

Every small business in the UK will now have free access to thousands of lower value government contracts on the Government's website www.supply2.gov.uk.

For three years, supply2.gov.uk has advertised thousands of public sector procurement opportunities worth up to £100,000 – making the website ideally suited to small and medium sized businesses.

The fee that was previously charged to search the site across the UK will now be removed, providing firms with better access to public sector contracts to help their businesses grow.

Business Minister Shriti Vadera said:

“Small businesses are facing significant pressure in this downturn and new contracts are essential for their return to growth.

“We want to support small businesses by making it easier to access the thousands of Government procurement opportunities that are directly relevant to them.

“This free service is an interim step along the way to introducing a single website for all public sector contracts next year.”

Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Ian Pearson said:

“Small and medium sized businesses are a crucial part of the UK economy and in these challenging times it is essential that we support them in as many ways as possible.

“By introducing a free to use national search service we are helping to create a level playing field on which SMEs can compete with their larger counterparts. This will realise benefits for SMEs, the economy as a whole, and help drive further innovation in public services.

Debasish Sen, Federation of Small Businesses Trade and Industry committee member, said:

“The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) has been working closely with the Government to put better policies on procurement in place and we welcome this first step to create a free, national, on-line portal that small firms can use to apply for public sector contracts next year.

“FSB research shows that half of SMEs do not tender for public contracts because the process is too complicated and the contracts are too difficult to find in the first place. Making supply2.gov free to access is a first step in the right direction and something the FSB has been pushing for, for a long time.”

Searching for lower-value contracts across the UK was previously only available as part of a commercial subscription service, which cost up to £180 per year.

This announcement is a move towards delivering on a key recommendation outlined in the Glover Review - that by the end of 2010 all public sector contract opportunities should be accessible through a single, free online web portal.

Notes to editors

1. Supply2.gov.uk is the official government portal for the advertisement of lower-value (typically below £100,000) contract opportunities, and provides small businesses with access to lower-value public sector contracts.
2. The site allows businesses to view contracts in a single location, reducing the time taken to source opportunities, unites buyers and suppliers and is cited as a best practice means of advertising lower-value contract opportunities by HM Treasury and the European Commission.
3. Since it launched in June 2006, www.supply2.gov.uk has published more than 132,000 contract notices with many under the value of £100,000 – making them particularly relevant to SMEs. Over 6,800 public sector buyers have registered including local government, health, education and housing authorities, emergency services and the Olympic Delivery Authority.
4. Anne Glover's report in to SME participation in public sector procurement: *Accelerating the SME economic engine*, published alongside the Pre-Budget Report in November 2008, made 12 recommendations aimed at breaking down the barriers faced by small businesses when looking to supply goods and services to the public sector. The principal recommendation was the development of a single, free, easy to search portal for all contract opportunities over £20,000. The full report can be assessed via the following link: [Glover Report](#).
5. The Office of Government Commerce is working closely with the Department for Business Innovation and Skills on the implementation of the Glover recommendations.
6. Value added services, such as daily email alerts, will continue to be offered for which a subscription fee will be required.
7. The www.supply2.gov.uk service is managed by BiP Solutions Limited. BiP Solutions proactively worked with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to facilitate the free search facility.