NEPRO³ Professional Services Solution

User Guide

Working in partnership:

nepo®

Bloom*

*Opening up procurement®

What our clients say

> Working with Bloom to access the NEPRO solution has ensured we realise all the expected benefits from a neutral vendor approach in procuring and managing specialist professional services. They are a true partner and are continually looking to improve the way we work and ultimately the services provided by the suppliers.

Darren Knowd, Chief Procurement Officer
Durham County Council

> Working with Bloom means we get access to the best choice of small and large suppliers, especially supporting local small and medium enterprise suppliers. Working with a dynamic and competitive supply chain gives us flexibility, greater supplier choice and access to the latest thinking. Overall that delivers better value for money for the tax payer.

Kieran Topping, Service Director - Commercial Services - Cornwall Council

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Hello and welcome

NEPRO³ is the new and improved solution for the procurement of professional services; it is the only solution of its kind within the UK public sector marketplace.

This guide has been designed to help you get started with the NEPRO³ solution. It explains important information you need to know including, NEPRO³ benefits, the Bloom tender process, NEPRO³ categories, pricing information, and, how to access the solution.

NEPRO³ overview

The faster compliant alternative to traditional public sector frameworks

NEPRO³ is a compliant procurement framework which assists the UK public sector to buy and manage specialist professional services from a choice of regional and national suppliers. It allows buyers to move quickly and at the lowest possible cost, whilst achieving better outcomes.

Bloom Procurement Services have been the UK's exclusive operator of the NEPRO solution, on behalf of NEPO (the North East Procurement Organisation), since its original inception in 2012. NEPRO³ is the third evolution of the solution which will open up procurement opportunities for public sector buyers and suppliers alike.

NEPRO³ delivers substantial savings to the public sector. On average, public sector buyers currently using the NEPRO solution save on average 14% against budget.

For suppliers, NEPRO³ opens up the market, removing the traditional barriers of marketing and selling to public sector bodies. The advantage to suppliers, especially smaller SMEs and VCSEs (voluntary, community and social enterprises), is that once they are registered and accredited with NEPRO³ they no longer have to go through time-consuming pre-qualification stages, instead they compete on a level playing field against larger suppliers for contracts they might not otherwise have access to.

About NEPO

Established in 1976, NEPO undertakes high-value procurement in major strategic areas of spend in conjunction with the UK public sector.

NEPO's portfolio of procurement solutions covers a range of categories including construction, energy, facilities management, fleet, food, ICT, social care and professional services. Many of NEPO's solutions are available for use by public sector bodies throughout the UK.

About Bloom

Bloom deliver the NEPRO^3 solution on behalf of NEPO.

Bloom provides a full end-to-end marketplace solution for the procurement, contract management and payment of all professional services. From local authorities, housing associations and central government departments to NHS trusts, not-for-profit, emergency services and education, Bloom supports and assists the entire UK public sector to buy and manage professional services from a choice of regional and national suppliers. Bloom enables buyers to move quickly and at the lowest possible cost, whilst achieving better outcomes.

Recognised by Porge Research as one of the fastest growing professional services companies in the UK, Bloom specialise in bringing together a community of buyers and suppliers to help the public sector buy professional services better, giving the best choice for buyers and more business opportunities for suppliers, big or small.

The evolution of NEPRO

In 2011, NEPO, in collaboration with the twelve North East local authorities, found an opportunity to procure specialist professional services in a different way. At the time, the sourcing of specialist professional services had unclear parameters and budget visibility which was leading to high levels of public sector expenditure and inefficiency.

The original NEPRO solution was launched by NEPO in 2012 to give public sector buyers access to a constantly evolving supply chain, whilst providing efficiency savings and a compliant route to market. Public sector spend through the original NEPRO solution totalled an annual expenditure of £25m.

Following the success of the original solution, NEPRO^2 was launched in 2015 with a new focus of promoting the solution further across the wider public sector and removing the typical barriers to entry for the national supply chain. A total of 330 public sector buying organisations have accessed NEPRO^2 with a combined expenditure of £0.5 billion - 70% of that expenditure delivered by SMEs.

Launched in September 2019 NEPRO^3 continues to address all core requirements of NEPRO and NEPRO^2 however, as the third evolution of the solution, a greater focus is given to public sector buyer and supplier communities. NEPRO^3 allows participating buying organisations to communicate, share best practices and solve common problems. The supply chain also encourages collaboration and working together, to access and deliver against the more strategic and complex requirements.

Bloom has been the UK's exclusive operator of the NEPRO solution since its original inception and will continue to operate NEPRO^3 throughout the lifetime of the solution.

nepro3™

NEPRO³: key facts

- Delivery Partner: Bloom Procurement Services
- Start Date: 01 September 2019
- Solution Duration: 4-years, with the option to extend by up to 2 x 2-year periods
- Available for use by: All UK Public Sector Contracting Authorities
- OJEU Reference:
  - 2018/S 184416263 - Prior Information Notice
  - 2019/S 010-018943 - Contract Notice
  - 2019/S 125-306374 - Contract Award Notice

Compliance:

This solution has been arranged in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and followed NEPO's robust approval route. The solution has also been procured in line with the expectations of external funding bodies.

Duration of NEPRO³:

The solution agreement will cover from 01/09/2019 to 31/08/2023. There is an option for two 2-year extensions. The first extension has now been enacted to take the solution to 31/08/2025. Should a second extension be enacted the framework shall be extended to 31/08/2027.

Who can use NEPRO³?

The solution is available to every public sector organisation in the UK including local authorities, housing associations, central government departments, NHS trusts, emergency services, not-for-profit and education.

Technology platform:

All projects are managed via Bloom's cloud-based project management system Pro-vide 2.0. Pro-vide 2.0 is a purpose-built online sourcing and project management system with real-time reporting and management information. The platform is a hub where public sector buyers and professional services suppliers come together to manage and report on projects.

The NEPRO³ solution is delivered by Bloom with category experts on hand to ensure access to the all relevant information to enable end-to-end project delivery and success:

- Full end-to-end marketplace solution for the procurement, contract management and payment of all professional services.
- The ability to work with regional and national suppliers.
- Payment is on delivery of outcomes when milestones are achieved and signed off by the buyer.
- Mini-competition or direct award routes.

NEPRO³ solution scope

The NEPRO³ procurement process is fully compliant and every step is auditable, from business case, to approvals, to supplier performance.

The role of Bloom is to deliver successful outcomes. Bloom helps buyers to create the best project specification, ensuring milestones and outcomes are clearly defined. Bloom also helps buyers select the right supplier from an exclusive community of thousands of pre-accredited providers, who are paid only when a project is delivered to expectations.

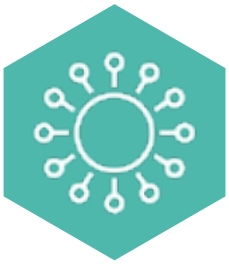
To suppliers, NEPRO³ offers an efficient route to genuine public sector business opportunities across the UK. All Bloom suppliers go through a simple yet robust accreditation process.

NEPRO³ is available across 20 categories and over 340 sub-categories of professional services spend. All contractual obligations are defined and agreed upfront, which provides peace of mind and a full audit trail for governance.

The list below illustrates the overarching categories that govern the scope of services available under NEPRO³:

1. **Asset Management & Delivery**
2. **Business Strategy**
3. **Commercialisation & Public Services**
4. **Construction, Design & Engineering**
5. **Education, Learning & Curriculum**
6. **Environment, Sustainability & Waste**
7. **Environmental Health & Consumer Protection**
8. **Facilities Management and Catering**
9. **Finance, Audit & Accounting**
10. **Highways & Transport**
11. **Housing & Community**
12. **Information, Communication Technology**
13. **Leisure, Culture & Heritage**
14. **Marketing, Media & Communications**
15. **Organisational Change Management**
16. **Planning & Development Control**
17. **Public Health & Wellbeing**
18. **Safeguarding**
19. **Social Care (Adults & Children)**
20. **Social Value & Regeneration**

Benefits of using NEPRO³



Choice

20 categories and over 340 sub-categories.

Speed

One of the fastest and most cost effective routes to market, enabling contracts to be compliantly awarded in as little as 15 days.

Delivery assurance

Full management of all contractual, commercial and delivery risk, through one contract with in-built IR35 safeguards and IP protection.

Compliant route to market

Transparent performance and governance management for each project.

Value for money

Average savings of 14% against budget.

Benefits of using NEPRO³

NEPRO is the faster, compliant alternative to traditional public sector frameworks for specialist professional services. The vast knowledge, expertise and data that has been obtained since the solution launched in 2012 has been used to enhance the NEPRO³ offering:

Category offering: NEPRO³ has been expanded to 20 categories of spend with over 340 sub-categories. The new category 'Commercialisation and Public Sector Services' has been made available to support commercialisation and income generation across the public sector. The new category is aimed at public sector organisations seeking to develop and create areas of expertise or distinct services which could be traded, enabling them to effectively develop their approaches to trading and export locally, regionally or nationally.

Upgraded technology to improve user experience: Bloom are dedicated to investing in technology to provide the best procurement route. To meet the specification requirements of NEPRO³, Bloom's technology platform - Pro-vide 2.0 enables robust and tailored supplier and buyer on-boarding and ongoing management, whilst providing enhanced functionality for spend controls, spend management, specification development, evaluation and payment.

New simplified supplier accreditation process: Pro-Vide 2 offers a simple yet robust tiered supplier accreditation process covering standard, enhanced and construction projects, allowing easier access for SMEs and the 3rd Sector.

New payment terms: The NEPRO³ call-off agreement stipulates a 'pay when paid plus 14 day' process which means suppliers will get paid more quickly. The only exception to this is for construction projects which will have a standard 30 day payment term.

Additional levels of compliance: NEPRO³ has been procured in line with external funding body expectations. The process followed enables specialist professional services to be procured using external funding, supported by your own legal guidance.

Access to the buyer community: With NEPRO³, buyers will have access to thousands of tried and tested specifications offering opportunities to benefit from lessons learned and to work collaboratively on future projects.

Social Value: NEPRO³ makes it easy for public sector clients to deliver on their social value goals and objectives. The framework helps clients to overcome any difficulties they may have in understanding, tendering, recording, and reporting on social value outcomes and impact. There's access to an extensive marketplace of suppliers of all sizes with a significant number from the SME and VCSE community, offering you an excellent opportunity to help deliver your social value objectives.

We believe that social value doesn't come at any extra cost, it's all part of the fully managed service that NEPRO³ offers.

How to access NEPRO³

When a buying organisation chooses to procure services via NEPRO³, they first sign up as an Associate Member of NEPO. Associate Membership with NEPO is free of charge and provides UK public sector bodies with access to NEPO's extensive range of solutions. To sign up, an online form is available on the NEPO website **www.nepo.org/associate-membership**

The buying organisation then enters into a Call-Off contract with Bloom (the exclusive operator of the NEPRO³ solution). These contractual terms and conditions are agreed from the outset; so only need to be signed once.

The entire process is quick and easy.

Your procurement options

Mini-competitions

With a mini-competition, Bloom will engage with the marketplace and identify suppliers with the skills and experience to deliver your expected outcomes, bringing new suppliers in if needed, to deliver your project. Mini-competitions allow you to get the most competitive price for a solution that meets your specific needs.

The mini-competition process begins with your statement of requirements, which Bloom can help you create. If you choose a Mini-Competition, Bloom will present you with a selection of the most relevant suppliers that meet your needs, allowing you to choose without any sales pressure.

Based on optimal delivery where tasks required by supplier and or client are completed aligned to the target schedule, Bloom can deliver a mini-competition in approximately 24 days.

Direct Awards

There may be occasions where you need to appoint a supplier directly. This might include an existing or niche supplier offering services integral to a project or where significant cost implications or service disruptions have been identified through other routes.

If direct award is your preferred route Bloom can deliver this in as little as 15 days, assuming optimal delivery i.e. client and supplier actions are delivered in accordance with the target schedule. Bloom will work with you to define your needs and develop a statement of requirements based upon the best outcomes for your project. Bloom offer a fully managed service to on-board and manage your existing suppliers, ensuring they are fully accredited.

The Bloom tender process

The entire tender process is managed online, via Bloom's cloud based project management system – Pro-vide 2.0

Step 1

The Buyer submits their requirements to Bloom. The tender is released to the selected supplier(s).

Step 2

The supplier(s) confirm their Expression of Interest (EOI) and indicate their intent to bid / no-bid the opportunity.

Step 3

Supplier(s) submit their proposals to Bloom. The response must include any project specific variations for the buyer to consider, and can only be accepted providing the supplier(s) is fully accredited.

Step 4

The proposals are evaluated by Bloom in conjunction with the buyer and the preferred supplier is selected. The buyer provides notifications of award and may provide feedback to Bloom; which is distributed to suppliers.

Step 5

Once Bloom receives a purchase order (PO) from the buyer, Bloom will draft the work order (WO) based on the supplier's submitted proposal; incorporating any agreed variations.

Step 6

The award process involves obtaining acceptance of the WO from all three parties:

- The WO is authorised by Bloom, which is then sent to the buyer for review and acceptance.
- The buyer approves and accepts the WO.
- The WO comes back to Bloom and is forwarded to the supplier for review and acceptance.
- Once this process is complete, the supplier will be able to begin delivering services.

Step 7

After the supplier has signed the WO, delivery of services can begin:

- To get paid, the supplier outlines the deliverables/project specific outcomes met on the Service Delivery Plan (SDP).
- The buyer is notified that an SDP has been raised and provided the buyer is happy that the work has been completed to an acceptable standard, the buyer approves the SDP.
- Buyer approval of the SDP triggers the payment terms. An invoice is automatically generated and Bloom pay the supplier within the agreed payment terms.

Pricing information

Suppliers are not charged for registration, accreditation or participation in bid opportunities.

Bloom charge a 5% management fee to all accredited suppliers for any work undertaken through the NEPRO^3 solution. The 5% management fee will remain fixed for all projects throughout the life of NEPRO^3.

Bloom provides a high-touch, end-to-end service including full delivery assurance and payment processing for each project.

Bloom ensure suppliers are aware of opportunities with current buyers, and offer a fast, compliant route for services to be procured by the rest of the UK public sector.

Supplier accreditation

Bloom provide three accreditation levels for NEPRO³: Standard, Enhanced and Construction & Engineering. The accreditation levels ensure that NEPRO³ is accessible to all suppliers, big or small and are appropriate to relevant projects.

Standard Accreditation

Criteria: Project value no greater than £75,000 and/or term no greater than 12 months.

Minimum requirements:

- Registered company name and address.
- VAT number and Certificate of Incorporation (if applicable).
- One case study and supporting reference for each category the supplier wishes to be accredited against.
- Minimum Professional Indemnity Insurance coverage of £1m.
- GDPR compliance.

Enhanced Accreditation

Criteria: Project value greater than £75,000.

Minimum requirements:

- Registered company name and address.
- VAT number and Certificate of Incorporation (if applicable).
- One supporting reference and two case studies for each category the supplier wishes to be accredited against.
- Minimum Professional Indemnity Insurance coverage of £2m.
- GDPR compliance.

Construction and Engineering Accreditation

Criteria: All projects within the Construction, Design and Engineering category.

Minimum Requirements:

- Registered company name and address.
- VAT number and Certificate of Incorporation (if applicable).
- One supporting reference and one case study for each category the supplier wishes to be accredited against.
- Minimum Professional Indemnity Insurance coverage of £2m.
- GDPR compliance.
- Evidence of: Health and Safety (including training) Policy, Work Equipment Procedure Policy, First Aid Policy, Risk Assessment and COSHH Assessment Policy, Accident Reporting Policy, Fire Risk Assessment Policy, Electrical Safety Policy, Manual Handling Assessment Policy.

Technology platform: Pro-vide 2.0

All NEPRO³ projects are managed online with complete control and transparency through Bloom's user-friendly cloud-based project management system, Pro-vide 2.0.

Pro-vide 2.0 is at the heart of Bloom's collaborative approach and gives buyer and supplier communities one common place to manage projects, leading to better connections and better outcomes.

Through Pro-vide 2.0, Bloom have developed a central database of all project information and knowledge. This database has been designed to share information and best practice throughout the duration of NEPRO³. The database will educate and inform future projects for continuous improvement purposes and facilitate future collaboration between buying organisations.

Pro-vide 2.0 streamlines the entire procurement process from initial customer request, through the sourcing process and subsequent project delivery, right through to project completion. Through regular project updates and reports, you can be sure milestones are hit and quality is assured.

Become a Bloom Accredited Supplier

To become an a Bloom Accredited Supplier, start by registering on Pro-vide 2.0:
bloom.services/supplier-registration

The supplier registration process has been designed to be quick and easy. All suppliers are taken through the accreditation process to become part of Bloom's supplier community. Once a supplier is accredited, they will have access to NEPRO³ opportunities, in addition to opportunities from other Bloom procurement frameworks.

> "Bloom is a professional and far reaching procurement partner, allowing Torne & Shirmers to reach its target market in supporting the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Local Authorities, Universities and NHS Trusts throughout the UK."
>
> **Neil Wilkinson, Managing Director**
> **Torne & Shirmers**

Start your journey with NEPRO³

Contact Bloom

Call: 020 3948 9400

Email: hello@bloom.services

Online: www.bloom.services

Tweet: @TalkBloom

LinkedIn: Bloom Procurement Services

Contact NEPO

Call: 0191 638 0040

Email: nepro@nepo.org

Online: www.nepo.org

Tweet: @NEPOprocurement

LinkedIn: NEPO (North East Procurement Organisation)