Trust Tendering, Procurement and Purchasing.

This policy is applicable to the Wonder Learning Partnership (WLP)

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Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Approved:	Summer Term 2025
Name of Responsible Committee/Individual:	Board of Trustees
Implementation Date:	Summer Term 2025
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Context

The Wonder Learning Partnership (WLP) wants to achieve the best value for money from all purchases. This means we want to procure the goods and services we need, at the right quality and at the lowest possible whole life-cycle cost[1]. At the same time, as a publicly funded body, we need to undertake our procurement in a way that ensures:

- spending has been for the purpose intended and there is probity in the use of public funds
- spending decisions represent value for money
- internal delegation levels exist and are applied
- a competitive tendering policy is in place and applied, and Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) procurement thresholds are observed
- professional advice is obtained where appropriate

Furthermore, in common with most organisations, WLP employs a strong and well-understood scheme of delegation incorporating a robust segregation of duties as part of its programme of internal control designed to protect WLP and its employees against actual, potential or suspicion of fraud. This policy should be read in conjunction with the purchasing procedures, which set out the measures and limits in place to help achieve these procurement objectives.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation and national guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- ESFA 'Academy Trust Handbook'
- The Academies Act
- The Procurement Act 2023
- DfE 'Governance Handbook'
- ESFA 'Declare or seek approval for related party transactions: summary guidance'

This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the Trust's:

- Scheme of Delegation
- Finance Policy
- Reserves and Investments Policy

Procurement Routes

As a public sector body, Wonder must comply with the Procurement Act 2023 and any public procurement policy and associated regulations set down by the Crown Commercial Service. The over-riding procurement policy requirement is that all public procurement must be based on value for money, defined as "the best mix of quality and effectiveness for the least outlay over the period of use of the goods or services bought". This should be achieved through competition, unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary.

[1] Whole life cycle cost includes the cost of procurement itself, the value of any warranties included in the purchase price, the on-going running cost associated with the goods/services procured, the expected life of the goods and any cost of disposal at the end of an asset's life.

In order to make procurement as efficient as possible, and to gain the benefits of scale obtained by purchasing consortia, national or regional framework agreements for the public sector should be used wherever possible.

Where such frameworks are not used, the following procurement methods should be employed.

Procurement Thresholds

Procurement Act 2023 Schedule 1
Schedule 1 of the Procurement Act 2023 sets out the thresholds that apply to procurement of different categories of goods and services, above which procurement is subject to the full suite of UK regulations governing public contracts. The relevant threshold for goods or services procured by WLP Trust is £214,904.
However, the WLP Trust employs a lower threshold for tendering procedures to apply as set out below, to ensure that best value is obtained.

Orders over £50,000
All goods/services ordered with a value likely to be more than £50,000, or for a series of contracts which in total exceed £50,000 from the Local Authority or a single provider, must be subject to formal tendering procedures.

The budget holder shall be required to draw up a specification for the supplies / services for inclusion in a competitive tender process. The tendering process must consider both cost and quality and provide clear instruction to tenderers of what is required and the award criteria to be applied, along with the Terms and Conditions that will apply to the contract if successful. At least 3 suppliers are to be invited to participate.

In exceptional circumstances, the requirement to tender for orders over £50,000 may be waived; all such instances would need the approval of the Trust Chief Executive Officer and Accounting Officer, Trust Chief Operating Officer, the Chair of Trust Board and the Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. Such instances are expected to be very rare and may be due to extenuating operational reasons, i.e. need to have a very prompt turn around in the supply of goods/services.

Orders over £5,000 but less than £50,000
Three written quotations should be obtained for all orders likely to be between £5,000 and £50,000 to identify the best value source of the goods/services, or for a series of contracts with the Local Authority or a single provider, which in total exceed £5,000.

If quotes are in all other respects equal, the use of local suppliers or not for profit organisations is encouraged where we are able to demonstrate other advantages such as proximity, speed of service, etc.

Orders between £3,000 and £5,000
For all orders between £3,000 and £5,000 in value, a quote or price must be obtained **before any order is placed**. Usually, such orders would be placed with suppliers on the Wonder Approved Suppliers list. However, for novel purchases or if the budget holder considers that better value for money can be obtained by ordering from a supplier not on the approved supplier list, the reasons for this decision must be discussed and agreed with Chief Finance Officer before an order is placed.

If quotes are in all other respects equal, the use of local suppliers or not for profit organisations is encouraged where we are able to demonstrate other advantages such as proximity, speed of service, etc.

Orders below £3,000
Orders up to £3,000 in value may be placed with suppliers on the WLP Approved Suppliers list on the basis of a verbal quotation. Orders from new or previously unused suppliers will only be placed with evidence of a formal written quotation.

Procurement Process

Where a relevant approved supplier list exists, approved suppliers can be used, however this must be in line with the procedures. The route is determined by the anticipated contract value, or order value if this is a one off.

The Budget Holder is responsible for overseeing the arrangements for the delivery of supplies and checking items upon delivery.

If a tender process is required, please contact the Trust Chief Operating Officer to get approval to commence tender procedures set out in Appendix 1 to this policy.

If quotations are required, written details of quotations obtained should be prepared and retained by budget holders for audit purposes. Telephone quotes are acceptable if these are evidenced and emailed confirmation of quotes has been received before a purchase decision is made. Similarly, screen shots of internet-sourced prices are also acceptable as evidence of compliance with this policy.

Regardless of procurement route, the limits for authorisation (set out in Appendix 2) apply to ALL orders placed. When entering into a contract the full value of the contract is deemed to be the total cost for the lifetime of the contract and to which the limits still apply.

Once appropriate authorisation has been given for the full value of the procurement in accordance with the financial limits set out in Appendix 2, any interim invoices up to the total value of the authorised procurement can be paid. Such individual invoices will be subject to the authorisation limits of roles listed in Appendix 2, with the exception that the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer or Chief Finance Officer may authorise invoices of any value provided this does not breach in aggregate the total amount approved by Finance, Audit and Risk Committee or Trust Board.

Regardless of procurement route, all contracts or service level agreements must be authorised by the Trust Chief Operating Officer.

Appendix 1: Tender Procedures

Preparation for Tender
Full consideration should be given to:

- Overall requirements
- Technical skills required
- Timescale
- Impact upon the provision and standard of education
- After sales service requirements
- Quality
- Form of contract

It may be useful after all requirements have been established to rank requirements (e.g. mandatory, desirable and additional) and award marks to suppliers on fulfilment of these requirements to help reach an overall decision.

Invitation to Tender
If a restricted tender is to be used then an invitation to tender must be issued. If an open tender is used an invitation to tender may be issued in response to an initial enquiry.

Tender Acceptance Procedures
The invitation to tender should state the date and time by which the completed tender document should be received by the school. Tenders should be submitted in plain envelopes clearly marked to indicate they contain tender documents. The envelopes should be time and date stamped on receipt and stored in a secure place prior to tender opening. Tenders received after the submission deadline should not normally be accepted.

Tender Opening Procedures
All tenders submitted should be opened at the same time and the tender details should be recorded. Two persons should be present for the opening of tenders.

A separate record should be established to record the names of the firms submitting tenders and the amount tendered. This record must be signed by both people present at the tender opening.

The evaluation process should involve at least two people. Those involved should disclose all interests, business and otherwise, that might impact upon their objectivity. If there is a potential conflict of interest then that person must withdraw from the tendering process.

Those involved in making a decision must take care not to accept gifts or hospitality from potential suppliers that could compromise or be seen to compromise their independence.

Full records should be kept of all criteria used for evaluation and for contracts over £50,000 a report should be prepared for the Finance Committee highlighting the relevant issues and recommending a decision. For contracts under £50,000 the decision and criteria should be reported to the Finance Committee.

The accepted tender should be the one that is most advantageous to the WLP. All parties should then be informed of the decision.

Related party transactions
Trustees will avoid conflicts of interest, declare their interest in proposed transactions and arrangements, and will not accept benefits from third parties.

All members, Trustees, local governors and senior employees will complete the register of interests. No member, Trustee, local governor, employee or related individual will use their connection to the Trust for personal gain, including payment under terms that are preferential to those that would be offered to an individual or organisation with no connection to the Trust.

Payments to Trustees by the Trust will only be made where permitted by the articles, or by the authority of the Charity Commission, and comply with any relevant agreement with the Secretary of State.

The Trust will consider their obligations where payments are made to other businesses who employ a Trustee, are owned by a Trustee or in which the Trustee holds a controlling interest.

The Trust will adhere to 'at cost' requirements.

Personal relationships with related parties will be managed in a manner that avoids both real and perceived conflicts of interest, promotes integrity and openness and is in accordance with the seven principles of public life.

The Trust will be aware of relationships with related parties that may attract greater public scrutiny, such as:

- transactions with individuals in a position of control and influence, including the chair of the board and the accounting officer
- payments to organisations with a profit motive, as opposed to those in the public or voluntary sectors
- relationships with external auditors beyond their duty to deliver a statutory audit

Record keeping
The Trust will keep sufficient records, and make sufficient disclosures in the annual accounts, to show that related party transactions have been made in accordance with accountability and transparency standards.

Approval by the DfE
The Trust will obtain the DfE's approval for related party transactions that are novel, contentious or repercussive.

Transactions involving the chair of the board or the accounting officer will be carefully considered against this requirement.

The Trust will obtain the DfE's prior approval for contracts supplying goods or services by related parties agreed on or after 1 October 2024 where any of the following limits apply:

- the contract exceeds £40,000
- For the purposes of reporting to, and approval by, the ESFA, related party transactions do not include salaries and other payments made by the Trust to a person under a contract of employment through the Trust's payroll.

When seeking approval, the Trust will ensure it has the relevant information about the supplier, including the supplier's name, address and company number. The Trust will also:

- confirm the statement which best describes the relationship between the supplier and the Trust
- confirm that the supplier is listed in the Trust's register of interests
- confirm that the Trust has a statement of assurance from the supplier
- confirm that the Trust has an open-book agreement with the supplier
- provide a short description of the goods or service, details of the proposed cost and the start and end date of any contract or agreement
- provide a copy of the agreement or proposed contract
- upload any additional documents the Trust feels are relevant as part of its submission Register of interests

The Trust will document all relevant business and pecuniary interests of members, Trustees, local governors and senior employees, including:

- directorships, partnerships and employments with businesses
- Trusteeships and governorships at other educational institutions and charities
- for each interest, the name of the business, the nature of the business, the nature of the interest and the date the interest began

The register of interests will identify all relevant material interests from close family relationships between the Trust's members, Trustees or local governors.

It will also identify relevant material interests arising from close family relationships between those individuals and employees.

The Trust will consider any other interests for inclusion on the register or interests.

The Board of Trustees will keep the register of interests up-to-date.

The Trust will publish on their website the relevant business and pecuniary interests of members, Trustees, local governors and accounting officers.

The publication of interests belonging to any other individuals named on the register is at the discretion of the Trust.

'At cost' requirements

'At cost' requirements apply to contracts for goods and services from a related party exceeding £2,500, cumulatively, in any one financial year. Where a contract takes the Trust's cumulative annual total with the related party beyond £2,500, the element above £2,500 must be at no more than cost.

'At cost' requirements apply to legal advice or audit services when the organisation's partner directly managing the service is a member or Trustee of the Trust, but not in other cases.

The cost will be the full cost of all the resources used in supplying the supplies or services and will not include any profit. Full cost includes:

- all direct costs – the costs of any materials and labour used directly in producing the supplies

or services

- indirect costs – a proportionate and reasonable share of fixed and variable overheads

Reporting The Trust will report all related party transactions taking place on or after 1 April 2019 to the DfE in advance of the transaction taking place, using the DfE's online form

Appendix 2: Authorisation Consent and Limits

APPENDIX 2	**Authorisation consent and limits. Unless otherwise specified in the column heading, authority rests with any role in the relevant column.**											
Position	**BACS (COO plus one other)**	**Payroll (CFO plus one other)**	**Preferred Supplier (Add)**	**Below £1,000**	**Below £2,500**	**Below £5,000**	**Below £10,000** for items within the Trust approved budget	**Below £20,000** for items within the Trust approved budget	**Above £5,000 but below £20,000** for items **NOT** within the Trust approved budget	**Above £20,000 but below £50,000**	**Above £50,000**	**Notes**
Contracts and Service Level Agreements	Regardless of value, **ALL contracts and Service Level Agreements** (including those with a Local Authority) **must be approved in writing on an annual basis by the Chief Operating Officer.**											
Chief Executive Officer and Trust Board											Y	Once procurement has been authorised in accordance with this schedule, any invoices may be authorised by any named role in this schedule subject to the financial limits set out here. The Chief Operating Officer may authorise
Chief Executive Officer and Trust Finance Committee									Y	Y		
Chief Operating Officer	Y	Y	Y					Y				

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Chief Finance Officer	Y	Y					Y					invoices of any value where prior contract or order authorisation has been given by the appropriate body, provided that the total cumulative expenditure does not exceed that initial authorisation limit.
Trust Director	Y						Y					
Secondary Head (for the school they lead only).		Y				Y						
Primary Head (for the school they lead only).		Y				Y						
EA to the CEO						Y						
Secondary Head of Finance / Business						Y						

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Primary School People and Estates Lead					Y							
Delegated budget holder (Secondary only) Schools)				Y								

Appendix 3: Wonder Preferred Suppliers List (PSL).

The Wonder Preferred Suppliers List comprises all suppliers with an active status on the trust's finance system.
Additions to or removal from this list is controlled by the Trust Finance Team.
The process for adding a provider to the PSL is as follows:

1. Assess needs: Start by determining which products and services are essential for your care group's everyday operations. Identify what qualities in suppliers are most important to your group, such as their reliability, cost-effectiveness, or the quality of their services. This helps ensure that your chosen suppliers can consistently meet your needs and expectations.
2. Evaluate suppliers: You should also ask for opinions from your colleagues who have interacted with these suppliers to understand their experiences. Additionally, it's important to verify that the suppliers follow all relevant industry regulations and standards to ensure they are reliable and legal to work with. This thorough check helps in making informed decisions when selecting vendors for your Preferred Supplier List.
3. Stakeholder engagement: Actively involve representatives from different areas of your organisation in the process of creating your Preferred Supplier List (PSL).
4. Negotiate terms: Discuss and agree on contract terms with your chosen suppliers that benefit both your care group and the suppliers. These terms should allow for some flexibility to accommodate changes and should offer financial advantages such as discounts or favourable payment terms. The goal is to create mutually beneficial agreements, ensuring a cooperative relationship that supports both parties' needs and goals.
5. Approval: Finally seek approval for the supplier to be formally approved by the Chief Operating Officer and Finance Committee.