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CPD

Procurement Guidance Note

PGN 02/15

(as amended)

Procurement Pipeline
(Publication of Information on
Infrastructure Projects and Supplies &
Services Contracts)

Reissued: 03 June 2016



PROCUREMENT GUIDANCE NOTES

[Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy \(NIPPP\)](#) was approved by the Northern Ireland Executive in 2002. In approving the policy, the Executive took the decision that legislation was not necessary to ensure that Departments, their Agencies, Non Departmental Public Bodies and Public Corporations complied with the policy. Instead, it considered that compliance could be achieved by means of administrative direction.

Procurement Guidance Notes (PGNs) are the administrative means by which Departments are advised of procurement policy and best practice developments. They apply to those bodies subject to NIPPP and also provide useful guidance for other public sector bodies.

PGNs are developed by the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD), in consultation with the Centres of Procurement Expertise (CoPEs), and are subject to the approval of the Procurement Board.

Once endorsed by the Procurement Board, they are issued to the Departments for implementation and copied to CoPEs to develop, if necessary, underpinning procedures supporting the implementation of this guidance in their particular sector. PGNs are also published on the [Department of Finance \(DoF\) website](#).

The following PGN was endorsed by the Procurement Board with effect from 16 April 2015 for use by those bodies subject to NIPPP.

Revision History

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Definition of Terminology

In the preparation of this guide, the term **contractor/supplier** has been used to denote an organisation that contracts directly with a Department, whether it is a supplier, a service provider or a construction contractor.

The term **Department** has been used to refer to those bodies subject to Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy including Departments, Non-Departmental Public Bodies and Public Corporations. A full list of such bodies is available in Annex A of the [Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy \(NIPPP\)](#).

1 BACKGROUND

Public procurement is an important element of the economy in Northern Ireland. Expenditure on the purchase of supplies, services and construction works is a key driver of economic growth in Northern Ireland. It is important to Government that public procurements are visible and easily accessible to suppliers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. Early market visibility of forthcoming opportunities is beneficial to both Government and industry. Pipeline information helps businesses to plan ahead more effectively, to identify other private sector partners with which to form consortia and to identify supply chain opportunities. Through heightened supplier awareness, it enhances competitive tension. This is an important component for Government in the delivery of best value for money.

2 PURPOSE OF THE GUIDANCE

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that the procurement pipeline for Government's infrastructure and supplies and services contracts is transparent, up to date, comprehensive and publicly available. This guidance therefore mandates:

- use of the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland Delivery Tracking System (ISNI DTS) by departments to record details of significant infrastructure investments¹ (for example, planned or underway) and publishing this information to the ISNI Portal (www.isni.gov.uk); and
- the publication on CoPEs' websites of information relating to supplies and services contracts, including collaborative arrangements.

¹ See Section 5.2.

PART 1: INFRASTRUCTURE

3 INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE

- 3.1 Investment in modern infrastructure lays the foundations for economic growth and development. Building roads, bridges, energy and sewage networks, schools and hospitals, create jobs and attracts inward investment.
- 3.2 The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) sets out the forward programme for investment in Northern Ireland's infrastructure. It identifies priority areas for investment and is intended to assist Government and private sector partners to plan ahead in delivering infrastructure projects.
- 3.3 To enable Government to deliver new infrastructure efficiently, it is important that its private sector partners, particularly those in the construction industry, have visibility of the pipeline of forthcoming infrastructure projects in Northern Ireland. To ensure continued competition and interest in public sector infrastructure projects, the pipeline of work (that is, the Regional Infrastructure Plan) must be transparent, comprehensive and up to date.
- 3.4 The ISNI Delivery Tracking System (ISNI DTS) and ISNI Portal were established in 2010. This approach has been developed to enable Departments to publish information relating to their infrastructure projects and is designed to:
- provide the construction industry and those allied to it, with clear visibility of the procurement pipeline and timelines for procurement;
 - provide the public with general information on the major capital investments that have been delivered, are in delivery or being planned; and
 - enable the Executive to monitor the implementation of the ISNI.

4 THE ISNI DTS AND ISNI PORTAL

- 4.1 The **ISNI DTS is a secure database** which can only be accessed by Departmental officials who have obtained registration through the Strategic Investment Board (SIB). To register as a user, or for any queries in relation to the ISNI DTS, Departments should contact SIB at the following email address: ISNIDTS@sibni.org.
- 4.2 The [ISNI Portal](#) is a **public facing website** which draws its information from the ISNI DTS. In relation to the interaction between the ISNI DTS and the ISNI Portal, the following points should be noted:
- programme/project/procurement information held on the ISNI DTS is not automatically published on the ISNI Portal. This is at the discretion of the official responsible for updating information; and
 - where information is published on the ISNI Portal, sensitive values are converted to ranges, for example, forecast dates and financial values are respectively converted to quarter end dates and ranges.
- 4.3 The task of entering and updating information on the ISNI DTS is the responsibility of the funding Departments and delivery bodies taking forward infrastructure investment. SIB does not have a role in updating information, but can assist and advise in respect of training and use of the system. Departments should send requests for training to SIB to the email address identified above.

5 APPLICATION

- 5.1 In addition to providing general information in relation to infrastructure investment through the ISNI Portal, it is imperative that supplier visibility is enhanced by providing estimates of the key dates for the associated procurements. To this end, the ISNI DTS captures estimated or actual dates relating to four key milestones within the procurement and contract lifecycle. These are the:
- Procurement Start Date (date opportunity published);
 - Procurement End Date (date contract awarded);
 - Construction/Delivery Start Date; and
 - Construction/Delivery End Date.
- 5.2 Procurement information relating to the above milestones should be provided where there is an expectation that a contract will be awarded having a **construction value in excess of £500,000**. This threshold applies to all procurements subject to Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy (NIPPP). This includes the procurement of frameworks and construction works contracts awarded under a framework which have a value that exceeds this threshold. A decision tree is attached at Annex B which is intended to assist Departments when deciding what information should be provided on the ISNI DTS.
- 5.3 Information regarding procurements for construction services contracts which have a value in excess of £100,000 must be provided on the ISNI DTS. This gives added confidence to the construction industry of project/programme development and provides visibility of opportunity to those professional services that are allied to the construction industry.
- 5.4 Information relating to the procurement of frameworks for maintenance contracts with a value in excess of £500,000 should also be provided by Departments. These procurements, while not necessarily associated with a specific infrastructure project, are of equal interest to the construction

industry. Therefore the key milestones for procurement and delivery should be provided.

- 5.5 Where a capital grant is being offered towards infrastructure investment and a condition of award is that NIPPP applies, then the principles above remain applicable; that is, procurement milestone information should be provided (relating to the programme/project being supported) where there is an expectation that a contract will be awarded having a construction value in excess of £500,000.

6 RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PROVIDING AND MAINTAINING INFORMATION

- 6.1 Each Department is responsible for ensuring that comprehensive and accurate information relating to its infrastructure investments is published on the ISNI Portal in line with the above guidance. Responsibility for entering and updating information on individual infrastructure investments is the responsibility of the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO). The SRO will establish a project plan for each infrastructure project or programme and report progress against the project plan via the ISNI DTS. SROs may, however, choose to delegate the actual task of updating the system to others but will remain responsible for the adequacy of the information entered on the ISNI DTS and subsequently published to the ISNI Portal.
- 6.2 Where capital investment is being funded by several Departments, the lead Department² will be responsible for ensuring that the information is uploaded and maintained on the ISNI DTS. In all instances, Departments should ensure that a robust business process is in place to ensure that the requirements under this guidance note can be met and consider any risk management and internal audit implications that may arise from it.

² The Lead Department is normally that Department which is providing the majority of the funding. The exception to this is when the Departments involved have agreed to nominate a Lead Department which is not the main funder.

- 6.3 Construction is a distinct area of procurement and NIPPP requires that all construction related contracts, irrespective of value, should be procured through a construction Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE)³. Departments/SROs should consider the need to liaise with their CoPE when entering or updating data on the ISNI DTS to ensure accuracy.
- 6.4 SIB is responsible for ensuring that the ISNI DTS is available to Departments on a full time basis. In addition to providing training to users, SIB can provide advice in relation to entering and updating information and assist Departments with the development of reports to meet their specific needs. Where systems already exist that capture the information required by this guidance note, SIB should be informed so that they can explore the scope for system interface or other means of automating the task of updating information on the ISNI DTS.
- 6.5 Whilst the information entered on the ISNI DTS and published on the ISNI Portal is the responsibility of Departments, SIB undertakes to review the information on a routine basis and, for example, will inform Departments of instances where there is:
- a lack of information or detail;
 - an obvious inaccuracy in the data; or
 - data which is out of date.

³ This does not apply to grant funded construction projects, wherein the CoPE's role may be limited to the provision of advice.

7 MANDATORY INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED ON THE ISNI DTS

7.1 The ISNI DTS is a database designed to capture information on capital investment and associated procurements. The information is held in a hierarchical structure (see Annex A) as described below:

- Level 1 – Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland;
- Level 2 – Government Departments;
- Level 3 – Delivery Unit/Framework;
- Level 4 – Project/Programme/Framework (general information); and
- Level 5 – Activities underpinning the above (more specific information relating to procurement of construction works, and so on)

7.2 Departments are only required to enter and update information at Levels 4 and 5 on the ISNI DTS. Information provided at Level 4 is very general in nature as shown by the table below:

Information to be provided at Level 4	
Name and description of planned capital investment	Typically, this will be the name and description of a project or programme being taken forward by a Department. This could also be the name and description of a framework being established ⁴ .
Total expected value	The total expected value of the investment. NB. This may be higher than the amount being provided through Executive funds; for example, where a third party is making a contribution to the capital costs.

⁴ Except where this information cannot be provided for security reasons.

7.3 The information provided at Level 5 is more specific and descriptive of the ‘investing activities’ that underpin capital investment; for example, the:

- procurement of construction works or related services;
- procurement of a framework;
- award of a construction works contract under a framework; or
- acquisition of land.

Information to be provided at Level 5	
Name and description of the investing activity	Typically, a name to denote a procurement and a description of what it is that is being procured ⁵ . Applicable to the procurement of a framework contract (and also a construction works contract being awarded under an existing framework contract).
Expected Value	Total expected value of the construction works arising from the contract.
Funding Requirement	The approximate timing of funding which may straddle more than one financial year. (NB Not published on the ISNI Portal).
Milestone Dates	See Section 7.5

7.4 As described in previous sections, the focus of the ISNI DTS is capturing and tracking information on procurements being taken forward in line with NIPPP. The information published on the ISNI Portal is representative of the Executive’s procurement pipeline and can form the basis of a Regional Infrastructure Plan.

Of particular importance, is providing the construction industry with the timing of anticipated procurements. This information should be provided as early as

⁵ Except where this information cannot be provided for security reasons.

possible and when it is practicable to do so. Key procurement opportunities normally include the procurement of:

- construction services (to design the infrastructure);
- construction works (to build the infrastructure); and
- frameworks for maintenance contracts.

7.5 The table below is illustrative of the key information to be maintained in relation to procurement opportunities with an expected construction value in excess of £500,000.

Information to be provided (expected construction value > £500,000)	
Procurement Start Date	Expected/actual date that opportunity advertised/completed.
Procurement End Date	Expected/actual date of contract award.
Delivery Start Date	Expected/actual date that performance under the contract commences.
Delivery End Date	Expected/actual date that performance under the contract ends.
Winning Bidder(s)	The name of the contractor that the contract has been awarded to ⁶ .

7.6 Following the procurement, it is important that the construction and wider business industry are aware to whom the contract has been awarded. This information is particularly important to the supply chain as it enables it to approach the successful firm to seek subcontracting and supply opportunities available under the contract. For this reason, the name of the winning bidder should be published on the ISNI Portal, when known.

⁶ Except where this information cannot be provided for security reasons.

7.7 Departments should note that the ISNI Portal is not a procurement portal. It is an information portal which can be used to alert industry to future procurements and delivery timescales for new infrastructure. Therefore, specific procurement information such as Pre Qualification Questionnaires (PQQ) and Invitation To Tender (ITT) documentation should not be provided on the ISNI Portal. Once a procurement commences, information associated with it will normally be made available to the construction industry through the [eTendersNI](#) portal⁷.

8 KEY STAGES FOR PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION

8.1 Information entered on the ISNI DTS is published to the ISNI Portal at the discretion of the official to whom responsibility for updating it has been delegated. As a general principle, information should be published on the ISNI Portal as early as possible, when it is practicable to do so, where there is a strong indication that funding will allow the project(s) to be progressed to market, and where a legitimate expectation may have been raised; through;, for example:

- approval of a Strategic Outline Case;
- where capital investments are specifically mentioned in the Programme for Government, ISNI or Budget documents; or
- where a public announcement has been made or a major capital investment is covered via a news release or press article.

8.2 The design of the ISNI DTS allows considerable scope in how to approach this. For example, when procurement timelines have not yet been fully developed, general information in relation to the capital investment can be published as an interim step (that is, the type of general information provided at Level 4) and in advance of publishing more detailed information relating to

⁷ The implementation of the eTendersNI portal commenced on 1 April 2015. For Government Departments, use of the eTendersNI portal will replace use of the eSourcingNI portal.

expected procurement timelines. In any event, Departments should ensure that sufficient information is published on the ISNI Portal at the earliest possible opportunity. Normally this will be a minimum of six months in advance of the advertisement of key procurements associated with them.

- 8.3 The ISNI DTS is an internal database used by the Executive to monitor the implementation of its Investment Strategy and should be a comprehensive source of reliable information at all times. Departments must, therefore, ensure that the ISNI DTS is populated with sufficiently detailed information and routinely maintained to allow this monitoring to take place. Information should be reviewed, and where necessary updated, on a monthly basis.
- 8.4 In relation to the procurement process itself, procurements will be advertised on the eTendersNI portal where the contract advertisement and PQQ documentation will normally be available. As the CoPE will be responsible for advertising procurements on the eTendersNI portal it is imperative that it notifies the Department/SRO immediately upon publication of the procurement advertisement. The Department/SRO must then ensure that the ISNI DTS is updated to reflect the revised status of the procurement. A similar process needs to be in place at the contract award stage.
- 8.5 After the closing date for submission of PQQs has occurred, it will no longer be possible for firms to access the procurement on the eTendersNI portal, unless the procurement is abandoned and recommenced.

9 HOW INFORMATION ENTERED ON THE ISNI DTS WILL BE USED

9.1 A number of key reports are automatically generated by the ISNI DTS; such as the following.

- **Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) Reports:** On the last Sunday of every month, each MLA automatically receives a report showing the projects and related procurements relevant to their constituency. The report only contains information on capital investments that have been published on the ISNI Portal.
- **Assembly Committee Reports:** As above, except that the report is focussed on the Statutory Committee's area of work (for example, Education, Health, and so on).
- **Permanent Secretary Reports:** On the second last Sunday of every month, each Permanent Secretary receives a report summarising the 'investing activities' planned or underway for their Department (for example, procurements). This includes information not published on the ISNI Portal.

9.2 Departments and SROs should note the timing and recipients of reports generated from the ISNI DTS. Inaccurate or misleading information within these reports has the potential for reputational damage for a Department. Departments should consider the adequacy of their business processes to mitigate the likelihood of these risks arising.

PART 2: SUPPLIES AND SERVICES CONTRACTS

10 SUPPLIES AND SERVICES CONTRACTS

10.1 Similar to infrastructure projects, it is important that suppliers have early visibility of supplies and services contracts before they come to market.

10.2 Supplies and services contracts can be purchased directly by:

- a Department⁸;
- a CoPE on behalf of a Department; or
- CPD on behalf of several Departments and CoPEs through a collaborative arrangement for the purchase of common supplies and services.

11 SUPPLIES AND SERVICES CONTRACTS PURCHASED BY DEPARTMENTS

Departments can undertake their own procurements for supplies and services contracts which have a value below £30,000. However, this arrangement requires Departmental Accounting Officer approval. The service level agreement between the CoPE and the department should reflect this arrangement.

⁸ If the value is below £30,000 and the purchase of these contracts has been approved by the Departmental Accounting Officer.

12 SUPPLIES AND SERVICES CONTRACTS PURCHASED BY A COPE

- 12.1 It is a requirement of NIPPP that the award of all supplies and services contracts which have an estimated value above £30,000 is through a CoPE. As a minimum, information relating to potential contract awards with an estimated value above the relevant EU Threshold will be published on CoPE websites to provide industry with sufficient advance notice to plan. This will form the procurement pipeline for potential supplies and services contracts. The information provided should contain an outline of the goods or services to be procured, anticipated timing and likelihood of the procurement proceeding to market. This information should be regularly refreshed to update suppliers on progress. Where possible, CoPEs should include details of contracts above £30,000. It is important that departments provide this information well in advance of any planned procurement.
- 12.2 Following the procurement, it is important that the wider business industry is aware to whom the contract has been awarded. The name of the firm(s) to whom the contract has been awarded should be published on the CoPE website. This information is particularly important to the supply chain as it enables it to approach the successful firm to seek subcontracting and supply opportunities available under the contract⁹.

13 SUPPLIES AND SERVICES CONTRACTS PURCHASED THROUGH COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENT

- 13.1 Collaborative Procurement has been introduced to centralise the supply of an agreed range of common supplies and services for CPD's customers. They also seek to maximise opportunities for aggregation with other CoPEs to achieve best value for money in support of the delivery of better government services. The Procurement Guidance Note on collaborative

⁹ Except when this information cannot be provided for security reasons.

procurement ([PGN 05/14: Collaborative Procurement](#)) can be found on the DFP website.

13.2 Collaborative Procurements managed by CPD on behalf of various Departments are typically high value contracts which cover the following common categories:

- Energy;
- Fleet;
- Office Supplies;
- ICT commodities;
- Telecoms and Networking Equipment;
- Facilities Management;
- Postal services;
- Travel Services;
- Professional Services including Banking; and
- Advertising Services.

13.3 CPD publishes details of CPD's Supplies and Services Collaborative Procurements on its website on a monthly basis. As CPD procures and manages these contracts, it is responsible for ensuring that the information published on its website is up to date. This information includes details of contracts which are:

- due to commence within the current financial year; and
- collaborative procurements recently awarded

14 SUPPLIES AND SERVICES PROCUREMENT PIPELINE

Unlike infrastructure projects, a DTS is not available for supplies and services contracts. However, eTendersNI provides a link to each CoPE's procurement pipeline which is published on its website. The information on collaborative arrangements is provided on the [CPD Collaborative Procurement Pipeline](#).

Suppliers can access the website to view details of forthcoming procurements for supplies and services contracts.

15 FURTHER INFORMATION

Any queries on this guide should be addressed to:

Construction Procurement Policy Branch
Central Procurement Directorate
2nd Floor East
Clare House
303 Airport Road West
Belfast, BT3 9ED
Phone: 028 9081 6871
Email: ConstructionProcurementPolicy@finance-ni.gov.uk

ANNEXES

ANNEX A: HIERARCHIAL STRUCTURE OF ISNI DTS

The ISNI DTS is a database designed to capture information on capital investment and associated procurements. Information is held in a hierarchical structure as described below:

	Type of Information Provided	Timing of entry onto DTS Database	Timing of publishing information to ISNI Website
Level 1 – Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland	Information is not entered at this level	n/a	n/a
Level 2 – Central Government Departments	As above	n/a	n/a
Level 3 – Delivery Unit/Framework	As above	n/a	n/a
Level 4 – Project/Programme/Framework	Provision of basic information relating to capital investment: essentially a name, description and estimated value of the overall capital investment for a project/programme. Also to be used where a framework will be established (or has been) – providing a name, description and estimated overall value of works to be awarded under the framework. Refer to Section 7.2.	Given the basic nature of information, create at earliest opportunity; for example: when Business Case work is underway, the project/programme appears in Programme for Government, ISNI, the subject of a Ministerial announcement or press article. The same applies where a framework is being established.	Publish on web as soon as possible – information provided at Level 4 is general in nature. NB: Information published at Level 4 does not form part of the 'Procurement Pipeline'. Information published is included in reports to MLAs and Assembly Committees.
Level 5 – Investing Activity	Typically, provision of information relating to the procurement lifecycle(s) underpinning capital investment and expected timing of spend; for example, procurement start and end, delivery start and end, estimated annual investment value. Applicable to construction and related non-construction procurements (for example, appointment of design team) as well as when a Capital Grant is being awarded and the application of NIPPP is a condition of award (refer to Section 5.5). Where a framework is being/has been established the procurement start and end, delivery start and end and estimated annual investment value of that framework should be provided. Where a construction works contract with a value in excess of £500,000 is being awarded under a framework then it is only necessary to provide information on the delivery start and end dates together with the estimated annual investment value of that work.	Information should be entered where reasonable estimates can be made in relation to anticipated milestone dates for procurement/contract award and investment profile (refer to Section 7.3). Information should be reviewed on a monthly basis and, where necessary, updated. The name of the winning bidder should be entered on the ISNI DTS following contract award.	Publish on web as soon as practicable. Procurement information published forms part of the 'Procurement Pipeline' and is relied upon by the construction industry and those allied to it. Information published is included in reports to MLAs and Assembly Committees.

ANNEX B: DECISION TREE FOR PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION ON ISNI DTS

