

Short Guidance for Market Engagement and Stakeholder Dialogue

This short guidance builds on work carried out within the SF4C project and is intended to help local governments organise market engagement or dialogue in the context of public procurement for food and catering services. It includes practical information, examples, and references drawn from SF4C and other projects.

What is market dialogue?

Market dialogues are **public engagement processes** that aim to create a dialogue with supply chain actors and potential bidders. Market dialogues help to: a) communicate your procurement strategy, criteria and goals; b) discuss procurement challenges and opportunities c) consult the implementation of new criteria that you want to use in the new tenders; d) review with your contractors details of contract clauses on social and environmental criteria and their practical implementation during contract management; and e) obtain ideas to develop next tenders.

When can it be carried out?

Market engagement may take place **before, during and after a formal tender procedure has been launched**. Prior to tendering (3-6 months), it is typically used to identify potential suppliers and relevant product/services (see what the market has to offer), and to give suppliers an opportunity to prepare for the tender, for example by forming partnerships. Before publishing a call for tender, the contracting authority may meet with bidders. Following a tender, debriefing may be offered to bidders.

How can market dialogues be organised?

Market dialogues can take various forms including **online and in-person** and have different levels of importance and/or purpose. Online events are less work intense and can be organised to establish transparent communication and share info about a procurement strategy, your goals and short-term activities regarding your criteria and social and environmental targets. Although the in-person events require more time to be arranged, they are more fruitful in terms of exchange and can be organised to discuss the existing supply chains, the need for alignment, development and planning and bring bidders attention to writing and preparing tenders.

Who should participate?

Participants in market dialogues range **from the relevant public authority staff** (contracting/ procurement side – an initiator) **to representatives of farmers, farmers associations, cooperatives, primary producers, suppliers and catering and food service providers** as well as other relevant stakeholders such as **NGOs or other public buyers**. On the contracting authority side, market engagement should involve **procurement staff** and, where **relevant end users such as suppliers, industry** etc. It is advisable to involve **environmental/sustainability staff**. Suppliers should be encouraged to involve those staff who will actually be involved in delivering the contract, not just marketing or sales people.

A few steps to follow when organising and conducting a market dialogue/engagement

Step 1 – Set your goals

- Plan your event according to your goal: Is this market dialogue linked to a specific tender you are planning or rather a general dialogue with the market about supplier capabilities or our strategic goals?
- Know your bidders: conduct market research
- Make sure that contract clauses, criteria and tenders requirement are understood from the start by everyone involved in the procurement process
- Publish a forward procurement plan if you have one (e.g. Annual Procurement Plan)
- Publish a press release on the event announcing the goal, methods and expected results (if it is a public event)

Step 2 – Choose your method

- Choose the format of the planned meeting:
- Individual or group meetings e.g., Meet the Buyer/Meet the Supplier event
- Trade show in which suppliers can pitch their offers
- Meetings with industry bodies
- Panel discussions and question and answer sessions
- Interactive workshops e.g., World Café
- Phone calls, Zoom, Skype, MS Teams
- Allow food suppliers site visits (e.g., visits to the schools)
- 'Show-and-tell' to allow suppliers to explain their proposed solutions

Step 3 – Carry out the event

- Create an open and friendly environment for people to share their views
- Have a good moderator: facilitation is a key
- Engage bidders and allow networking between suppliers
- Take notes and document the event

Step 4 – Follow up

- Create an open and friendly environment for people to share their views
- Have a good moderator: facilitation is a key
- Engage bidders and allow networking between suppliers
- Take notes and document the event

**It's time for
a new menu**



Additional tips to engage the market

- Start early and add a date for the beginning of the market engagement to your supply schedule.
- To save time, organise an online dialogue through a portal, with a limited number of questions laid out to be answered anonymously (example from the City of Copenhagen) and followed by in-person meetings.
- Make sure that suppliers confirm as part of the tender that they have priced their bids independently and have not entered into any anti-competitive agreements with other suppliers.
- Use market engagement to support demand driven innovation and sustainability impacts

References and links to Best Practices and Detailed Guidance

- ➔ Market Engagement Best Practice Report from the [SPP Regions project](#) (covers all sectors including Food)
- ➔ [How to engage the market: A step by step guide for dialogue events](#) (focused on the ICT sector, however information is transferable to the Food sector)
- ➔ Engaging the Market in Public Procurement from the [INNOCAT project](#) (on Food sector)
- ➔ [GPP Training toolkit: Module 6: Market Engagement](#)

Find out more on Healthy and Sustainable Public Food Procurement [on the website](#).

What targets and criteria should be included in food and catering tenders?

