



# THE GENESIS INITIATIVE

*- the Business Senate for Enterprise*

## **A Master Key to Britain's Biggest Issue**

Practical Suggestions for Government and SMEs on How to Work Together More Effectively  
so that the Deficit is Reduced and Economic Growth is Stimulated

Launched in the House of Commons on 19 October 2011 in the presence of Brian Binley MP,  
Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Small Business Group, and [Stephen Allott](#), Crown Commercial  
Representative for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises.

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material has originated from The Genesis Initiative paper: 'A Master Key to Britain's Biggest  
Issue', October 2011.

The Genesis Initiative recognises the extraordinary contribution of Graham Kennedy of Alexoria  
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For the latest version of this paper please click [here](#).

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## A Master Key to Britain's Biggest Issue

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### 1. Executive Summary

The Coalition Agreement ('The Coalition: Our Programme for Government'), published in May 2010, recognises that Britain's most urgent issue is deficit reduction and continuing to ensure economic recovery. In response to this issue, the Agreement states that the Coalition 'will promote small business procurement, in particular by introducing an aspiration that 25% of government contracts should be awarded to small and medium-sized businesses and by publishing government tenders in full online and free of charge.'

The economic rationale often quoted for this policy is that it will enable government to take advantage of better value for money solutions from small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), thus reducing the structural deficit, and that awarding public sector business to SMEs will stimulate economic growth and create jobs.

Evidence suggests that this economic rationale is sound. Many SMEs with a focus on the public sector help reduce the costs of delivering public services in ways and in areas that are different from traditional players. Those SMEs that have a proven way of winning business together with an attractive proposition are growing at rates of over 20% per year and recruiting additional personnel as a result.

Yet notwithstanding this evidence and efforts from both government and industry to overcome the barriers typically faced by both government and SMEs when trying to work together effectively, there is little evidence of a demonstrable change in the amount of public sector business being awarded to SMEs. If this situation does not change, there is a risk that SMEs with relevant solutions become increasingly disillusioned with the rhetoric, and focus their attention away from the public sector, resulting in a missed opportunity for government to reduce the deficit and stimulate the creation of jobs. On the other hand, if government and industry work effectively together to change the situation, there is potential to reduce the deficit faster, to accelerate the growth of relevant SMEs and to help propel the UK into a position where it is playing an exemplary role in leading the global economic recovery.

In our experience there are many reasons why SMEs and the public sector find it difficult to engage. Some of the principal barriers holding SMEs back from doing more business with the public sector are an inability to access opportunities; lack of understanding about how to win business from the public sector; difficulties within government at a local and national level in engaging more SMEs; and poor or inappropriate payment terms.

Many solutions to these – and other – problems exist today. These range from government sponsored training courses on how to win more business from the public sector to industry solutions that help SMEs position their solutions so that people in the public sector buy them. Yet there is still more to be done to make it easier for SMEs and the public sector to work together effectively. This paper highlights some of the solutions that are available today and suggests options for further work. It is not intended to be exhaustive; it aims to become a focal point for debate and action about additional initiatives to help the public sector and SMEs work together more effectively while highlighting options which can be

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adopted immediately to improve the situation. The authors therefore welcome contributions from other interested parties to enhance the debate and raise awareness of ways that exist today for the public sector and SMEs to work together more effectively.

Please send your contributions to [genesis@alexoria.co.uk](mailto:genesis@alexoria.co.uk).

**2. Small and medium sized enterprises are a master key to unlocking Britain's biggest issue**

The Coalition Agreement ('The Coalition: Our Programme for Government'), published in May 2010, recognises that Britain's most urgent issue is deficit reduction and continuing to ensure economic recovery. In response to this issue, the Agreement states that the Coalition 'will promote small business procurement, in particular by introducing an aspiration that 25% of government contracts should be awarded to small and medium-sized businesses and by publishing government tenders in full online and free of charge.' The Cabinet Office has subsequently clarified that this aspiration is 25% by value of central government contracts either awarded directly to SMEs or awarded to them through the supply chain.

The principal economic rationale for this policy is that it will enable government to take advantage of better value for money solutions that small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) can offer, thus reducing the deficit. In addition, in the absence of public money that can be spent on government infrastructure projects, awarding more business to SMEs will more effectively create new jobs and stimulate economic growth; research shows that coming out of any recession it is typically businesses in the SME sector that create jobs and grow first.

Central government departments currently award 6.5% by value of their business directly to SMEs. Government recognises that a lot is being done to make it easier for the public sector and SMEs to engage effectively, but that it needs to make a demonstrable change to the value of business awarded to SMEs within the next 12 months. If it does not make this change, there is a risk that SMEs' belief that the rhetoric is not being translated into reality grows and that they focus on other markets. This means that government needs to be able to demonstrate a material difference in the value of business awarded to SMEs, either directly or through the supply chain.

Government has already taken a number of steps to make it easier for SMEs to win more business from central government departments, many of which are documented in government's first [progress report](#) on making government business more accessible to SMEs. There is also a plethora of other well documented solutions available today that SMEs can use to help them win more business from the public sector. Yet, from our experience, there is more to be done both to increase the awareness of these initiatives and to develop additional solutions that make it easier for SMEs and the public sector to engage more effectively.

### **3. Informing the debate for further investment and action**

The objectives of this brief paper are to:

- Raise awareness amongst Genesis' SME members and senior public servants of many of the solutions and initiatives that they can take advantage of today to make it easier for them to work together
- Suggest ways in which Genesis might help convert the current favourable rhetoric about SMEs into practical measures that make it easier for SMEs to win more public sector business
- Provide real examples to public servants of the tangible outcomes and benefits they should expect when working with good SMEs
- Identify opportunities for further work.

This paper will therefore enable the appetite for investment in the development or communication of further solutions to be tested while demonstrating some of the solutions that exist today.

The intended audience of this paper is Genesis' members with an interest in winning business from the UK public sector together with Ministers and public servants with responsibility for ensuring that the Coalition's aspirations with respect to small business procurement are met.

The scope of this paper covers solutions and recommendations to address the following principal barriers that SMEs typically face when doing business with the public sector:

- Inability to identify and access opportunities
- Lack of knowledge about how to win business from the public sector
- Difficulties within government at a local and national level to engage more SMEs
- Poor or inappropriate payment terms.

Central government's 4 top spend categories are information and communications technology (ICT); management consulting; facilities; and construction. This paper will therefore principally benefit SMEs in these sectors together with Ministers and public servants who are looking to engage SMEs with solutions from these sectors. It is however likely that many of the solutions and initiatives identified in this paper will be applicable to SMEs in other sectors that are looking to win more business from the public sector.

This paper is not intended to be exhaustive. It intends to articulate what the authors know is going on today in the area of helping SMEs and the public sector to work more effectively together and to prompt discussion and suggestions for further work. The authors therefore welcome contributions from other interested parties to enhance the debate and raise awareness of ways that exist today for the public sector and SMEs to work together more effectively.

**4. Public sector focused SMEs are already helping reduce the deficit while creating jobs: case examples**

SMEs with innovative solutions can help government reduce costs in areas that traditional players do not reach. Typically these SMEs reduce the cost of an aspect of a government department's operation by at least 20%. Benefits are usually visible and start to accrue within weeks of implementation, and payback on the initial investment can be expected to occur within a few months of implementation. Many of these types of SMEs with a proven way of winning business together with an attractive proposition are also growing at rates in excess of 20% per year and recruiting additional personnel as a result. In addition, SMEs which win business from the UK public sector are in a much stronger position to grow both export markets (both public and private) and to win more business from larger domestic businesses.

We have included below some examples of SMEs with innovative solutions together with an overview of the results they typically deliver.

**Iken: Adaptive Case Management Solution for Knowledge Workers**

Local government organisations (including Birmingham City Council) have increased the productivity of knowledge workers by 15% to 20% (and brought more work in house as a result) in areas such as legal, procurement, property asset management and commissioning as a result of deploying Iken's Adaptive Case Management solution.

**Knowledge Powered Solutions: Knowledge Management Software for Contact Centres and IT Service Desks**

Knowledge Powered Solutions' clients (including 22 states in Canada and the USA, Transport for London, the East of England Development Agency, Wokingham Borough Council, East Dunbartonshire Council and West Midlands Police) have typically increased the productivity of query handling contact centres and IT service desks by 20% to 70% as a result of operating Knowledge Powered Solutions' 'Universal Knowledge' solution. This solution can also be adapted to allow callers to find answers to queries themselves, thus reducing contact centre and IT service desk costs further.

**West Trax: SAP Optimisation Experts with Sophisticated Analytical Toolset**

West Trax' clients (which include organisations such as Robert Bosch, Carl Zeiss and Gaz de France) have typically reduced the IT costs of operating SAP by more than 20%, reduced IT upgrade costs by 33% and significantly increased business productivity from implementing opportunities identified by West Trax' SAP optimisation and benchmarking toolset.

**Execview: an Holistic Corporate Performance Management Platform**

Organisations such as the University of London, the BBC, a local government council, Old Mutual Group and Oxfam have increased the productivity of project and programme personnel by 5% to 20% while reducing the risks associated with delivering policy and strategic objectives as a result of operating Execview's performance management platform.

### **Datasquirt: Multichannel Software Product for Contact Centres**

Wokingham Borough Council reduced its cost per contact in its call centres by 50% and New Zealand's Electoral Enrolment Centre reduced its cost per contact by up to 80% by adding Datasquirt's award winning multichannel (i.e. SMS, social media, email, webchat and eFax) 'Contact' solution.

### **5. Many solutions already exist or are emerging that help overcome key barriers**

There are many existing and emerging solutions that help overcome key barriers that SMEs and the public sector face when trying to engage. This section outlines the solutions that the authors know about. The authors welcome the opportunity to include other solutions in this paper that are not mentioned here.

#### **5.1 Improving identification of and access to opportunities**

##### Government Solutions

- Government is working to publish all contracting opportunities with central and local government over £10,000 on [Contracts Finder](#). Opportunities that are thought to be particularly suitable for SMEs are flagged.
- Government has also made it clear that it has a strong aspiration that all suppliers to the public sector publish opportunities for SMEs on Contracts Finder.
- There are a number of [existing procurement systems](#) (such as Constructionline, CompeteFor, Sell2Wales, Public Contracts Scotland and eSourcing NI) that will continue to be used to publish opportunities for suppliers wishing to engage with the public sector.
- Government has recently launched the [Government Procurement Dynamic Marketplace](#). This gives suppliers the opportunity to register for procurements below the EU threshold of £100,000 where the complexity is low. Government Departments, their Agencies and Non-departmental Public Bodies are expected to use this marketplace to carry out spot buy procurement for those goods and services that do not fit well in a catalogue, but are not complex enough to warrant the use of a specialist eSourcing tool.
- Government is eliminating pre-qualification questionnaires (PQQs) for all central government procurements under £100,000. So far 14 out of 17 Departments have done this.
- Each central government Department has published its own [action plan](#) for encouraging greater involvement of SMEs in their departmental procurement
- Central government publishes the [Civil Service Yearbook](#) to help others understand who is responsible for what across central government. This publication contains the names and high level contact details of senior civil servants across all central government departments. Similar publications exist covering other parts of the public sector. Copies are available in most libraries across the country.
- Government operates the [Technology Strategy Board](#), which – through the [Knowledge Transfer Networks](#) – aims to accelerate economic growth by stimulating and supporting business-led innovation.
- Government has published the findings of the Cabinet Office's [LEAN review](#) into increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of procurement processes and is putting

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plans in place to implement the recommendations (which – amongst other things – will shorten the average elapsed time government takes to procure goods and services).

- Government is running a programme of product surgeries, designed to enable selected SMEs to 'pitch' innovative products and services to a panel of senior decision makers in departments. To find out more about these and to register your interest in participating in a product surgery, click [here](#).

#### Industry Solutions

- Intellect, the trade association for the UK technology industry, offers SMEs the ability to find opportunities in the public sector through its [public sector programme](#). The principal relevant components of this programme are:
  - i) A [programme of meetings](#) where senior speakers from all parts the public sector are invited to talk about their area of responsibility and engage in dialogue with industry about how they might overcome the challenges they are facing
  - ii) A [Concept Viability Service](#), that enables government to involve suppliers early in the development of technology enabled change projects, so that policy ideas that embrace a significant technology component deliver the desired outcomes more effectively and efficiently
  - iii) The [Innovation Den](#), which offers small, innovative businesses the opportunity to pitch their ideas to panellists from central and local government and large suppliers to the public sector.
- Alexoria, through its [SME partnering programme](#), helps services, software and technology SMEs better position their offerings for the public sector and to engage with senior public servants and senior executives in the public sector supply chain so that relevant stakeholders buy.
- Dods publishes the [Civil Service Companion](#), which they claim is the most comprehensive and respected Civil Service contact directory available.
- The Hemming Group publishes the [Municipal Yearbook](#). This lists full contact details for all 467 local government authorities and all senior decision-makers in them.
- CMB2, through its procurement intermediary model, offers SMEs a way of working together to aggregate supply so that they can together respond to larger opportunities in the public sector, which they are not able to access on their own. A case study that makes use of the model can be found [here](#).

## **5.2 Increasing knowledge about how to win business from the public sector**

#### Government Solutions

- ['Winning the Contract'](#): Learndirect has developed a free course on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills on how to find opportunities in the public sector and how to tender for them.
- The government's [interchange programme](#) enables the Government to get secondees from the business world into its procurement teams and allows civil servants to get commercial expertise



### Industry Solutions

- [Dods](#) produces a number of publications and runs a number of events (such as Civil Service World) that enable the public sector to engage better with suppliers and vice versa.
- Intellect offers a variety of [training courses](#) that enable both members and non-members (including SMEs) to understand how they should approach winning business from the public sector
- [BiP Solutions](#) offers several products and services that help businesses understand and learn how to win business from the public sector.

## **5.3 Identifying and overcoming difficulties within government at a local and national level to engage more SMEs**

### Government Solutions

The Cabinet Office has already established an SME Panel to 'hold [government's] feet to the fire on delivering this [exciting package of measures](#) ... designed to significantly open-up the public sector marketplace to Small and Medium Enterprises'. This panel – which has members such as Francis Maude, the Minister for the Cabinet Office, and Stephen Allott, the Crown Commercial Representative for SMEs – is also focused on identifying improvements to Contracts Finder, enabling new suppliers to engage effectively with government and enabling SMEs to work together in consortia to access opportunities that they are unable to reach on their own. You can find out more about the role of the Crown Commercial Representative for SMEs and his work [here](#).

The Cabinet Office is also setting up a programme to identify and drive the key strategic changes that are needed to “make change happen on the ground”. This programme is likely to investigate the economic and political case for government to award more business to SMEs. In addition, it is likely that it will identify the other key challenges that need to be overcome to award more business to SMEs and put plans in place to overcome them. It is likely that this programme will seek representation from relevant industry bodies to supplement existing representation provided through the SME Panel and the [Supplier Feedback Service](#) (which is also known as the [Mystery Shopper Service](#)).

### Industry Solutions

Intellect is working to help government improve access to the technology supplier market in the UK. The trade body is looking at additional ways of improving government's pre-market engagement with the industry and helping suppliers of all sizes to work together more effectively.

## **5.4 Improving payment terms**

### Government Solutions

Government has announced plans that require major suppliers to ensure SMEs receive a [fair deal in supply chains](#). These plans require major suppliers to guarantee that subcontractors working on Government contracts are paid within 30 days and encourage them to pass these payment terms down supply chains.

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Industry Solutions

- Electronic payment platforms (such as [Visa Europe's Government Procurement Card](#)) improve the velocity of circulation of money so that SMEs are not disadvantaged as to payment terms when applying for government contracts. Costs of operating such systems to government will also be beneficial. Banks may also be more prepared to lend to SMEs where they know the payment terms from government are rapid.

**6. Genesis should encourage Ministers to improve the alignment between government's and industry's initiatives**

There is a plethora of opportunities to improve the way in which SMEs and the public sector work together so that the structural deficit is reduced, SME revenues grow and employment grows. More should be done to improve the clarity and consensus both about those opportunities on which government and industry should work together and how they should work together effectively. This will result in the structural deficit being reduced faster, SME revenues growing faster, growth in employment accelerating and the UK being propelled into a position where it is playing a leading role in the global economic recovery. Genesis should encourage Ministers and industry to work together to establish such a way of working.

Genesis welcomes the opportunity to provide innovative thinking as to how SMEs can reduce the structural deficit and increase the UK's gross domestic product (GDP) and employment by working more closely with central and local government. Some of these ideas include:

- All interested parties putting forward their ideas as to how the contract between government and SMEs can be improved for mutual benefit
- Local authorities publishing authorisation thresholds and approving bodies for procurements below the European Union threshold so that innovative suppliers can provide propositions that work within these thresholds
- The UK persuading the Commission in Brussels that it should opt out of some of the constraints imposed by the Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA) as have the USA and others so that larger companies are not inadvertently favoured
- Government supporting innovative projects between the public sector and Private Sector Partnerships that increase employment such as [DESTA](#), a Special Purpose Vehicle consisting of a number of voluntary and community based businesses that has successfully bid for social care contracts from the public sector
- Government and industry working together to develop measures that change public sector attitudes towards procuring goods and services from SMEs, including increasing the visibility of SMEs with innovative solutions
- Translating this deliverable into specific recommendations for each industry sector
- A transparent reporting system which shows the value of government business being awarded to SMEs, both directly and through the supply chain, across the different parts of the public sector and across the different types of SMEs.

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### 7. Next steps

This paper provides a start point for debate and action about additional initiatives to help the public sector and SMEs work together more effectively while highlighting options that can be adopted immediately to improve the situation. We welcome contributions from other interested parties that will increase awareness of solutions and progress initiatives that will result in more effective engagement between relevant SMEs and the public sector. Please send your contributions to [genesis@alexoria.co.uk](mailto:genesis@alexoria.co.uk).

### About The Genesis Initiative

The [Genesis Initiative](#) was formed in 1999 to improve the quality of the debate on SMEs in the UK and Europe and create economic reform, driven by SMEs and supported by Parliamentarians. The Founder Patron of the Genesis Initiative is HRH Prince Michael of Kent, GCVO. The Initiative now comprises (through its Senate) 113 SME trade associations which themselves represent over a million entrepreneurs, together with academics in the field of SME research, accounting, tax, legal and financial professionals specialising in SME activity. It has a number of senior and respected Parliamentarians serving as members of the Genesis Initiative Company who are also on the board of Directors. As an organisation, the Genesis Initiative is All-Party; it actively supports the All-Party Parliamentary Small Business Group and the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Micro Businesses.

### About the Authors

[Graham Kennedy](#) is Chair of Genesis' working group on SME Public Sector Procurement and principal author of this paper. He is the founding director of Alexoria, a niche professional services firm that works with services and technology businesses with a focus on the public sector to fulfil their potential by helping them to identify and overcome their key inhibitors. He is also Intellect's SME Champion for the public sector, Vice-Chair of Intellect's Public Sector Council, Chair of Intellect's Government Group and principal founder and Chair of Intellect's Innovation Den. Prior to founding Alexoria, he held partner level roles at Accenture and A.T. Kearney, where he led the consulting team that positioned EDS (now HP) for its £800m contract extension with DWP in 2005.

[Lynda Purser](#) has held senior positions in private, public and voluntary sector organisations in both executive and non executive positions. She has worked extensively with small businesses, helping them transfer a range of technologies from academia to support their strategic development. Latterly she was Chief Executive of the Institute for Management Consultants and worked with Government (OCG) on procurement policy. She continues to be active in non executive roles.

[Jerome Albarus](#) is the Managing Director of CMB2 Group Limited and recently joined the Genesis SME Procurement working group.

He has been an active procurement practitioner for the past 12 years and has programme managed several SME engagement initiatives both nationally and internationally.

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Along with Joy Nichols he is one of the architects of the Procurement Intermediary Model (PIM).

[Richard Smerdon](#) is the rapporteur to the Genesis Initiative and the working group which produced this paper. He is also rapporteur to the All Party Parliamentary group on Corporate Governance; contributing editor to the research newsletter of the European Corporate Governance Institute and Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of Management Studies, the Jersey International Business School.

[Nick Wood-Dow](#) is Deputy Chairman of Chelgate, a consultancy firm working in local, national and European public affairs. Nick has a special interest in the SME sector, and has worked alongside the Small Business Bureau and the Genesis Initiative for more than 25 years. Nick was a public relations adviser to MEPs in Strasbourg, and now works with MEPs and MPs on SME issues, as well as being active in the local community in the Surrey area.

[John May](#) is the Policy Director of the Genesis Initiative and has been a promoter of the SME cause to government for over 20 years. He is a Chartered Accountant with many interests in SME businesses as a Director and investor.

[Carrie Hartnell](#) is an Associate Director at Intellect, the trade association for the UK technology industry. She is the Programme Lead for Intellect's Industry Strategy work, responsible for promoting the important role of the technology industry to an within the UK economy.

#### **Index of Links**

For an index of links and definitive universal resource locators (URLs), please go to <http://bit.ly/q9miRj>. This is because we would like to track which links are most popular by monitoring those on which readers click. This will inform development of this paper.

The links in this paper are listed below for ease of reference.

Government's first progress report on making government business more accessible to SMEs: <http://bit.ly/qPxB3F>

Government's Contracts Finder: <http://bit.ly/qVbvtj>

Government's existing procurement systems: <http://bit.ly/pL3H5v>

Government Procurement Dynamic Marketplace: <http://bit.ly/pL3H5v>

Government Departments' SME action plans: <http://bit.ly/nAfQzB>

Civil Service Yearbook: <http://bit.ly/r8n61x>

Government's Technology Strategy Board: <http://bit.ly/qTwDFK>

Government's Knowledge Transfer Networks: <http://bit.ly/p9FVCv>

Government's Lean review: <http://bit.ly/pRungN>

Government's product surgeries: <http://bit.ly/nTvoiD>

Intellect's public sector programme: <http://bit.ly/nrEPR4>

Intellect's concept viability service: <http://bit.ly/qCyrNu>

Intellect's Innovation Den: <http://bit.ly/pALnZH>

Alexoria's SME Partnering Programme: <http://bit.ly/omzUTP>

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Dod's Civil Service Companion: <http://bit.ly/omzUTP>  
Hemming Group's Municipal Yearbook: <http://bit.ly/nVPvof>  
CMB2's procurement intermediary model: <http://bit.ly/nVPvof>  
Learndirect's 'Winning the contract' course: <http://bit.ly/oZpQsO>  
Government's interchange programme: <http://bit.ly/ooZNJf>  
Dods publications and events: <http://bit.ly/ooZNJf>  
Intellect's training courses: <http://bit.ly/qFYM2v>  
BiP Solutions products and services: <http://bit.ly/qFYM2v>  
Government's existing package of measures: <http://bit.ly/omfJF6>  
The role of the Crown Commercial Representative for SMEs: <http://bit.ly/qGhOBv>  
Government's Supplier Feedback Service: <http://bit.ly/nBOXRx>  
Government's Mystery Shopper Service: <http://bit.ly/npeNQI>  
Government's plans for SMEs to receive a fair deal in supply chains: <http://bit.ly/qBUmo7>  
Visa Europe's Government Procurement Card: <http://bit.ly/qBUmo7>  
DESTA: <http://www.vusra.org.uk/resources/CaVSA%20summer.pdf>  
The Genesis Initiative: <http://bit.ly/qEcr2o>  
Latest version of this paper ('A Master Key to Britain's Biggest Issue'): <http://bit.ly/pWSBrq>