

## Let's Talk Frameworks!

We often get asked about frameworks - what are they? How do they work and what are the benefits? To help we have put together a simple guide of everything you need to know, including the different types of frameworks and suggested frameworks for the education sector. So, let's talk frameworks...

### What is a framework?

A framework is an agreement between a public sector central buyer and a supplier or group of suppliers with agreed terms. Under these terms, contracts can be placed for the goods, works or services covered by the framework agreement. They are designed to provide the public sector with a pre-defined route to market which covers your requirements.

### Who manages the framework?

Frameworks can be set up and managed by a variety of parties. Local Authorities can set up frameworks for organisations in their area. Public Sector Buying Organisation (PSBOs), who are designed to assist public sector organisations with their buying needs might establish a framework. Or other public sector organisations who might set up a framework for their own organisation can allow other public sector entities to access and benefit from them too.

### How do frameworks work?

Unlike a full tender, a framework does not usually result in a delivery contract with the supplier, but instead an agreement on the minimum terms and conditions for the order placed by the purchaser. Therefore, any contract to deliver goods or services is made only after an order is placed by a public sector purchaser, with each order having its own contract; this is referred to as a call off.

### What are the different types of frameworks?

Different frameworks operate slightly differently, providing different routes to market and supplier flexibility.

- **Single supplier frameworks:** these offer a quick and simple route to market as it only offers a direct award approach. You'll receive a quote for your requirements directly from the supplier and place a contract with them through the framework. There is no need to seek additional quotes for compliance purposes as the necessary tendering activities are all undertaken by the framework provider.
- **Multi supplier frameworks:** these frameworks have a number of pre-qualified suppliers that are eligible to deliver your contract. They work by offering direct award or a mini competition approach. The direct award route is based on the price of your requirements, enabling you to award the cheaper supplier on the framework. The mini competition approach invites all the relevant suppliers on the framework to submit a quotation or bid for your requirements. The framework will help you to determine which supplier is most suitable for your needs. This approach allows you to place a higher emphasis on the quality of the service compared to a direct award, whilst ensuring you receive best value for money. Regardless of how many bids you receive via this route, the process will be compliant.
- **Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS):** another type of framework is a DPS, these are becoming more popular as they allow any supplier to join the framework once they prove they are

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eligible to deliver the service. After passing the pre-qualification checks, the supplier can then bid for your contract in a fully compliant manner.

- **Serviced frameworks:** these new frameworks will allocate a consultant to assist and advise you through your procurement (at no extra cost to you). They offer direct award, mini competitions, supply chain solutions and contract management, ensuring all outcomes are most favourable for you. These frameworks can rapidly onboard suppliers that aren't already part of their supply chain so you can compliantly direct award to your preferred or incumbent supplier.

### What are the benefits of using a framework?

There are many benefits to using a framework such as:

- **Timescales:** frameworks provide the flexibility to compliantly appoint your new supplier with a much shorter timescale, compared to the full open tender process. Depending on the framework, the timeline can be reduced from six to eight months to as little as two to three months, or even less depending on your requirements.
- **Costs:** frameworks can also help you save money on your goods or services. Utilising a framework can lead to economies of scale, reduced administrative burden and consequent savings for your school or Trust. In addition, as frameworks benchmark the costs before you award the supplier you can be sure you are receiving the best price. This is particularly helpful if you wish to roll over a contract with your existing supplier.
- **Compliance:** frameworks are a compliant route to market and are designed for any value of spend. Using a framework agreement can take away a portion of the work required to ensure you meet procurement legislation.
- **Reassurance:** as suppliers have been pre-qualified before being awarded a place on the framework agreement, you can be confident in the fact they have the experience and expertise to deliver your contract. The checks cover technical and professional ability, track record and financial stability, providing the reassurance your service will be in good hands. Furthermore, as the framework has done all the checks for you, you don't need to take the time to undertake this task yourselves.
- **Supplier options:** a framework will give you the chance to expand your pool of potential tenderers to companies which you may not have known about otherwise.
- **Support:** during the process, many frameworks offer templates for you to use such as draft specifications, utilising these will not only save you time but help you create a strong bid. Some frameworks will also offer support once your contract is in place such as contract management advice, help with contractual issues and running a successful contract.

### What are the downsides to frameworks?

Traditional frameworks can be rigid with fixed suppliers as once the initial tendering process is completed additional suppliers aren't able to join until it reopens, which can typically take 4-5 years. Therefore, if you have a particular supplier or incumbent in mind for your next contract, they won't be able to bid if they are not on the framework. The introduction of DPS has resolved some of these issues, but the process for onboarding new suppliers can be quite time consuming. If you are looking for a quick process a serviced framework might be your best solution.

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Frameworks also require some knowledge and expertise to be able to manage them effectively and pick the right route to market for your contract. Therefore, hands-off frameworks might not provide the right support for you. Especially where the contract requires a level of expertise, such as ICT or catering, in these cases a serviced framework or bespoke procurement can lead to a better service and value outcome.

### Are frameworks expensive?

Frameworks charge a levy to the suppliers who win work through them, but it is usually a low percentage typically between 0.5% and 5%. Although buyers can be hesitant to use a framework, once you factor in the advantages, such as reduced time, support and compliance, the levy is likely to be outweighed by the potential costs of running your own full open tender. Even with the levy charge, frameworks are designed to help you achieve best value for money; in order to receive a place on the framework, suppliers often apply a bulk buying cost reduction on their goods and services. You can also receive advantageous pricing due to the long-term relationship formed with the supplier.

### Suggested frameworks for the education sector



Everything FM is a fully serviced framework offering direct award and mini competitions. It is designed to be compliant, fast and flexible so you can onboard your incumbent or preferred supplier quickly and compliantly.

From catering to cleaning, grounds and buildings maintenance to construction projects - you can achieve best value whilst significantly reducing the time you spend on procurement. [To find out more click here.](#)

Everything ICT makes buying the ICT you want and need easier, faster and cheaper. The public sector framework is free to use, fully compliant and extremely flexible, their "customer first" approach makes them popular in education and across the Public Sector. [To find out more click here.](#)



The Department for Education also have a list of recommended frameworks on their website; these range from facilities management, energy and utilities, ICT, finance, furniture, recruitment, HR and more. These frameworks provide a range of benefits for schools and are assessed for compliance with procurement regulations, ease of use, suitability, and value for money.

If you have any further questions on frameworks or would like to discuss using a framework for your next procurement get in touch at [contact@schoolsbuyingclub.com](mailto:contact@schoolsbuyingclub.com)

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