

HS2 Supply Chain & Business Support Programme

Frequently asked questions

1. What's the background? What are the opportunities?

HS2 is one of the most demanding and exciting transport mega-projects in Europe. There will be thousands of opportunities within the HS2 supply chain. These will be created across many business sectors, requiring a wide range of capabilities, suitable for suppliers of all sizes and generated over a number of years.

HS2 Ltd will directly procure and manage a relatively small number of high-value major works contracts, to be delivered by Tier One contractors. Those contractors will, in turn, through their own supply chains, procure and manage a high number of lower-value sub-contracts, engaging a much larger and more diverse range of smaller suppliers.

It is important that those businesses understand the process and prepare themselves so they are ready for when the opportunities materialise. For example, this may involve understanding if their business has the capability and capacity to deliver, or whether they need to have particular accreditations or meet certain standards such as Level 2 Building Information Modelling (BIM).

In addition, HS2 Ltd will have numerous, ongoing requirements to support the running of the business and many of these 'corporate' opportunities are likely to be suitable for SMEs.

2. What is the *Supply Chain & Business Support Programme*?

This is an initiative to develop **business, engagement, support and funding solutions** for businesses which potentially stand to benefit from specific HS2-related opportunities, as well as from the wider expansion and modernisation of the UK's railway network.

The initiative covers the three local enterprise partnership (LEP) areas of [Black Country](#), [Coventry & Warwickshire](#) and [Greater Birmingham & Solihull](#) and which constitute the [West Midlands Combined Authority](#).

3. Who is this support aimed at?

The support is aimed at SMEs within the West Midlands Combined Authority geography which might need support or assistance to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the construction of HS2.

HS2 Ltd has stated that it expects 60% of contract opportunities arising in the supply chain to be awarded to small medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

4. Why now? Why here in the Midlands? Why SMEs?

HS2 is a reality. Royal Assent is expected by the end of 2016 and preparatory work is already underway. Construction of Phase One between London and the West Midlands will begin in 2017 and the first trains will operate in 2026.

The West Midlands will be at the heart of HS2. As well as benefiting from two stations (Curzon in Birmingham and Interchange in Solihull), Birmingham is already home to HS2 Ltd's construction HQ. It will be home to the National College for High Speed Rail and a rolling-stock depot at Washwood Heath. Additionally, a state-of-the-art control centre will be built in the city.

Thousands of opportunities will exist for SMEs in the region, whether they are in the rail supply chain or in unrelated sectors which might benefit, e.g., hospitality, professional services, etc.

5. What support is on offer?

There are five different types of product which can be accessed through local [Growth Hubs](#) in each of the three LEP areas. These hubs are the primary contact for businesses wishing to access a range of business help and advice including this support:

- a) Business engagement, diagnostic and business support
- b) Procurement tools
- c) Access to funding
- d) Building Information Modelling (BIM)
- e) Inward investment

6. Practically, what does that support involve?

The Growth Hubs will play a major role in providing practical support.

In terms of **business engagement**, they will each have dedicated web pages explaining the opportunities and providing links to relevant procurement sites, etc, as well as producing regular electronic communications to provide updates on business opportunities.

They will put on related events for SMEs, supported by HS2 Ltd and their contractors, and also work with membership organisations such as the local Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, etc, to help reach more businesses.

The Growth Hubs will also deliver **diagnostic activity** including diagnostic tools such as an HS2 diagnostic app, and rail specific coaching and mentoring.

Additionally, they will deliver **business support** programmes which will include 1:1 support to help suppliers become investment ready, and provide funding for mentoring and coaching.

Other support includes access to funding such as the [Rail Supply Growth Fund](#), a national £20m fund to help businesses increase their capability and capacity to secure more business opportunities in the rail supply sector.

Support will also be available to SMEs to help them adopt Business Information Modelling (BIM) which is a requirement in a number of construction-related areas within the HS2 supply chain.

Discussions are also underway to identify ways to attract more related supply chain businesses to the region which may include funding incentives.

7. Is this programme mandatory for entry into the HS2 Ltd supply chain?

Not at all, but for many businesses it provides useful help, support, direction, information and guidance about the most efficient and effective ways to become part of the HS2 supply chain. HS2 Ltd is working to support this programme so that it is aligned to HS2's strategic goals and objectives.

8. Are there any eligibility criteria to use the support offered by this programme?

For businesses to access help and support for this programme, and to better understand what is on offer to them and any eligibility rules, they should contact their local Growth Hubs in the first instance.

9. How is this support funded?

This support programme is being funded by a variety of sources which includes some European funding as well as the provision of local funding from the public sector.

10. Why aren't businesses doing this for themselves? Why do they need help?

Some businesses don't realise that they need to act now to be investment-ready and give themselves the best chance to win HS2-related work in due course. The support on offer will help businesses to get ready for the opportunities ahead, whether that involves recruitment, up-skilling, investment in additional capacity, or diversification.

Additionally, some businesses may not fully understand the opportunities available. For example, suppliers to other sectors such as the automotive and aerospace sectors may find opportunities to diversify or expand their products / services and also supply the rail supply chain.

11. How do businesses get involved / find out more?

Businesses should contact their local Growth Hub as a first port of call.

They should also register to receive supply chain update emails at SCC@hs2.org.uk and visit www.gov.uk/government/collections/hs2-business to find basic information to help prepare and identify for HS2 business opportunities.

Download the HS2 [Supplier Guide](#) and [FAQs](#) to find out what HS2 Ltd is buying, when it is buying, how it is engaging with the supply chain and where you can access opportunities.

These resources also include information on the HS2 culture and what is expected from the supply chain, relating to Environmental Sustainability, Health & Safety (including HS2's [Supply Chain H&S Standard](#)), Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Building Information

Modelling (include our [BIM Upskilling Platform](#)), Skills and the National College for High Speed Rail.

12. Register to access HS2 Ltd contract opportunities

HS2 Ltd will be buying a relatively small number of high value contracts directly for the major packages of work. The majority of opportunities will emerge indirectly through our supply chain.

The [Contract Opportunities](#) Table enables suppliers whose works, goods and services aren't being purchased directly, to identify their prospective clients. This tool will identify the organisations at Tier One who are directly bidding for work on HS2 or have been awarded contracts. Businesses are encouraged to proactively seek contract opportunities by making contact with the relevant Tier One organisations using the email addresses provided.

Businesses can also register on [CompeteFor](#) which acts as a brokerage service, matching buyers and potential suppliers. Registration is free, quick and simple and once published, your business profile will be used to match your business with contract opportunities you can then apply for. HS2 Ltd will require its Tier One contractors to advertise all appropriate HS2 subcontract opportunities on CompeteFor and this will be cascaded to their subcontractors.

For details on what HS2 is buying directly, please visit [The UK Government's Contracts Finder](#). Where appropriate, some direct opportunities will also be sourced through existing public sector frameworks. To find out how to join an existing framework, visit the [Crown Commercial Services website](#).

13. Isn't most of the work going to China? Is there really an opportunity for UK firms?

The HS2 procurement process, like that of all public bodies, is governed by EU law. Public bodies are required to follow detailed rules set out in the EU Procurement Directives. These establish the procedures which public bodies must follow during a tender exercise. It is not possible under these rules to exclude employers bidding for work on the basis of nationality.

However, it is impossible for this project to be undertaken without British products, skills and jobs both in these organisations and throughout the supply chain.

HS2 Ltd is engaging with the market early and at a scale that is unprecedented on UK capital programmes to ensure UK businesses are in the best possible position to compete for work on HS2.