



## Why the third sector should collaborate to secure public contracts

Scotland's social enterprise sector is on the up. According to the 2017 Social Enterprise Census there are an estimated 5,600 social enterprises currently operating in Scotland, 8% higher since the first Social Enterprise Census in 2015. Social enterprises contribute £2 billion each year to the Scottish economy.

The reality on the ground, however, can be quite different. The majority of social enterprises (57%), operate with an annual income of £100,000 or less, and 51% of respondents to the Social Enterprise Census Survey highlighted insecure or declining grant funding as a key challenge going forward. Despite this, only 20% of social enterprises have bid for public contracts to expand their sources of income.

Against a challenging backdrop the public sector in Scotland continues to spend in excess of £11 billion each year on purchasing a very wide range of goods and services. The Scottish Government recognises the considerable purchasing power of the country's public sector and wishes to rapidly increase the number and range of social enterprises involved in shaping and delivering Scotland's public services.

There is sometimes a perception that only large organisations can bid for contracts with the public sector but this not necessarily the case. By forming a new partnership or consortium, groups of smaller organisations can bid and win contracts too, making it easier to compete for contracts rather than going it alone.

Additional benefits of collaboration can include creating efficiencies or reducing costs through shared infrastructure; a stronger, united voice; improving co-ordination of services; and better outcomes for clients.

There are a number of different examples of successful, existing consortia in Scotland, including the [CRNS Reuse Consortium](#), [Scottish Communities for Health and Wellbeing](#), and the [Fife Employability and Training Consortium](#).

[Partnership for Procurement](#) (P4P) was established in May 2017 as a result of the Social Enterprise Strategy to support the development of new partnerships or consortia, as well as to provide one-to-one support with tendering for contracts, either individually or as a group. Support is offered to all third sector organisations in Scotland.

The project is managed by Senscot, but is a partnership between Senscot, Social Firms Scotland, the Scottish Community Alliance, and Cooperative Development Scotland. P4P builds on the success of the previous Partnership and Procurement Support Service.

The [P4P website](#) has a range of resources which you can access, including a 10 Stage Guide to Procurement, case studies, templates, details of upcoming tender opportunities, events, and the refreshed [Ready for Business Third Sector Register](#).



P4P has also recently launched its Collaboration Toolkit and online survey. The toolkit is a comprehensive guide for organisations who are thinking about forming a new consortium. Organisations can use the guide to track their progress and as a checklist. It has been prepared with three phases that follow the typical lifecycle of a collaborative project. You can download the Collaboration Toolkit on the [P4P resources page](#).

Social enterprises and wider third sector can achieve much more by working together. If you would like to find out more about collaboration please visit the P4P website and download the Collaboration Toolkit guide. Alternatively, you can email [info@p4p.org.uk](mailto:info@p4p.org.uk) or phone 0141 280 2560 to speak with a member of the P4P team.

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