



Preliminary Market Engagement

Reference	CR/CORP/LCC/26/201
Title	The Provision of a Food Distribution Network
Return date	26 th October 2026 – 12:00pm



Preliminary Market Engagement (including Questionnaire)

Lancashire County Council (the Authority) is one of the largest local authorities in England and Wales, employing approximately 35,000 staff. The Authority serves a population of over 1.3 million residents across Lancashire and delivers a wide range of services to communities, businesses and visitors throughout the county.

Covering an area of approximately 3,070 square kilometres, Lancashire is home to a diverse mix of urban, rural and coastal communities. The county has a rich cultural heritage, a growing and diverse population, and plays a significant role in the economic prosperity of the North West.

Further information about Lancashire County Council can be found at:

<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk>

Lancashire County Council is seeking market feedback in relation to the future procurement of a framework agreement for the distribution of food and drink products to over 550 sites, predominantly schools and residential care settings.

Background Information and Requirements

Single supplier / distributor framework.

The contracted distributor will be responsible for receiving, warehousing, consolidating food supplies, receiving and managing orders, invoicing, and delivering food and drink products from multiple suppliers to Lancashire County Council sites, together with customer service, supply chain management and business continuity arrangements.

Due to the increased delivery frequency and purchase volumes acting as a distribution anchor, the distributor will also be required to separately source, supply and deliver fresh fruit, vegetables and salad products as part of the framework.

Delivery frequency is expected to be between three and five times per week, depending on the site.

Approximate annual expenditure is £4.5 million.

The length of the framework agreement is to be confirmed, but it is likely to be four years maximum, comprising an initial term of either two or three years with options to extend.

The majority of deliveries will support Lancashire School and Residential Care Catering services (over 90%)

The strategy aims to reduce the number of supplier deliveries, the administrative burden and carbon emissions, whilst reducing barriers to market participation.

Please note: Details of the values above are based on recent historical spend and are provided in good faith to give tenderers an understanding of the current value of the framework. They should not be interpreted as an undertaking that this will be the value of the goods throughout the duration of the framework in the future.

Important:

Tenderers must be aware that the Authority has no exclusivity to supply any Lancashire schools and likewise no exclusivity can be given under the Framework Duration. Schools are free to make their own decisions about their procurement practices they use and they are under no obligation to take such services from the Authority.

Local Government Reorganisation:

The Government has announced its ambition to dissolve Lancashire's existing councils and create new unitary councils to deliver all services through single authorities. More information is available on the Authority's website:

[Local government reorganisation - Lancashire County Council.](#)

The tender procedure, the form of contract, and the project timetable

The tender procedure is anticipated to be an Open above-threshold services procurement, although a Competitive Flexible Procedure may be utilised. The evaluation weightings will likely be a mixture of quality and technical considerations.

The tender will likely be advertised in November 2026. Ideally, the Authority expects to award the tender no later than February 2027. Services are anticipated to commence from 1 May 2027. The Authority will confirm the timelines in the tender procedure.

Questions & Topics – requiring your response:

1. Introductory details: please provide a brief overview of your company. Details to include:
 - a. Company structure, ownership.
 - b. Annual turnover.
 - c. Typical client base.
 - d. Experience of regularly providing the scope of goods listed above to multiple sites within Lancashire or another public authority
 - e. Contact name, role, telephone number, and email address.
2. Briefly describe your capabilities and how your organisation would meet the Authority's requirements.
3. Are there any specific issues that would either encourage or discourage you from bidding to deliver these services to Lancashire County Council?

4. Would the prospect of Local Government Reorganisation during the term of the framework present any concerns that could impact your organisation's willingness to bid? If yes, please explain the nature of those concerns and any measures that could help mitigate them.

Contact and return:

Please respond to the questionnaire no later than **26th October 2026 at 12:00pm**.

Completed questionnaires must be returned electronically to the Authority's procurement team via email at: contractscorporate@lancashire.gov.uk

The Authority is not obligated to review any late responses to this market engagement.

Important Notes

This preliminary market engagement exercise does not constitute a formal tender or pre-qualification process. It is issued for the sole purpose of market engagement and information gathering to help shape the final procurement approach.

Participation in this preliminary market engagement exercise is not mandatory and will not affect eligibility to participate in the formal procurement process once launched.

Responses to the preliminary market engagement exercise will not be scored but will be reviewed by the Authority to understand market appetite, delivery capability, and preferences regarding contract terms and risk allocation.

Submission of a response to this preliminary market engagement exercise does not constitute a contractual offer and shall not be construed as creating any obligation on the part of the Authority to proceed with a formal procurement or to award any contract.

The Authority reserves the right to:

- Make changes to the scope or timing of the procurement process.
- Hold informal engagement discussions with respondents to this preliminary market engagement exercise to clarify responses where required.
- Proceed or not proceed with the procurement process at its absolute discretion.

All information shared in responses will be treated in confidence and used only for the purposes of refining the procurement strategy. All information issued by and provided to the Authority should and will be treated as confidential and used only for internal purposes relating to project planning and procurement preparation.