



# Procurement Policy

Document Control

Policy owner: Director

Approved by: Board of Trustees

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## 1. Purpose

The Natural Sciences Museum, Sheffield (“NSM”) is committed to procuring goods, services and works in a manner that supports its charitable purposes, protects its resources, and maintains the confidence of trustees, staff, funders, donors, suppliers, partners and the public.

This policy sets out how NSM will plan, approve, conduct and manage procurement activity so that all purchasing is:

- value for money;
- responsible and sustainable;
- fair, transparent and appropriately competitive;
- collaborative where this benefits NSM; and
- proportionate to the level of cost, complexity and risk.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all procurement activity undertaken in the name of NSM, including the purchase of goods, services and works, consultancy, facilities services, exhibition services, learning and public engagement services, research services, IT and digital services, collections-related services and any other third-party expenditure.

It applies to:

- Trustees;
- the Director;
- Heads of Department; and
- all staff involved in specifying, approving, purchasing, tendering, ordering, receiving or managing goods, services or works on behalf of NSM.

This policy applies regardless of funding source, including unrestricted funds, restricted funds, grants, donations, sponsorship, project funds and trading income where expenditure is incurred on behalf of NSM.

### **3. Policy Statement**

NSM will procure in a way that helps colleagues achieve museum objectives by buying goods, services and works in a manner that:

#### **3.1 Delivers value for money**

NSM will seek best value by considering whole-life cost and overall benefit, not simply lowest upfront price. Procurement decisions may take account of quality, price, timeliness, fitness for purpose, durability, maintenance, operating costs, supplier reliability and disposal costs.

#### **3.2 Is responsible and sustainable**

NSM will seek to minimise negative environmental and social impacts within its supply chain and, where appropriate, will consider ethical sourcing, accessibility, inclusion, modern slavery risk, resource efficiency and wider social benefit.

#### **3.3 Is lawful and compliant**

NSM will comply with applicable law, regulatory requirements, its constitution, funding conditions, delegated authority limits, financial procedures and internal policies. Procurement will be conducted with integrity, fairness and transparency.

As an independent CIO, NSM is not treated as a public contracting authority merely because of its charitable form. Public procurement legislation will apply where, and only where, NSM is legally in scope for a

procurement or is required to comply through funding conditions or contractual commitments. Under the Procurement Act 2023, that turns on whether an organisation falls within the statutory definition of a contracting authority.

### 3.4 Is collaborative

NSM will work constructively across departments and, where beneficial, with other museums, universities, charities, consortia and framework providers to secure better value, reduce duplication and improve outcomes.

### 3.5 Manages risk

NSM will identify and manage commercial, financial, operational, legal, ethical and reputational risks throughout the procurement lifecycle.

## **4. Governance and Authority**

NSM's procurement authority structure is:

Trustees → Director → Heads of Department → Departmental Staff

All procurement activity must comply with NSM's constitution, financial regulations, scheme of delegation and this policy. No person may commit NSM to expenditure or contractual obligations beyond their delegated authority.

### 4.1 Trustees

The Trustees are responsible for overall procurement oversight and governance. They will:

- approve this policy and any material amendments;
- ensure procurement supports NSM's charitable purposes and proper stewardship of resources;
- approve procurement decisions reserved to them under the constitution or financial regulations;
- receive assurance on significant procurement risk, non-compliance or major contracts.

## 4.2 Director

The Director is accountable for implementation of this policy and procurement governance across NSM. The Director will:

- ensure suitable procedures, controls and guidance are in place;
- approve procurement strategies, awards, waivers and contract decisions within delegated authority;
- escalate reserved matters to the Trustees;
- ensure procurement supports NSM's operational and strategic objectives.

## 4.3 Heads of Department

Heads of Department are responsible for procurement within their departments. They will:

- ensure purchases are necessary, budgeted and aligned with departmental priorities;
- define requirements clearly and objectively;
- ensure appropriate competition is sought;
- obtain all required approvals before commitments are made;
- monitor supplier performance and contract delivery;
- maintain sufficient records to demonstrate compliance and value for money;
- escalate novel, high-value or high-risk procurements to the Director.

## 4.4 Departmental Staff

Staff may only purchase or commit NSM where authorised. Staff will:

- follow approved procedures and delegated authority limits;
- use approved suppliers, contracts or frameworks where available;
- obtain quotations, approvals and documentation as required;
- declare conflicts of interest immediately;
- not split orders or bypass controls;
- support accurate record keeping and receipt of goods or services.

## **5. General Procurement Principles**

### **5.1 Need and planning**

Before starting a procurement, the relevant department must be satisfied that:

- there is a genuine business need;
- the requirement supports NSM's charitable purposes and operational objectives;
- budget or funding is confirmed;
- the proposed route to market is appropriate;
- risks have been considered; and
- the level of process is proportionate to the value and complexity of the purchase.

For higher-value, higher-risk or strategically significant procurements, a written business case should be prepared.

### **5.2 Proportionality**

The degree of competition, documentation, due diligence, approval and contract management must be proportionate to the nature, value and risk of the procurement.

### **5.3 Competition**

NSM will normally seek competition before awarding a contract, unless there is an approved and documented reason not to do so. Competition may include verbal quotations, written quotations, formal tenders, mini-competitions under frameworks, or another appropriate method.

NSM will not artificially divide requirements to avoid approval thresholds or proper competition.

### **5.4 Whole-life value**

Award decisions will normally be based on the best overall value to NSM, taking account of relevant quality and cost factors over the life of the contract.

## 5.5 Collaboration and frameworks

Where it is lawful, practical and beneficial, NSM may use framework agreements, consortia and collaborative purchasing arrangements to achieve efficiency and better value.

## **6. Responsible and Sustainable Procurement**

NSM will embed responsible procurement considerations in a way that is relevant and proportionate to each purchase. This may include:

- minimising waste and carbon impact;
- promoting durability, repair, reuse and efficient resource use;
- considering ethical sourcing and labour standards;
- identifying and managing modern slavery and supply chain risks;
- promoting accessibility and inclusion;
- encouraging participation by SMEs, charities and social enterprises where appropriate and consistent with value for money.

## **7. Integrity, Fairness and Conflicts of Interest**

All procurement activity must be conducted honestly, impartially and in the best interests of NSM.

Anyone involved in a procurement must declare any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest as soon as it arises. Appropriate action must then be taken, which may include withdrawal from the process or reassignment of responsibilities.

NSM will treat suppliers fairly and consistently and will not give any supplier an unfair advantage.

Gifts, hospitality or inducements from actual or potential suppliers must not be accepted except in accordance with NSM's gifts and hospitality rules.

## **8. Supplier Selection and Due Diligence**

Before contract award, NSM will undertake proportionate due diligence on suppliers. Depending on the contract, this may include checks on:

- legal identity and status;

- financial standing;
- relevant experience and technical capability;
- insurance;
- safeguarding, where relevant;
- data protection arrangements;
- health and safety competence;
- ethical and reputational risk;
- references and past performance.

## **9. Specification, Evaluation and Award**

Specifications must be clear, relevant and non-discriminatory. They should describe the requirement in a way that supports fair competition and appropriate value.

Evaluation criteria must be established before bids are assessed and must be applied consistently.

No contract may be awarded and no work may commence until the correct approval has been obtained and the required purchasing or contract documentation is in place.

## **10. Contracts and Records**

A written contract, purchase order or other approved written agreement must normally be in place before goods, services or works are supplied.

NSM will keep appropriate records of procurement activity, including, where applicable:

- approvals;
- quotations or tender documents;
- evaluation records;
- conflict of interest declarations;
- due diligence records;
- contract documents;
- variations, extensions and renewals;
- contract management records.

## **11. Contract Management**

All significant contracts must have a named contract owner.

The contract owner is responsible for:

- monitoring delivery and performance;
- checking invoices against agreed terms;
- managing issues, risks and disputes;
- controlling changes, extensions and renewals;
- ensuring lessons learned are captured.

Material underperformance, overspend, dispute or risk must be escalated promptly to the Head of Department and, where appropriate, the Director.

## **12. Financial Control**

All procurement must align with approved budgets and funding restrictions.

Where practical, NSM will maintain separation of duties between requesting, approving, ordering, receiving and paying.

Invoices must only be approved for payment where goods, services or works have been satisfactorily received and are in accordance with the agreed terms.

## **13. Waivers and Exceptions**

Any departure from normal procurement procedures must be exceptional, justified in writing and approved at the appropriate level before commitment, unless immediate action is required to protect people, collections, buildings or essential operations.

A waiver does not remove the obligation to obtain value for money, manage risk or comply with applicable law and funding conditions.

## **14. Legal and Regulatory Compliance**

NSM will comply with all laws and regulatory requirements relevant to its procurement activity, including charity law, contract law, anti-bribery law, fraud prevention requirements, equality obligations, data protection law, health and safety law and any funding conditions attached to particular expenditure.

Where NSM is legally required to comply with public procurement legislation for a particular procurement, it will do so. Since 24 February 2025, the Procurement Act 2023 has been the main statutory framework governing public procurement in the UK for bodies in scope, replacing the previous regime for new procurements under that framework.

Where public procurement law applies, NSM will follow the relevant statutory duties, including any applicable requirements relating to transparency, competition, equal treatment and notice publication.

## **15. Training and Awareness**

NSM will ensure that staff involved in procurement have access to appropriate guidance and training.

Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that staff in their areas understand and apply this policy.

## **16. Monitoring, Breach and Review**

Compliance with this policy may be monitored through management review, finance review, internal control processes and audit.

Failure to comply with this policy may lead to withdrawal of delegated authority, disciplinary action, review of purchasing decisions, or other corrective action.

This policy will take effect on 1 April 2026 and will be reviewed by 1 April 2029, or earlier if required by changes in law, regulation, funding conditions or organisational structure.