

WE CAN BUILD BETTER

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HOMES
SCHOOLS
PARKS
WORKPLACES
LIBRARIES
UNIVERSITIES
VILLAGES
TOWNS
CITIES
COMMUNITIES

WE CAN BUILD BETTER

**PUBLIC
PROCUREMENT**

WE CAN BUILD BETTER PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

WE CAN BUILD BETTER

A manifesto for the urgent reform of the Irish public procurement system

ABOUT We Can Build Better

We Can Build Better is an independent voluntary group of architects, engineers and other construction professionals campaigning for positive changes to how we build in Ireland, focusing on the quality of the publicly-funded buildings and places we are making today. We are trying to highlight some issues with how our state procures its buildings. We think that the state is missing key opportunities to raise the quality of life for our citizens. Our ongoing aim is to create debate and discussion about how we build publicly-funded buildings in Ireland, with a view to influencing procedural and legislative changes that lead to better places for us all to live, work and relax. Our aims are as follows;

TO CAMPAIGN for the best long-term value in the construction of our publicly-funded buildings and places.

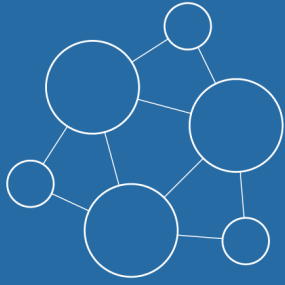
TO CONTRIBUTE to the creation of jobs within a sustainable and healthy construction ecosystem, through liberating the full available resources of the sector by showing how the state can engage the skills and talents of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME).

TO PROPOSE how to fix historical problems with how the state procures the design of its buildings, which are currently overly bureaucratic and accessible to only small parts of the construction sector - leading to resource bottle necks and quality breakdown.

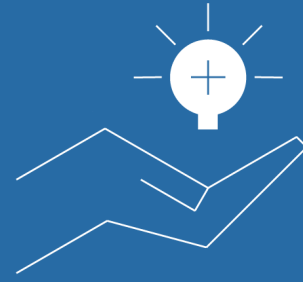
TO CHAMPION a progressive approach to the design and construction quality of publicly-funded buildings in line with other European countries - giving benefits to the daily lives of our citizens, and allowing the country to attract investment by presenting desirable cities and towns to live in.

TO DISSEMINATE to other publicly-funded sectors our work supporting Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in the reform of public procurement.

Our Proposals:



Social Value Matters



Value isn't All About Cost



Talent is Adaptable



Size isn't Everything



Experts are Useful



Its All about the People



Simplicity Rules



The EU is not the Problem

Social Value Matters		
The Issue	What Needs to Change	Our Recommendations
Public procurement currently favours large companies which tend to be based in large population centres. As a result, the social value of public procurement isn't distributed to the widest territory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the wider social value of employing local SME companies • Acknowledge the environmental benefits of employing companies local to the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage collaboration and joint venture submissions between large and SME companies • Large companies who collaborate with SME's score higher in assessment.

Value Isn't Always About Cost		
The Issue	What Needs to Change	Our Recommendations
Public procurement encourages low cost tendering without adequate mechanisms for comparing the quality of the service being offered between tenders. A low cost for a poor service does not give value for money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that quality of service is intrinsic to value for money. • Acknowledge that an adequate service can't be provided below a specific base cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a fee range for a service within which tenderers bid and then assess tenders primarily on quality. • Tenderers who bid towards the top of the range must demonstrate what extra they bring to the service

Talent is Adaptable		
The Issue	What Needs to Change	Our Recommendations
Primary consideration is given to companies who have recently carried out work which is similar in scale and type to the work being tendered for. This produces a closed loop which excludes new entrants to the market. It is anti-competitive and can lead to a monopoly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that the successful delivery of a future service is not dependent on only having carried out work which is similar in scale and type before. • Acknowledge that aspects of projects can be similar between different building and project types. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden the experience criteria to include qualitative assessment of previous work, even if it is not similar in scale or type. • Include expert professionals on panels to assess the scope and nature of previous work.

Size Isn't Everything

The Issue	What Needs to Change	Our Recommendations
Current suitability assessment criteria equate turnover with capacity, assuming that the greater the size of the company, the greater the scale of individual projects it can undertake. Most large or very large projects within a design company will be carried out by a team of max. 4-6 people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledge that turnover is not always an appropriate method of assessing capacity and that minimum turnover thresholds exclude SME's.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider a maximum turnover threshold for specific projects to encourage SME participation in public procurement.

Experts Are Useful

The Issue	What Needs to Change	Our Recommendations
It is commonplace for tenders for professional services to be assessed by panels which have no expert knowledge in the sector. Because of this, quality assessment tends to be about how the service is delivered, rather than the service itself or product the service will produce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledge that tenders should not be assessed by panels which have no knowledge of the service or product they are procuring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include construction professionals in every assessment team for tenders for construction professional services.

It's All About The People

The Issue	What Needs to Change	Our Recommendations
Current procurement practice views companies who can present a long-standing variety of previous work as less risky. But procuring a service is about procuring people. A company's portfolio is not necessarily a reflection of the experience of current or future staff members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledge that due to a misapprehension of risk, talent in small or young companies is being overlooked.• Acknowledge that SME's provide direct access to experience and talent which is not necessarily reflected in the age or size of the company	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attach a greater assessment weight to people's CV's and experience, especially SME owner/directors who provide continuous expertise to a project

Simplicity Rules		
The Issue	What Needs to Change	Our Recommendations
<p>The main purpose of public procurement is to provide transparency. In reality it is overly complex and made up of opaque processes and terminology. Tender briefing documents are often vague, open to interpretation, and difficult to price.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that the overly complex nature of public procurement excludes SME's • Acknowledge that poor quality tender documentation leads to wasted resources and poor tender returns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage greater SME participation by simplifying public procurement. • Ensure briefing documents are clear, concise and contain a quantifiable schedule of requirements • Create a centralised tender 'passport' which avoids duplication of information between tenders e.g. ESPD (European Single Procurement Document)

The EU is not the problem		
The Issue	What Needs to Change	Our Recommendations
<p>A common perception is that the overly bureaucratic nature of Irish public procurement is due to compliance with EU Directives. Other EU countries do not implement the same level of complexity and bureaucracy in their public procurement systems e.g. Denmark, Belgium, UK (former EU member).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that the Irish procurement system is a national interpretation of the EU Directives • Acknowledge that the Irish interpretation deviates from the actual requirements of EU regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn from best procurement practice in other EU countries, which includes design competitions, centralised procurement documents, lack of frameworks or bundling of work into lots, and identification of active measures for engaging SME's.

A resilient construction industry is a diverse construction industry. Ireland needs to use the full scope of its architecture, engineering and surveyors resource - large, medium and small companies. Increased SME participation in public work will ensure that the ecosystem works at a variety of scales. Allowing new companies into the system will increase competition, foster innovation, and encourage the diversification of skills. All of this will increase capacity and available talent in our public construction sector.

Public procurement produces public buildings and places; including schools, parks, housing, hospitals, public offices, theatres, and libraries. This is the stuff of our every day. The design of these spaces and places affects our lives. We should be striving for innovation, creativity and quality within our public buildings.

We can make decisions now which mean we can build better for today and the generations to come.

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