

ProClass

Enhancing the South East Business Portal

South East Business Portal



Summary

The South East Business Portal (SEBP) has been developed by software supplier Due North, to help local suppliers register with Improvement & Efficiency South East (IESE, formerly SECE), in conjunction with the 74 local authorities in the region.

Using ProClass means that suppliers can identify categories, which are described in plain language and not by codes, and register accurately for opportunities that are appropriate for their businesses.

Background

IESE provides an effective support network for the 74 councils and nine Fire & Rescue Services in the region. One of the key tools has been the SEBP – a web-based tool which allows the uploading of current local authority contracts and forthcoming business opportunities across all service areas in the region. A central feature of the SEBP is the facility to upload contract documentation, giving authorities the ability to share contract documentation and best practice, leading to savings in time and third-party costs.

The Business Challenge

Local authorities in the south-east are committed to achieving savings through collaboration in both back and front office services. An estimated 33% of external spend goes on commodities or services, on which councils can generate quick-win savings through switching to better contracts or working together to put in place new lower cost arrangements.

Authorities also have to conform to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) as they move towards a more transparent approach to procurement. Opportunities for local suppliers to bid for council business need to be published in a way that ensures visibility and ease of registering interest against advertised opportunities. Without a vehicle to collect the necessary information together in one place, achieving these aims proved extremely time-consuming, with both local authorities and suppliers having to search individual websites to find the data they needed.

The Business Solution

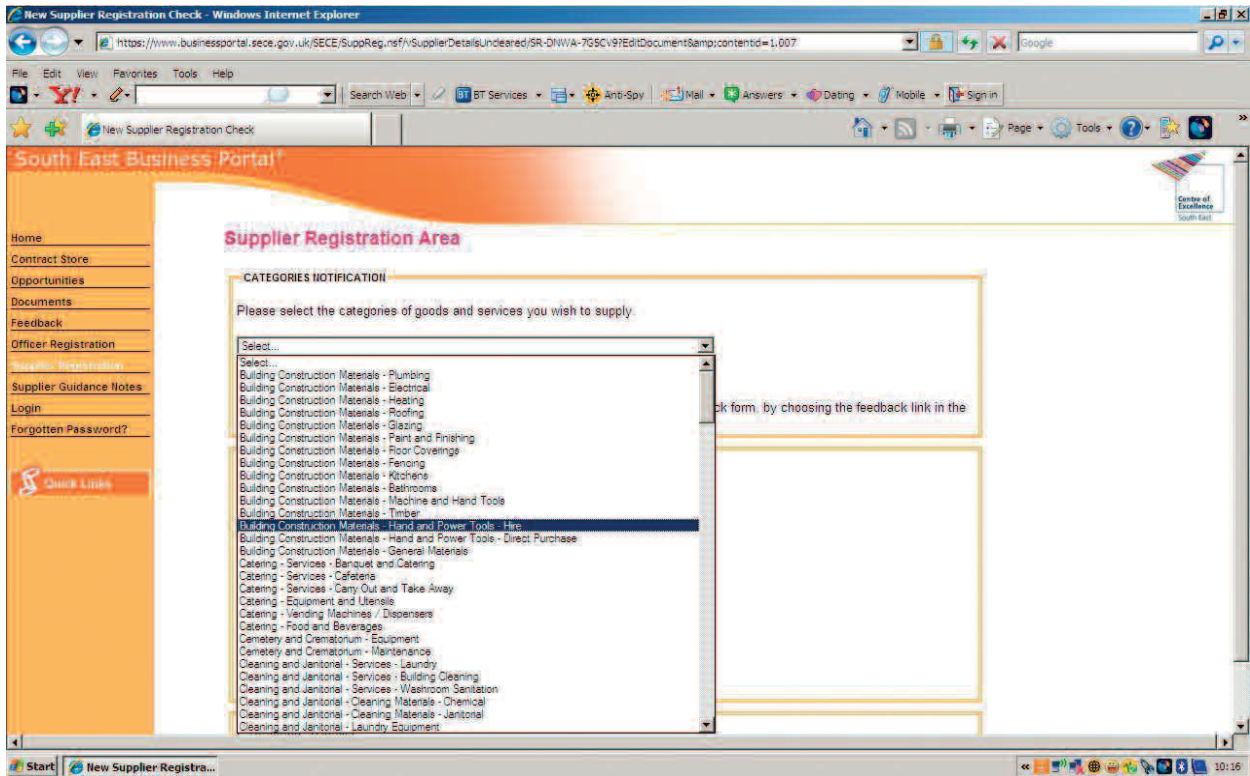
Working in partnership with Due North, IESE developed the SEBP. Registration is free and it is available to all local authority and fire authority officers in the south-east and all suppliers.

Most of the existing classification systems have thousands of codes to choose from and the difficulty in finding the right one has led to a great deal of miscoding; making data analysis less than reliable.

IESE therefore decided to use ProClass to categorise the contracts and opportunities contained within the portal.

“In effect, this meant a plain language approach to all of the information and one which both suppliers and local authorities alike would be able to adopt and use easily, and hopefully the incidence of miscoding would be greatly reduced.”

Alan Gray Managing Director of Due North



The introduction of ProClass into the SEBP means that all contracts and opportunities are classified in the same way and prospective suppliers are able to register their interest in supplying goods or services – by category – when an opportunity is posted which matches their profile.

Similarly, officers in authorities are now able to search category as well as supplier, making the searches more accurate and effective.

The SEBP has been a success with IESE reporting savings of £1.5m by 31 March 2008. This can be attributed to the one-off procurement of a portal for the whole region at £10,000 per authority, and savings on advertising costs and officer time through using the SEBP, rather than accessing a number of sources for the information, particularly where the contract records had documentation attached.

Suppliers are now empowered to ensure that they are only alerted to opportunities which are relevant to them, ie. only for the goods and services they actually supply. ProClass saves them time and effort by not having to register against stacks of codes.

“ProClass descriptions are designed to be easy to understand and use and are aligned to local government expenditure.”

Jennie Rhodes Business Portal Manager

Contacts

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