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CASE STUDY, DOCUMENT

Edsential: Empowering Welsh SMEs through Procurement Education: PDF

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Social Value Workshops

Business Wales have hosted a series of workshops aiming to strengthen the Welsh Public Sector supply chain by enhancing procurement knowledge and supporting the presence of Welsh-sourced foods on public menus. To achieve this, Business Wales collaborated with industry experts, covering topics such as procurement frameworks, joint bidding for SMEs, international best practices, and the integration of social value in procurement.

One such workshop, hosted by Ian McGrady, focused on demystifying social value in the context of Welsh public procurement.

Ian McGrady is a Doctoral Candidate at Alliance Manchester Business School, University of Manchester, where he is researching social value in Welsh public procurement, with a particular focus on the school food system. His work examines how procurement policies can drive community benefit, sustainability, and improved outcomes for public services.

In addition to his academic research, Ian is the Managing Director of Edsential Community Interest Company, a large social enterprise providing essential services to schools across Northwest England and North Wales.

Topics for the workshop included:

- Understanding Welsh procurement policy
- How social value is defined and measured
- How to approach and respond to tenders
- Real-life case studies showing successful tender responses with social value components

Real-Life Tender Walkthrough

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- Ian McGrady shared a successful school food tender case study with attendees.
- The session included a full breakdown of how Edsential incorporated social value into the response and how that aligned with Welsh Government policy.
- The goal was to build practical knowledge and confidence among SMEs

The Impact

- Improved SME confidence:
  Businesses now better understand procurement processes and no longer view social value as a barrier but as an opportunity
- Skills development:
  Participating SMEs gained vital skills in identifying, articulating, and evidencing their social value.
- Policy alignment:
  Businesses now have a clearer understanding of how to align their day-to-day operations with government priorities in areas like sustainability, community benefit, and local economic development

Summary and Key Takeaways

Businesses who signed up for the webinar gained a solid understanding of what is Social Value is and what it is not.

Social value refers to the wider community benefits that result from delivering a public contract. These can include:

- Supporting local jobs and training
- Using local suppliers
- Reducing environmental impact
- Contributing to health and wellbeing
- Strengthening community cohesion

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In Wales, public sector organisations are required to consider social value when awarding contracts, thanks to progressive legislation like the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

However, social value is not:

- Just a box-ticking exercise
- Charity or unpaid work
- A reason to overpromise or deliver unsustainable services
- Exclusive to large businesses or specialist social enterprises

For SMEs, this means that many of their day-to-day operations, like hiring locally, reducing food waste, or using local produce, already generate social value. The key is learning to identify, measure, and communicate that value clearly in tender responses

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