0	0	12
Type of Business			
<b>Sole Trader</b>	N/A	N/A	16
<b>Private Ltd Co</b>	N/A	N/A	112
<b>Public Ltd Co</b>	N/A	N/A	7
<b>Charity</b>	N/A	N/A	7
<b>Partnership</b>	N/A	N/A	13
<b>Declined to answer</b>	N/A	N/A	15
Size			
<b>Less than 5</b>	N/A	N/A	65
<b>5-50</b>	N/A	N/A	62
<b>50-250</b>	N/A	N/A	20
<b>+250</b>	N/A	N/A	9
<b>Declined to answer</b>	N/A	N/A	14

	Buyers	Stakeholders	Suppliers
Ownership (Gender)			
<b>Male</b>	N/A	N/A	80
<b>Female</b>	N/A	N/A	31
<b>50/50</b>	N/A	N/A	35
<b>Declined to answer</b>	N/A	N/A	11
Ownership (Ethnicity)			
<b>White British / Irish / other</b>	N/A	N/A	127
<b>Black African / other</b>	N/A	N/A	3
<b>Indian / Pakistani</b>	N/A	N/A	5
<b>Asian Other</b>	N/A	N/A	1
<b>Declined to answer</b>	N/A	N/A	34
Region			
<b>Derbyshire</b>	10	2	43
<b>Nottinghamshire</b>	1	3	49
<b>Lincolnshire</b>	1	0	8
<b>Leicestershire</b>	1	2	41
<b>Northants</b>	1	1	17
<b>Declined to answer /Outside E Mids</b>	3	3	22

### 10.2.2 Buyers – Key Results

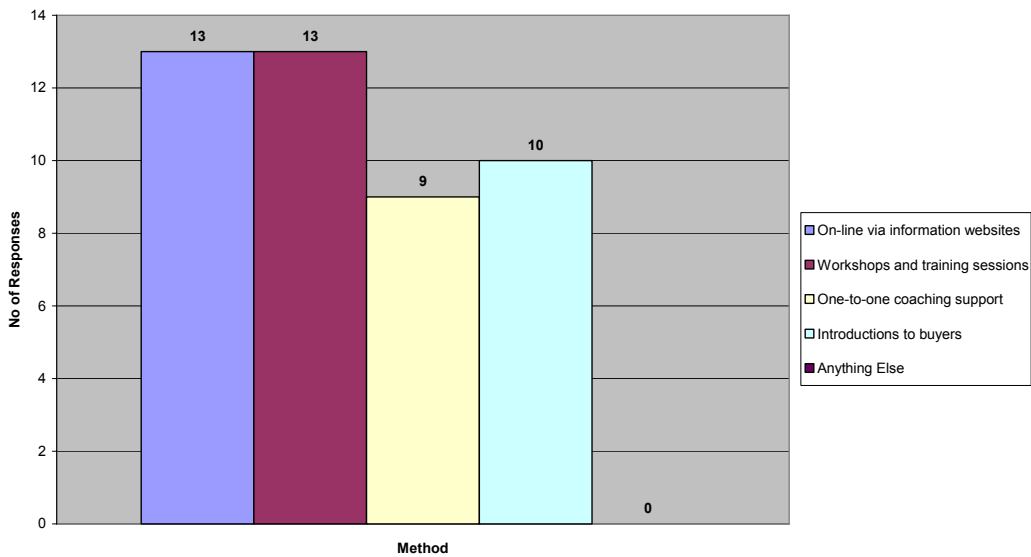
- 17 (95%) buyers believe an SDS would help small businesses
- Guidance on Completing Tenders, Finding Opportunities and doing business with Public sector ranked as top 3 areas where SDS can help.

Areas an SDS could help with



- 14 (77%) believe the proposed model would probably work, 3 (17%) definitely, and 1 (6%) probably not.
- Websites and Workshops / Training ranked equally as preferred method of delivering support most effectively.

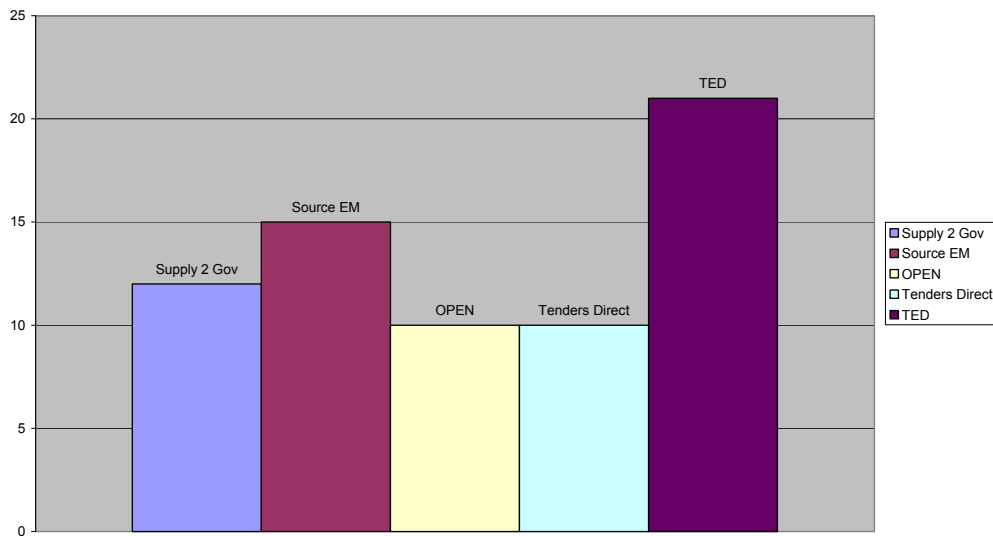
How do you think this sort of support can be delivered most effectively?



- 6 (35%) buyers never use online systems to advertise, 8 (44%) regularly use online systems to advertise.



Ranking of Online Systems

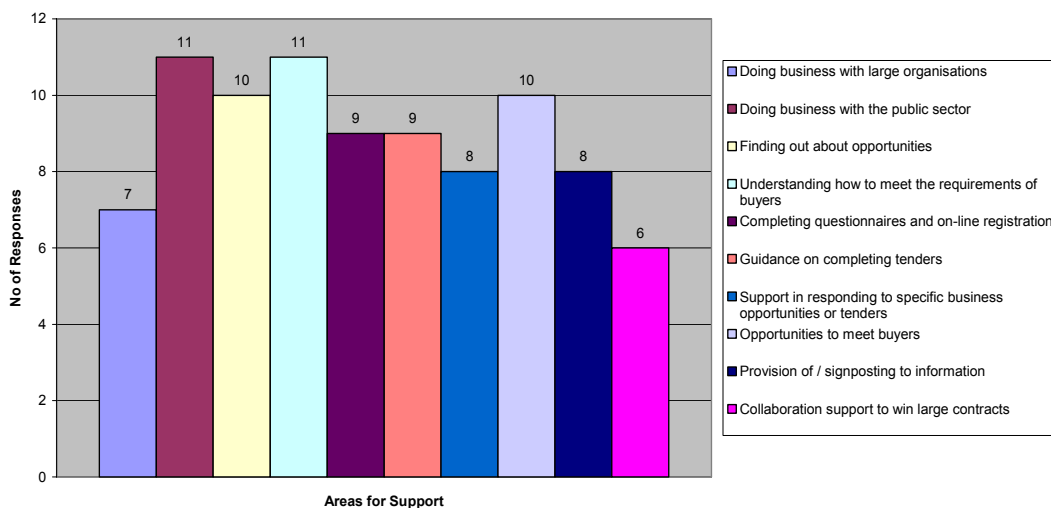


- 16 (89 %) believe an online system for SMEs would help
- 1 felt strongly that an online system would not be of use

### 10.2.3 Stakeholders – Key Results

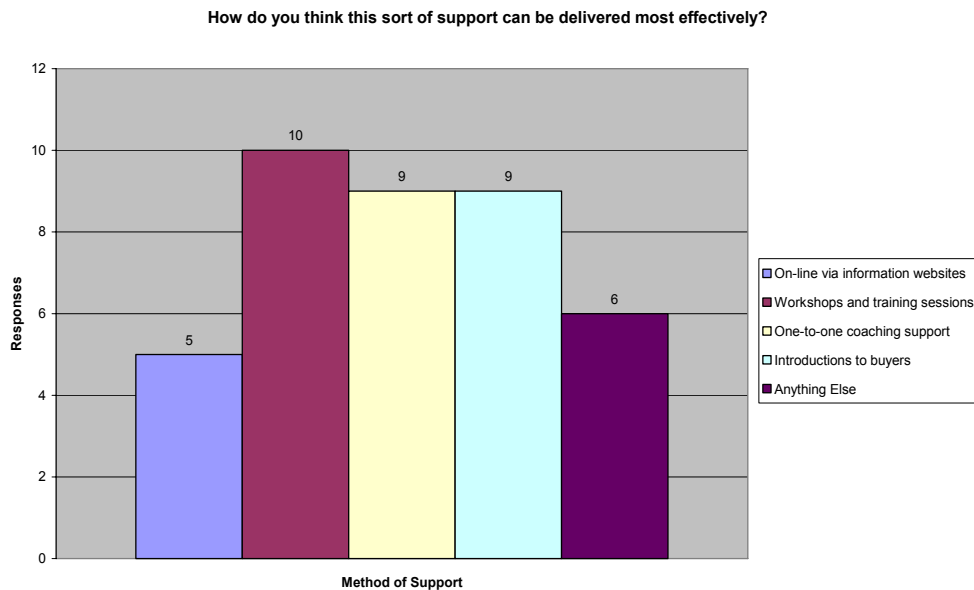
- 11 (100%) stakeholders believe an SDS would help small businesses (40% definitely. 60% probably)
- Understanding Buyer Requirements, Opportunities to meet buyers, Finding Opportunities and doing business with Public sector ranked as top 4 areas where SDS can help.

Areas a Supplier Development Service could help with



- 9 (82%) believe the proposed model would probably work, 2 (18%) definitely

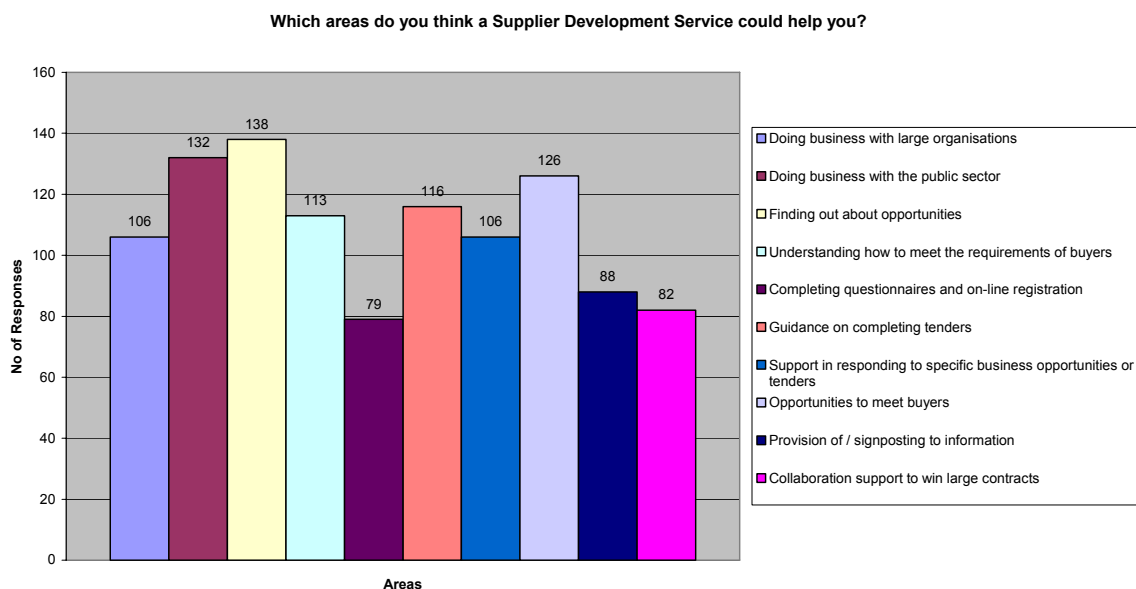
- Workshops / Training, one to one coaching and introduction to buyers ranked highest as preferred method of delivering support most effectively.



- 4 (36%) stakeholders never use online systems
- 4 (36 %) believe an online system for SMEs would not help

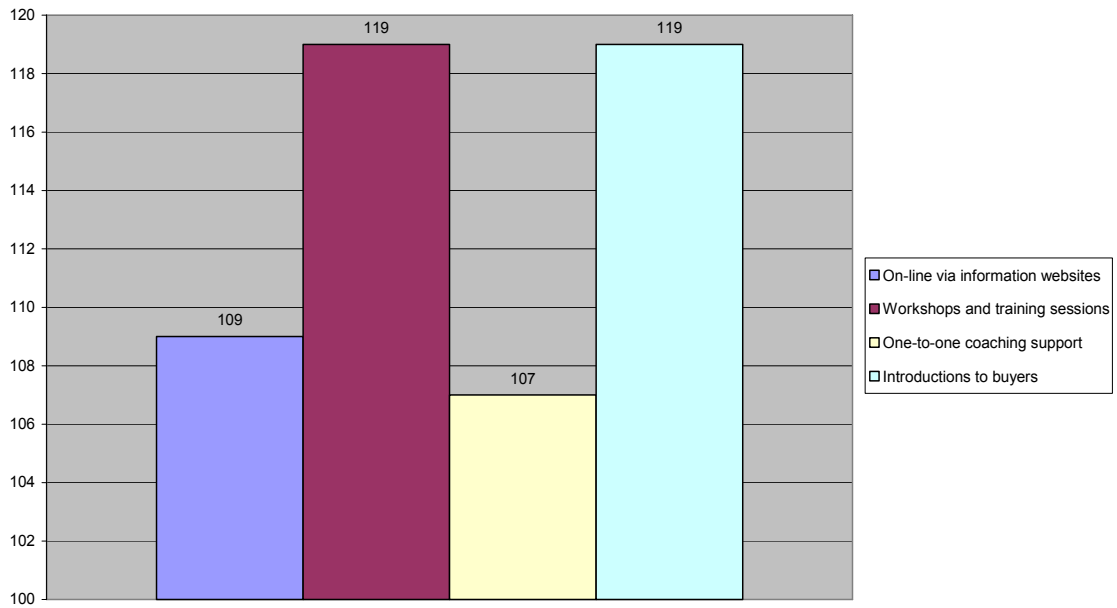
#### 10.2.4 Suppliers – Key Results

- Finding Opportunities, Opportunities to meet buyers, and doing business with Public sector ranked as top 3 areas where SDS can help.



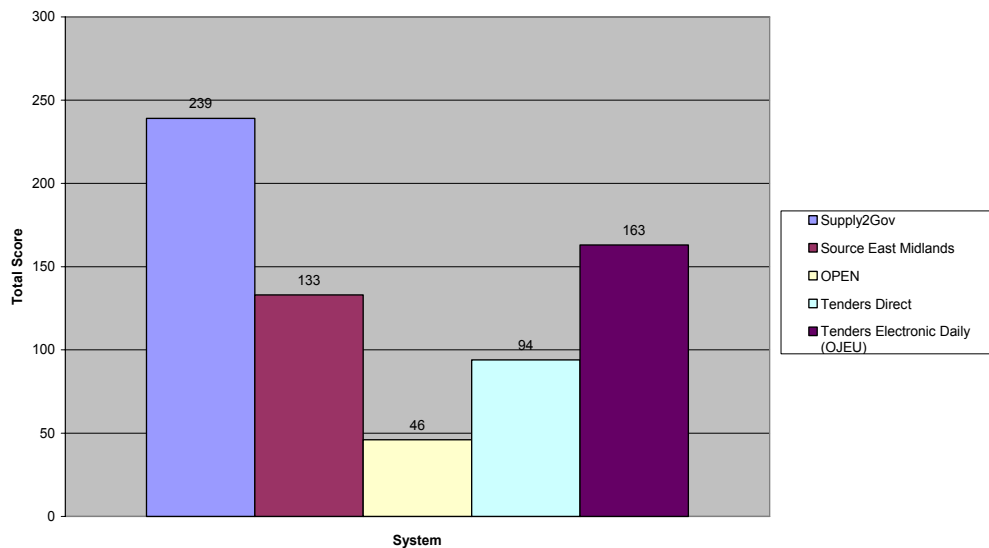
- Workshops / Training and introduction to buyers ranked highest as preferred method of delivering support most effectively

How do you think this sort of support can be delivered most effectively?



- 97 (57%) think that proposed model would probably work, 46 (27%) think it would definitely work, 19 (11 %) think the model probably would not work for them, only 1 respondee said it definitely would not work.
- Supply to Gov and TED ranked as most popular online systems.

Ranking of online systems



- 115 (68%) think that registration on a regional portal would definitely be useful.
- Average % private sector work: 64%
- Average % public sector work: 31%

### 10.3 Conclusions

Whilst some suppliers believed the current level of support available to be good, the majority were either unaware or believed it to be limited and/or poor although signposting to information and guidance ranked as one of the lower areas that an SDS could help with.

Both Suppliers and stakeholders favoured areas such as finding opportunities, opportunities to meet buyers and understanding buyer needs as the best way to deliver support whereas buyers focussed on Guidance on Completing Tenders.

Similarly Suppliers and stakeholders focussed on introduction to buyers and training as preferred methods of delivering support most effectively whereas buyers favoured online systems and training.

These results highlight the difficulties SMEs commonly experience in accessing opportunities particularly those at the lower value end of the spectrum and their desire to actively engage with buyers as opposed to completing tenders. From a buyer perspective the desire for SMEs to submit quality tenders and engage from distance via online systems is apparent.

A third of suppliers said that they currently never use online systems, although 93% said it would help if you could register on a regional system. Some of the concerns raised in relation to setting up a new regional portal were that it would duplicate existing systems such as Supply2 Gov and BiP Select, and that it would not be geared to SMEs. However positive comments were that it would enable greater exposure of SME capabilities to buying teams and save time searching for opportunities.

87.5 % of all participants believe that the proposed model for the SDS would either probably or definitely work. Key issues raised rested around the importance of building up tendering skills rather than simply introducing suppliers to buyers, the need for there to be greater standardisation across public sector purchasing approaches to reduce duplication of effort, the need for flexibility for individuals entering the process with different levels of knowledge and expertise, better feedback mechanisms, and opportunities for SMEs to tap into supply chains associated with contract awards.

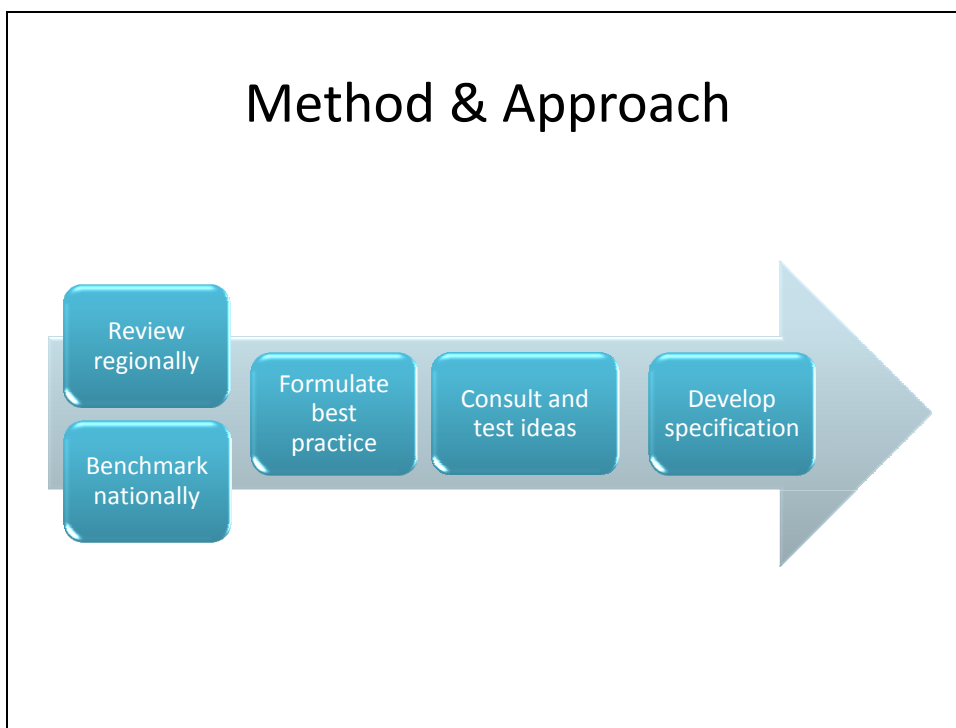
## 11 Appendix 2 – Powerpoint Presentation to Consultation Group

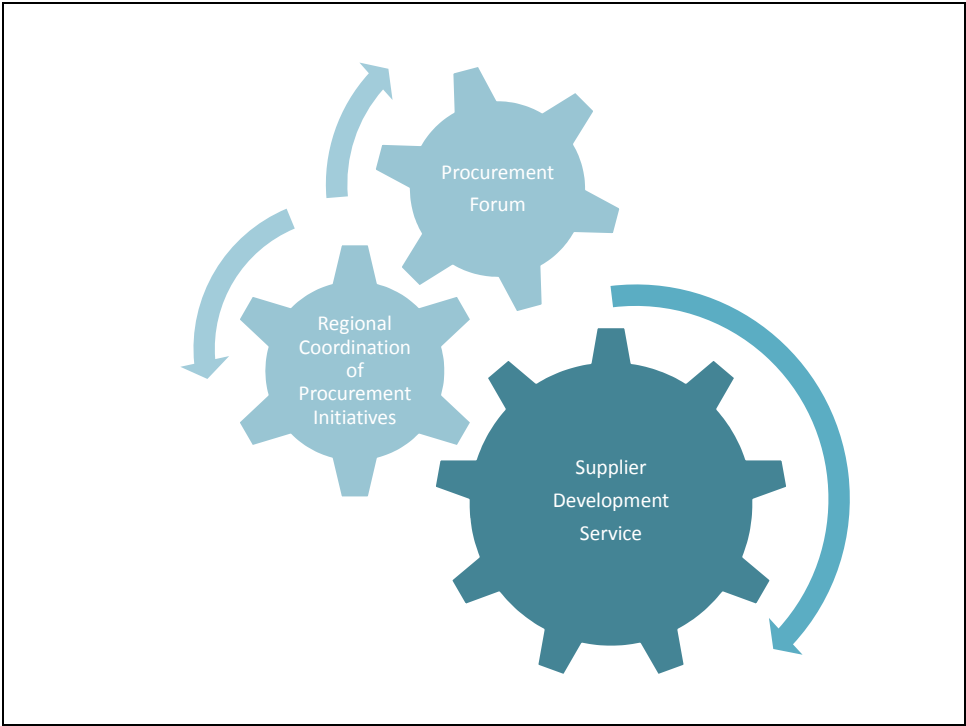


east midlands  
development agency

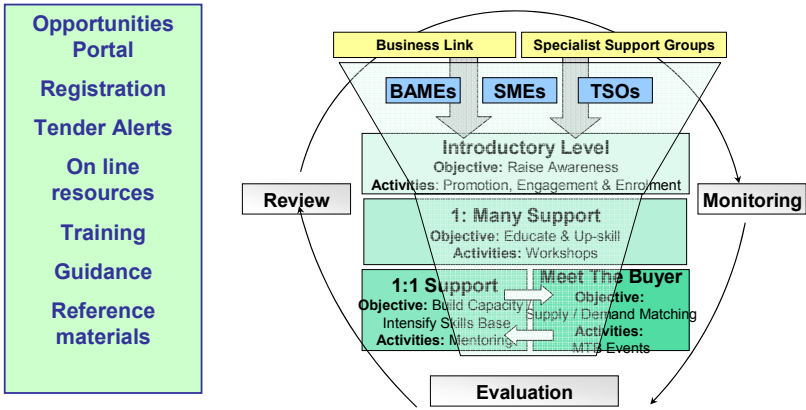
EMDA  
Supplier Development Service Feasibility Study

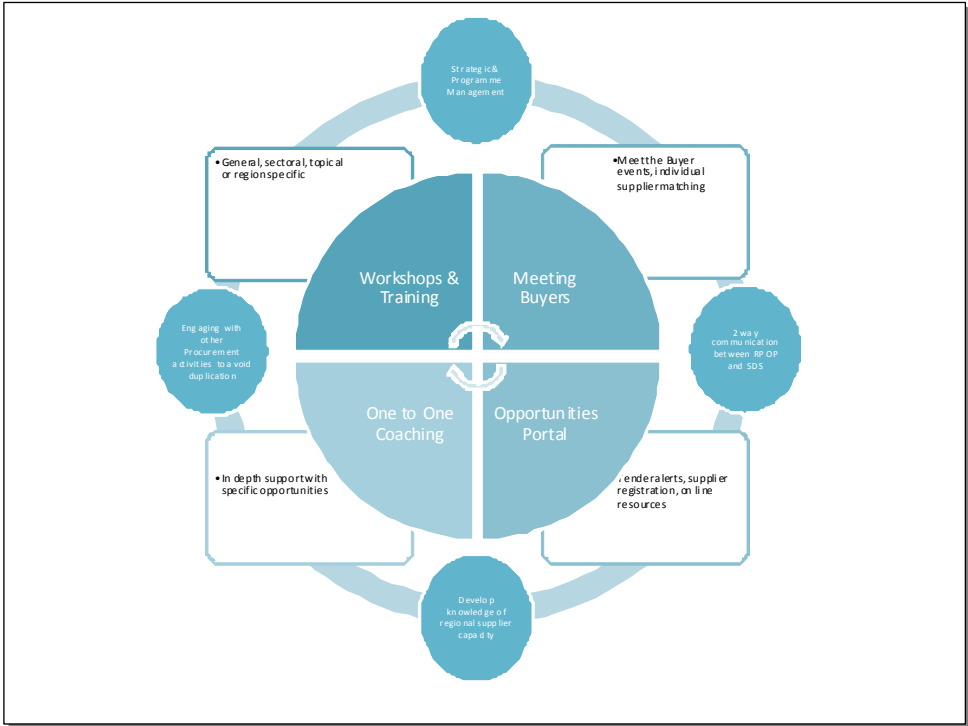
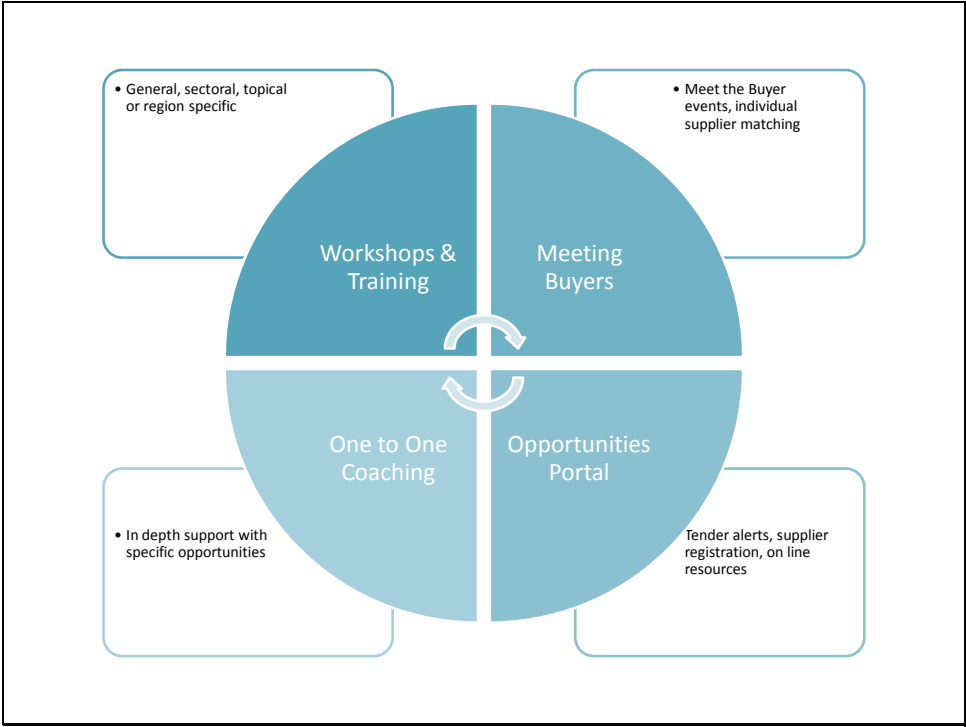
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Consultation

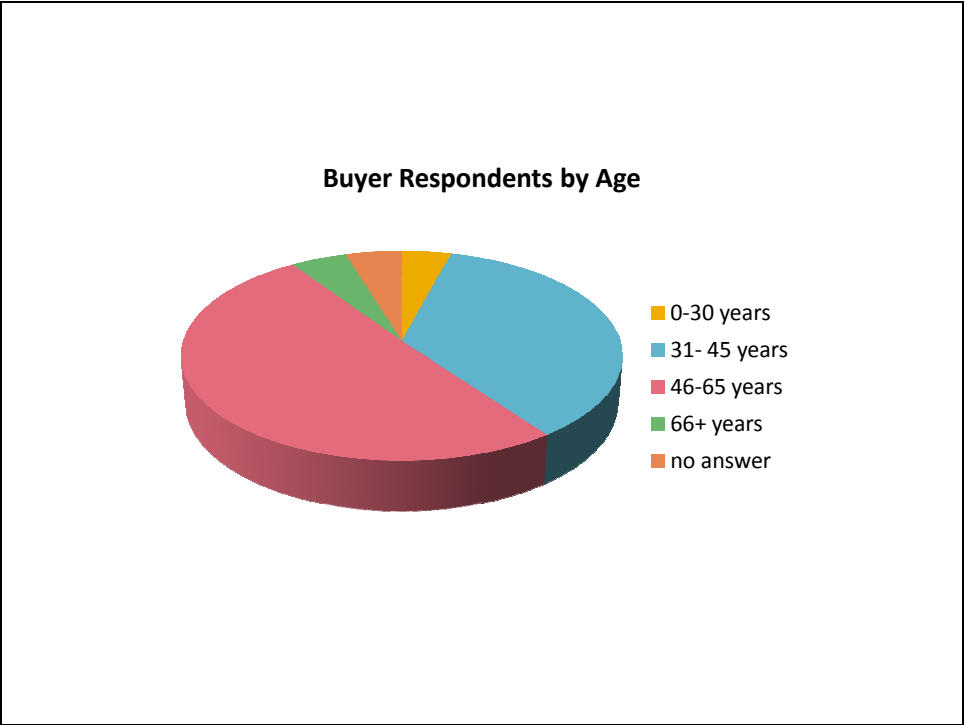
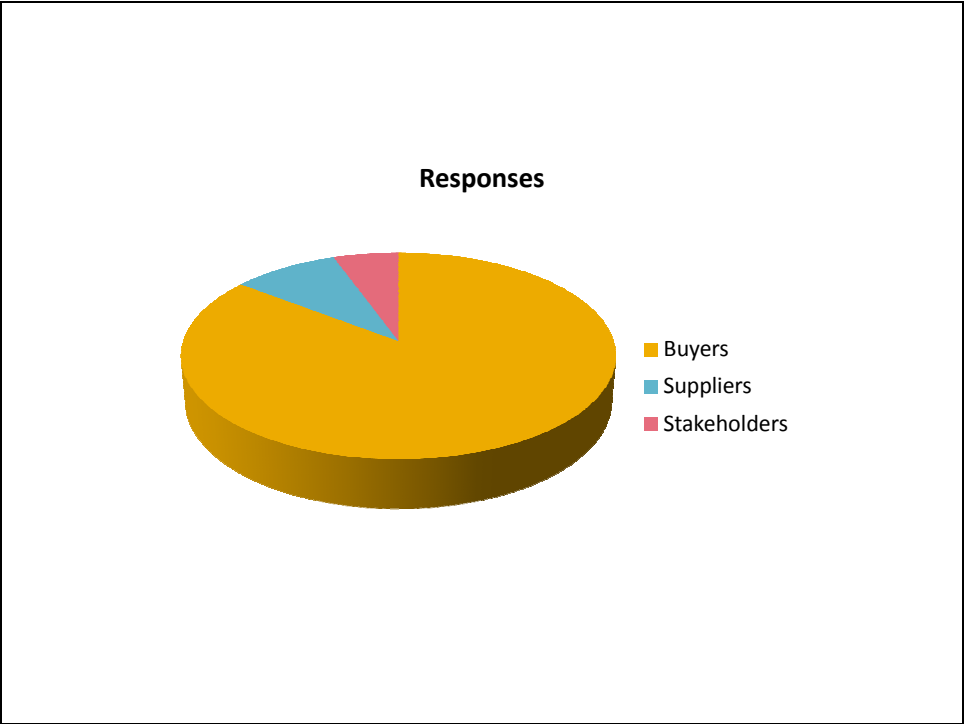




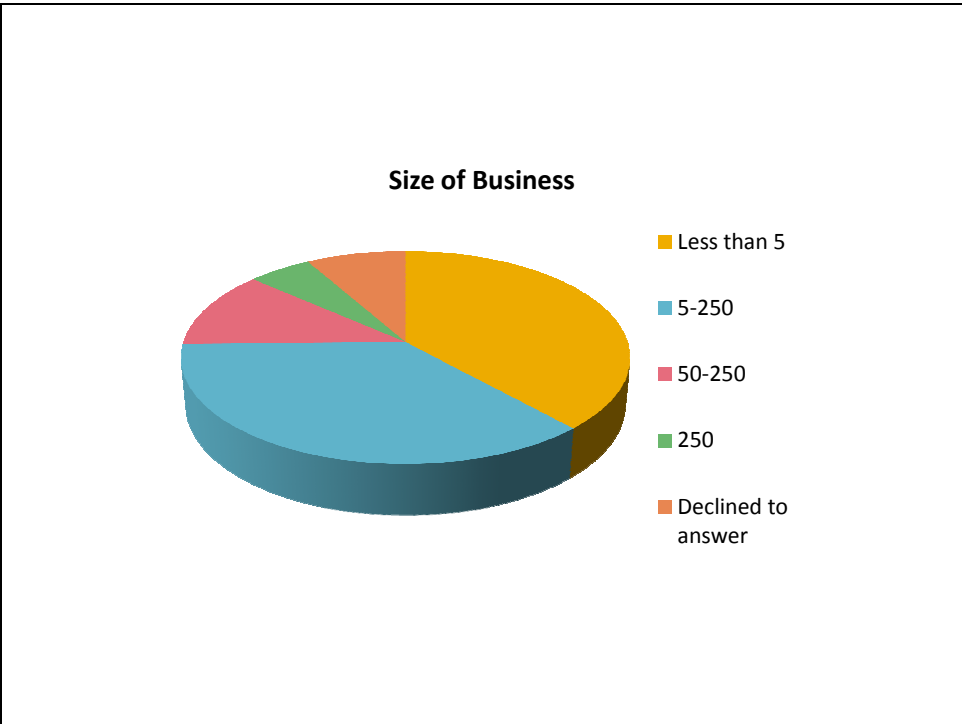
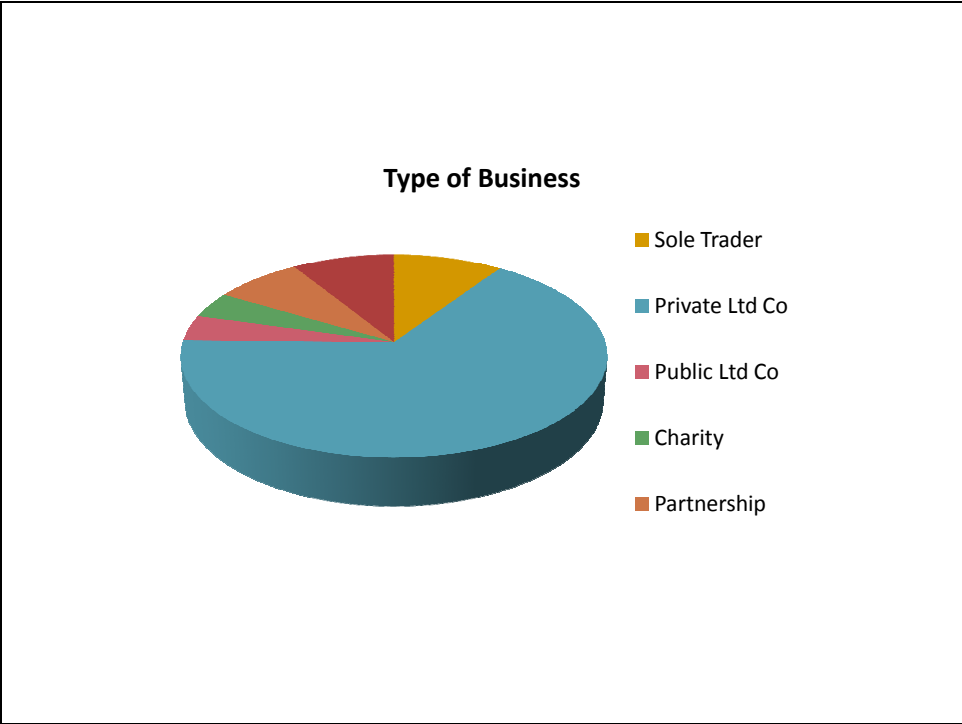
### Proposed Model Overview

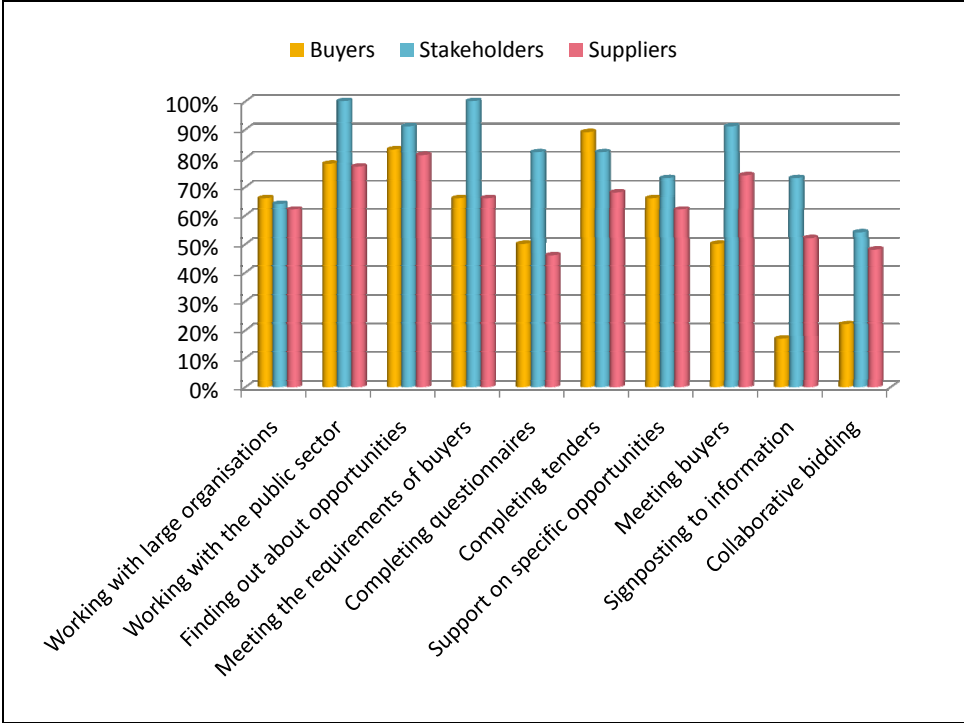
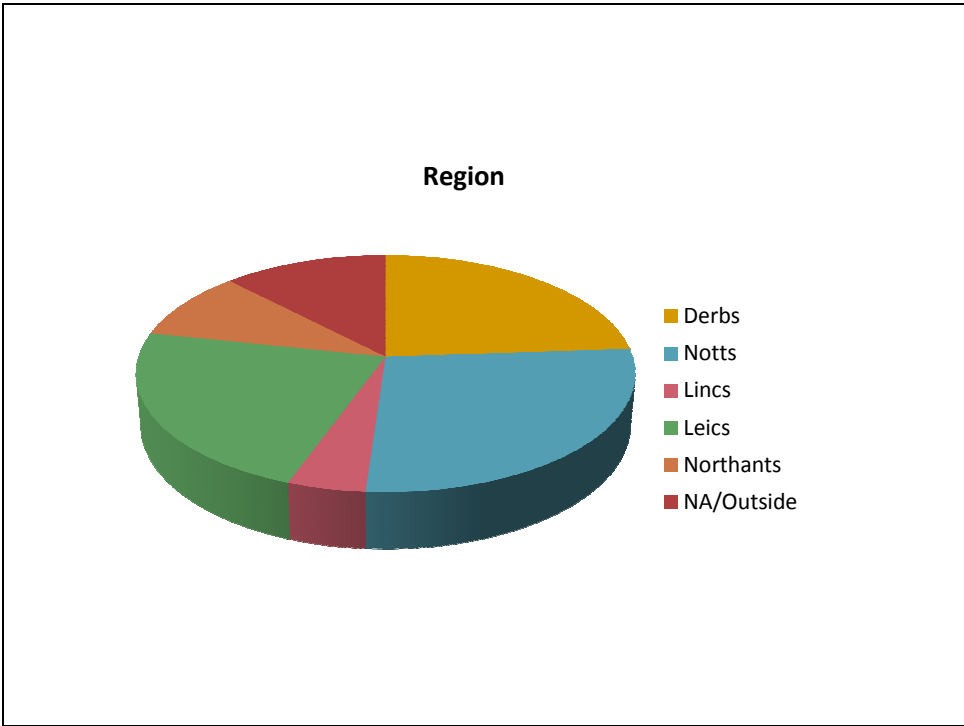


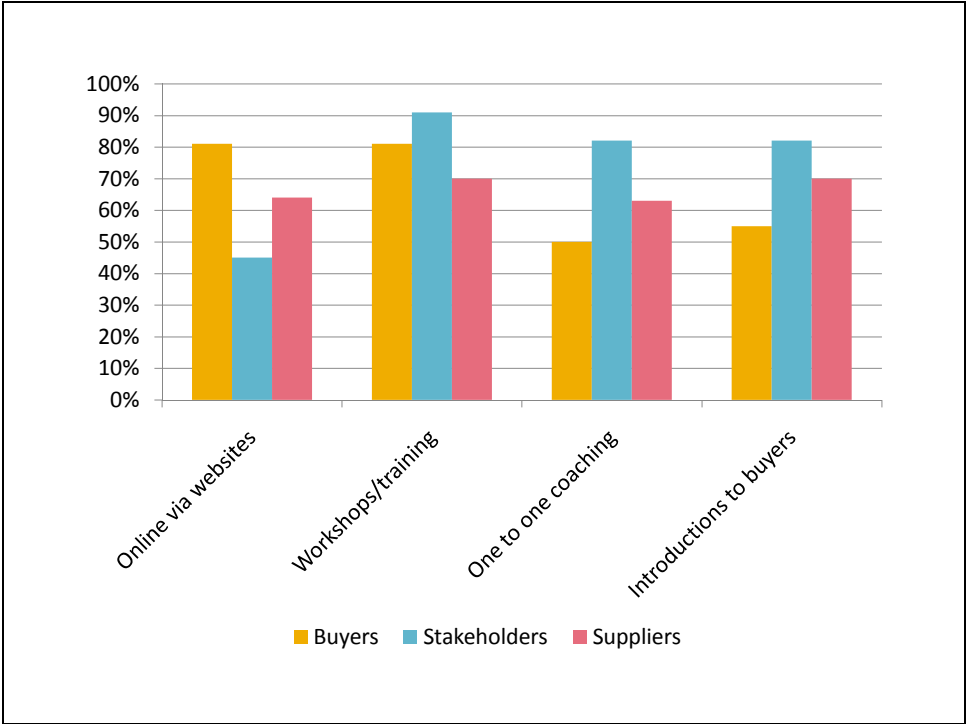












## 12 Appendix 3 – Current Provision: Questionnaire

How do you find support in winning public sector work at the moment?
Access to information difficult.
Aequately but improvement could definitely be made.
Almost non existent. If there is help already out there then I don't know about it.
Almost non-existent
Always a possibility of some links missing off websites.
Aware of generic events i.e. meet the Buyer
Basically knocking on doors.
Best to do it yourself.
Better to have a central website.
Bit patchy.
Business Link and trade organisations e.g. UKHCA FSB Chamber of Commerce
Business Link Constructing Excellence London Chamber of Commerce Own experience of past tenders etc
Business Link good only if you go TO them, they don't come to us.
Business Link. FSB. Other EMDA procurement events.
By checking different websites, Business Link, other businesses
by responding to seminar invitations etc.
Chamber of Commerce help. Supply to Gov. B to B.
Difficult to find - adhoc advice sessions from EMDA support or Business Link
Difficult to know who to ask for specific assistance and objective look at what you do.

Direct sales, tele marketing
Do not have any particular support
Don't have any
Dont have any.
Don't have any. Do it myself.
Don't know.
Don't.
European Journal (OJEU), canvassing and asking when tenders up for review.
Exists generally, but not for our product (renewables technologies) as they do not have a CIS designation
Fair
Fairly non existent locally
From time to time.
General networking or specifically bought in
Get information through sourcederbyshire and supply2gov. Therefore would like additional information on opportunities.
Growing - but very general
I am a member of EMTEX and an organisation called Design Factory which supports East midland designer/makers and small businesses
I think all of the above have been on offer for a long time and dont have much benefit at all! I dont tend to go on them as they all say the same thing but in different ways and in different venues and cost 200 - 500 pound for no business
I think you did well last year in some of the seminars you ran. However, immediately it became apparent that on the 40% of company turnover, that even pre-tender questionnaires would eliminate small suppliers. Perhaps the real focus should be on the collaboration element and how to set up these arrangements and the likely costs involved in responding to tenders, in order that appropriate management of these collaborations is in place prior to tender.
Important factor.

Internally within our own organisation. Plus we currently have very little exposure to public sector work where a more exacting PQQ/tender is issued
Internet searches and 1:1 contacts
It is out there, but for small businesses it can be prohibitive due to costs involved with 1 to 1 mentoring
It is there, but often aimed more at providers of products than providers of services.
Limited, we are members of the Nottingham and Derbyshire Chamber of Commerce and feel we have a certain level of support through them, however, it would possibly more beneficial to have a support mechanism that is more in line with Public Sector organisations and can provide a more direct answer to our needs than having to wade through the endless advisors that have to pass you on to someone that is experienced in a particular field. Also, we tend to get conflicting responses to questions we may pose.
Many businesses are confused about access to businesses. National database would be better rather than regional. Should not have to pay for access to these services. SIMPLIFY EVERYTHING.
Marginal - Business Link, other private associations.
Mediocre - half hearted attempts.
Meet the Buyer events. Training on How to Tender / How to do Business with Public Sector.
Minimal
Most introductions I get are through networking.
Mostly generic.
n/a have not tried
Nil
No focussed / specific enough. Lacks the 1:1 element and the opportunity to collaborate with like-minded businesses and potential partners
No support
None
none

Non-existent
Not generally great
Not good.
Not looked to date, but will now do so based on links mentioned.
Not sure - represent different companies.
Not tried
Not very comprehensive.
On line searches
only by personal contact
Only way at present is Business Link or the web.
Only word of mouth
Partnership networking.
Patchy at best. Business Link do some awareness sessions but there is more demand than supply
Poor
Poor
Poor
poor
poor or non existent
Poor.
Professional, experienced friend.
Public sector too intimidating a market at the moment so we don't go there!
Purchase data.
Rather adhoc - DIY.
Search the internet and use outside consultants.
See above comments

Self-generated and small numbers of tender promo sites
Small amount from Business Link but ordinarily self-taught.
Sporadic
Sporadic, hot and cold - might be to do with me! Tend to deal with what's in front of me.
supply.gov isn't very good - only for very large contracts and our business is too specific for us to find leads relevant to us. Very few opportunities to meet buyers (the only event I've heard of was only accessible by car, not near train line etc). Online local info eg source derbyshire doesn't have notifications and we don't have time to look through every sourcing website every day. Companies that offer paid-for help with finding contracts are hard to evaluate - are they good value/right for us or not?
Support ok. Not relevant to my situation.
Tender noticeboards, business colleagues help and advice, asking for feedback, invitations to quote from membership of LMR (Land Machinery Ring)
There is a small amount of support. The Chamber of Commerce all have a "Meet the Buyer" opportunity, but it is still left to the individual company to try to win the business
There is patchy bits of information around but I've been disappointed whenever I've tried to access them.
There is patchy bits of information around but I've been disappointed whenever I've tried to access them.
There is some support in this area but it is fragmented
There isn't enough, it seems like an exclusive group of businesses are in the running for each contract and it's hard to break into that group.
There isn't much support out there for information / feedback for buyers.
Through Best Western, our group which we are affiliated to.
Through training channels open to the voluntary sector - e.g. CVs etc Notts CC
Time consuming to find your way around
Trial and error. Make acquaintance with people who may be able to guide us (time consuming).



Unfortunately all the courses seems to cost monies and this is prohibitive - seeing the contracts costs monies and small business's especially currently cannot afford to do this
Using Sourceuk.net Supply2gov.co.uk European Journal
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Various - meeting with SP Funders, networking
Varying. Business Link courses helpful.
Very limited.
Very limited.
Very limited.
Very poor
Very poor for microbusinesses
Very slow.
Via a range of websites.
via Business Link
Via the Institute of Independent Business & FSB
We arranged to meet a buying agency in the housing sector to get feedback and awareness
We don't really receive this support currently
We dont really!
We have not previously called for support of this nature
We use Glenigon, Internet, local authority websites, in-house PQQ tender expertise, external marketing consultants.
We were registered with Supply2gov
Weak
web-sites, tender consultants, meet the buyer events, conferences and exhibitions
Well intentioned but not as practical as it could be.
Well-intentioned. Frustrating.

With great difficulty.

Within the organisation / networking / partners etc