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NORTHERN
PROCUREMENT
ALLIANCE



OUR FRAMEWORKS IN PRACTICE
CLIENT GUIDE

PART 2

Improving lives and places
through quality procurement solutions

www.northernprocurement.org.uk



This framework guide is interactive.

Navigate between the previous and next pages with the arrows located on either side of the pages. Alternatively, jump straight to a specific section from the contents page.

Welcome to NPA

Our framework guides explain what can be procured through each framework. This guide explains how clients can use an NPA framework in practice – from eligibility and supplier assurance to call-off routes, governance, social value and the support available from our team.

Whether clients are exploring options, preparing a project or ready to appoint, NPA can help them understand the right route and progress with clarity and confidence.

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Contents page

Who we are 4

Who can use our frameworks 4

Why clients use our frameworks 5

How we support clients 7

Choosing the right procurement route 8

Procurement documents and decision records 10

Evaluation, awards and governance 11

Considering social value through the framework 13

Community Benefit Fund 14

Who we are

NPA is one of five regional business units of LHC Procurement Group (LHCPG), supporting public sector clients across North of England. It brings together buyers and suppliers to build, refurbish and maintain social housing and public property across the region more efficiently and cost effectively, and to benefit local communities.

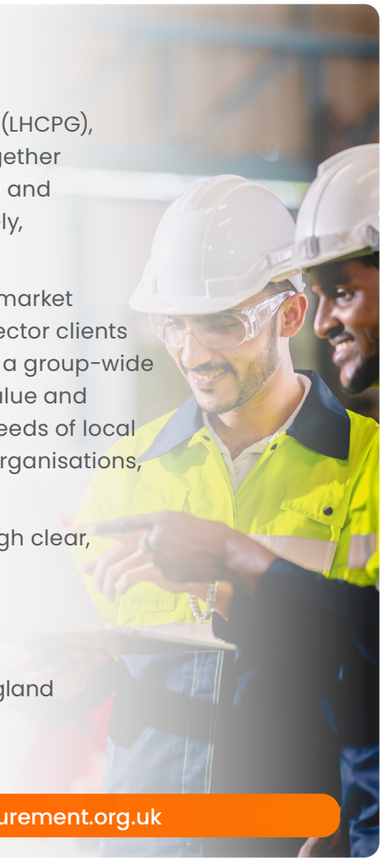
By using NPA frameworks, which are shaped by the team's regional market knowledge and insights from suppliers working in the area, public sector clients can access locally led procurement support. They also benefit from a group-wide centre of excellence for procurement, technical assurance, social value and framework governance. Our frameworks are designed around the needs of local authorities, housing associations, education providers, healthcare organisations, and other public sector bodies.

We help clients access pre-assessed and approved suppliers through clear, compliant and supported procurement routes.

There are four other business units run by LHCPG:

- **LHC:** across Midlands, London, South East and East Anglia
- **South West Procurement Alliance (SWPA):** across South West of England
- **Scottish Procurement Alliance (SPA):** across Scotland
- **Welsh Procurement Alliance (WPA):** across Wales

To find out more about NPA, visit: www.northernprocurement.org.uk



Who can use our frameworks

Suitable for

- Local Authorities and any subsidiaries and joint-venture vehicles of those Local Authorities
- Registered Social Landlords (RSL), Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) & Arm's Length Management Organisations (ALMOs)
- Registered Charities
- Publicly Funded Schools
- Universities and Further Education Establishments
- Colleges
- Police Forces
- Fire and Rescue services
- Health Authorities, Councils, Boards and Trusts
- Other public bodies including central government departments and registered charities
- Any organisation partially or fully publicly funded

If you are unsure whether your organisation is eligible, the NPA team can confirm this before you begin.



Did you know?

LHC Procurement Group was the first public sector procurement organisation in the UK, having been established in 1966 by London Boroughs.

Why clients use our frameworks

Using an NPA framework gives you access to a structured, pre-procured route to market, supported by clear framework documentation, appointed suppliers and regional procurement expertise.

This helps you avoid starting each procurement from a blank page while still retaining flexibility for your own requirements, approvals, award decisions and contract management. The main client benefits are summarised below, with practical guidance on how to use a framework set out in the following sections.

✓ **Compliance -** Frameworks provide a compliant route to market for relevant works, goods and services, supported by clear procedures, documentation and framework-related guidance.

Clients retain flexibility when it comes to their own procurement decisions and governance, but can use NPA's framework documents and support to help follow the correct process.

✓ **Supplier assurance -** Suppliers appointed to NPA frameworks have been assessed through a structured procurement process before being admitted to the framework. This assessment considers areas such as capability, capacity and compliance against the framework requirements. As a result, clients do not need to repeat the framework procurement process.

✓ **Client project due diligence -** Clients remain responsible for determining whether a supplier is suitable for their specific project. This may include considering factors such as scope, availability, location, programme, value for money, technical capability, social value commitments and project-specific risks.

Further detail on how the framework was procured, how suppliers were evaluated and how appointments were made is set out in the relevant Tender Report or Framework Summary. Please contact your regional team for more information.

✓ **Choice and flexibility** Frameworks provide flexibility in how clients appoint suppliers, where permitted by the framework. Depending on the project and the framework rules, clients may be able to use direct award or mini-competition.

✓ **Regional support from the NPA team** to help you understand local priorities, supplier markets, funding pressures and how the framework may support delivery conditions across North of England.

✓ **Social value -** NPA frameworks require appointed companies to work with our clients to identify and enable social value as part of project planning, supplier engagement, award decisions and contract delivery.

Clients can call off for their own community needs but extra support and practical guidance is available if needed.

We also support clients through our social value advisory service should they need assistance in ensuring the best outcomes for projects.

✓ **Quality and value -** Frameworks are designed to support balanced award decisions that consider quality, price, capability, delivery confidence, risk, sustainability and whole-life value.

Our frameworks are subject to the Constructing Excellence Gold Standard verification process, developed by central government to ensure only quality framework providers are accredited. New frameworks are accredited as part of this process to ensure continuous quality assessment.

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✓ **Support throughout** We can provide framework-related support from early enquiry through to award and delivery, helping clients progress with clarity and confidence while retaining responsibility for their own governance and decisions.

✓ **Simplicity -** Frameworks help simplify procurement by providing an established route to market, defined scope, appointed suppliers and clear call-off procedures.

This allows clients to focus on the practical details of their project, including specification, budget, programme and outcomes.



How we support clients

Our team can support you from initial conversation right through the project delivery to completion.

Stage	How NPA can help
Exploring options	Discuss your requirement and identify relevant frameworks
Checking suitability	Confirm framework scope, eligibility and regional availability.
Planning procurement	Explain direct award and mini-competition routes.
Project registration	Register the project and provide a reference.
Supplier engagement	Issue expressions of interest or support supplier selection.
Call-off process	Provide guidance on framework procedures as well as social value.
Award and delivery	Remain available for framework-related support.

Using an NPA framework: Client procurement journey

This guide is intended to help clients understand how to use an NPA framework once it has been established. It should be read alongside the relevant framework documents, lot information and call-off procedures.

Clients remain responsible for their own procurement decisions, approvals, governance and contract management, but NPA can support them through the key stages of the procurement journey.

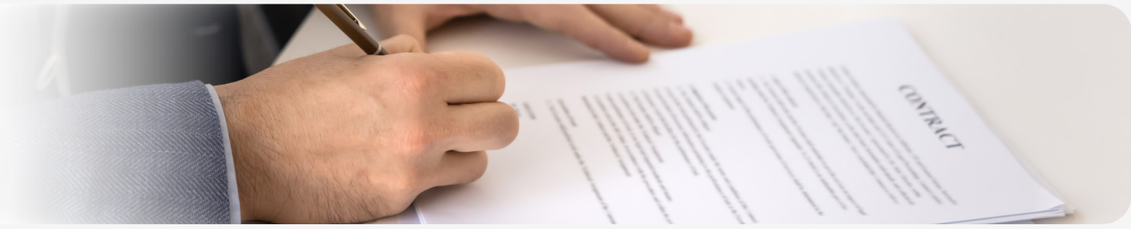
Stage	What clients should do
1. Plan the requirement	Define the need, budget, programme, specification, social value priorities or outcomes and internal approvals required before starting the call-off process.
2. Select the call-off route	Confirm whether direct award or mini-competition is permitted and appropriate for the project, **taking account of the framework rules** and the client's governance requirements.
3. Run the call-off	Carry out the direct award assessment or mini-competition process in line with the framework documents and keep a clear decision record.
4. Award the contract	Obtain the required internal approvals, issue the award decision, complete the call-off contract and retain the award record.
5. Manage delivery	Manage performance, contract changes, risks, social value commitments and reporting requirements in accordance with the call-off contract. NPA can also discuss relevant added value services that may support successful delivery.



Choosing the right procurement route

Direct award versus mini-competition

We can help you understand which route is appropriate for your project.



Direct award:

A route that may allow a client to appoint an appointed company without further competition, where the framework terms and project requirements allow.

Direct award may suit you when...

- your requirement is clearly defined.
- the most suitable supplier can be identified without further competition.
- the framework rules provide an objective basis for supplier selection.

Mini-competition:

A further competition between relevant appointed companies, allowing the client to test project-specific quality, price, social value, methodology, capacity or programme.

Mini-competition may suit you when...

- you want to compare supplier proposals.
- you want to test price, quality and social value impact.
- your project has specific requirements that should be tested through supplier proposals.
- you need suppliers to respond to a brief.

Direct award guidance

Clients should be able to evidence why the route is appropriate and how the award decision supports value for money, social value, transparency and fair treatment.

- Confirm that direct award is permitted under the relevant framework, lot and call-off procedure.
- Check whether the framework provides a ranking, allocation mechanism or other objective method for identifying the supplier.
- Consider whether the project requirement is sufficiently clear without further competition.
- Record why the selected supplier is suitable, including relevant capability, availability, price, quality, location, programme, risk and social value considerations.
- Obtain any internal approvals required by the client's own governance processes before award.

Mini-competition guidance

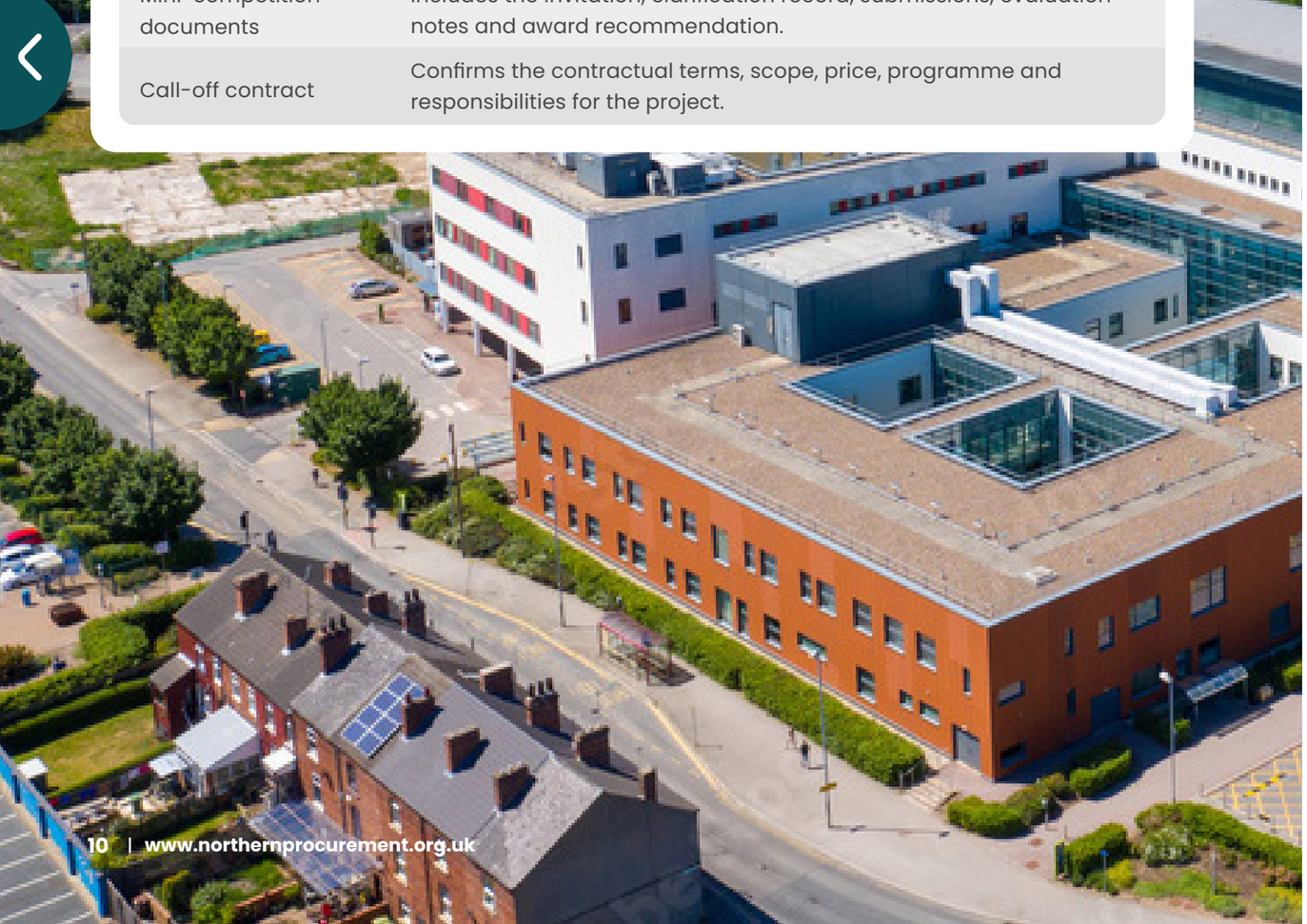
A mini-competition may be more appropriate where clients want to test project-specific proposals, price, quality, programme, methodology, social value or technical solutions. The process should be proportionate to the value and complexity of the project and should follow the framework call-off rules:

- Prepare a clear project brief, specification and timetable.
- Confirm which appointed companies should be invited in accordance with the framework rules.
- Set out the evaluation criteria, weightings and submission requirements before inviting responses.
- Evaluate responses consistently against the stated criteria and keep clear evaluation notes.
- Prepare an award recommendation or evaluation report before completing the call-off contract.

Procurement documents and decision records

Clients should keep a clear audit trail showing how the framework was used, why the chosen call-off route was appropriate, how the supplier was selected, and how the award decision was approved. The level of detail should be proportionate to the value, risk and complexity of the project.

Document	Purpose
Project brief	Explains the requirement, objectives, budget, programme and key social value outcomes.
Specification	Sets out the works, goods or services required and any technical, quality, social value or performance requirements. The specification forms a key project document and is typically incorporated into the call-off contract.
Call-off route assessment	Records why direct award or mini-competition was selected.
Direct award assessment	Records the supplier selection rationale and supporting evidence.
Mini-competition documents	Includes the invitation, clarification record, submissions, evaluation notes and award recommendation.
Call-off contract	Confirms the contractual terms, scope, price, programme and responsibilities for the project.



Evaluation, awards and governance

Clients should make award decisions using the criteria, factors and call-off procedures permitted by the relevant framework. The approach should be proportionate to the value, risk and complexity of the project and should support a clear, fair and evidence-based decision.

Direct awards

For direct awards, clients should record why the selected appointed company is suitable for the project and how the award decision supports value for money. This may include consideration of price, quality, capability, availability, programme, location, social value commitments and any relevant framework ranking or allocation method.

In all cases, clients should retain an award record showing the call-off route used, the criteria or factors considered, the evidence reviewed, the reasons for supplier selection, any approvals obtained and the final award decision. This should be supported by a clear audit trail in line with the client's standing orders, financial regulations, schemes of delegation and governance processes.

Mini-competition

Our frameworks are established using a quality and price evaluation split. Clients should refer to the relevant framework documentation for any requirements relating to quality and price evaluation at call-off stage, including any permitted flexibility in the application of weightings.

Project-specific criteria, sub-criteria and scoring guidance can still be tailored to the requirement, provided they remain consistent with the framework documents and are clearly set out before appointed companies are invited to respond.

Clients should apply the stated criteria consistently to all responses and keep clear evaluation notes explaining the scores awarded and the reasons for the award decision. This helps demonstrate transparency, fair treatment and value for money.

Transparency reminder: Clients are responsible for meeting the transparency and publication requirements that apply to their own call-off contract under the Procurement Act 2023 and the relevant regulations. This includes the publishing of any required notices in accordance with the applicable statutory timescales.

Clients should consider which transparency notices apply to their call-off contract. For more information, visit: Guidance: Contract Award Notices.

Call-off governance reminder: A mandatory standstill period applies when the framework is established. At call-off stage, standstill is generally voluntary unless required by the client's own governance arrangements, funding conditions or legal advice. Clients should retain evidence of any notices published, any voluntary standstill applied, the award decision and the completed call-off contract".

Understanding
the contractual structure

The Framework Agreement utilises a bespoke version of the FAC-1 contract, which sets out how the Framework operates, including the Framework scope, supplier obligations and call-off procedures. Clients become parties to the FAC-1 arrangement through the Project Registration Form (PRF).

Each project awarded under the Framework is subject to a separate call-off contract between the Client and the appointed company. Clients should confirm the form of contract they intend to use at call-off stage (during the further-competition process).

This may include a standard form such as JCT, SBCC, NEC, PPC, ACE or NHF, or a suitable client-specific contract appropriate to the project.

Considering social value
through the framework

Using an NPA framework can help clients turn project delivery into an opportunity to support wider social, economic and environmental outcomes. Clients should consider social value early, when defining the requirement and selecting the most appropriate call-off route.

Social value requirements should be relevant to the project, proportionate to the contract and linked to local or regional priorities. This helps clients move beyond generic commitments and focus on outcomes that can be delivered and evidenced.

Where social value is considered as part of a mini-competition or direct award decision, clients should ensure the approach is consistent with the framework documents, clearly recorded in the award decision and capable of being monitored during delivery.

All frameworks launched since January 2026, have a recommended approach to including social value in construction, that are designed for clients and appointed companies to work together to consider proportionate and attributable community-led and place-based outcomes in every project.

Social value opportunities may include:

Local jobs and skills - Creating employment, apprenticeships, training and work experience linked to the project.

Community benefit - Supporting local charities, schools, resident groups, community facilities or wellbeing initiatives.

Local and regional economies - Encouraging opportunities for SMEs and local supply chains where appropriate.

Environmental improvement - Supporting lower carbon delivery, retrofit outcomes, waste reduction, biodiversity or better use of resources.

Regional support from NPA team to help you understand local communities and their individual social, economic and environmental priorities.

Longer-term impact - Focusing on outcomes that continue to benefit people and places long after the contract has ended.



Clients should consider social value through the following practical steps:

Step 1: Identify local priorities

Consider what social, economic or environmental outcomes are most relevant to the project and local area.

Step 2: Build social value into the brief

Include proportionate and measurable social value requirements in the project brief or mini-competition documents where appropriate.

Step 3: Consider social value in the award decision

For a mini-competition, clients may choose to allocate 10% of the total evaluation score to relevant and measurable social value outcomes. This reflects the minimum weighting used under the UK government's Social Value Model for in-scope central government procurements. Any weighting should remain consistent with the framework documents, the client's own procurement governance and the nature of the project.

Step 4: Monitor and evidence delivery

Make sure commitments can be monitored during contract delivery and that evidence is retained to support reporting and audit requirements. NPA's social value advisory service can help clients shape social value opportunities around local priorities, project-specific outcomes and the communities the project is intended to benefit.

You can find out more in our Social Value Strategy:
www.northernprocurement.org.uk/social-value

Community Benefit Fund

We also reinvest a portion of our surpluses into our Community Benefit Fund. Through our partner charities, Lifting Lives and Lintel Trust, these funds support projects that improve lives, strengthen communities and create more sustainable places.

This means the value of using an NPA framework can extend beyond the immediate contract, to support project delivery, local priorities and wider social impact.

During 2025/26, we distributed £630,000 to communities across England, Scotland and Wales through our Community Benefit Fund.

The funded projects evidenced approximately £6.2 million in measurable social value, based on LHCPG's impact assessment methodology and independently reviewed by HACT.

(Source: Social Impact Report 2025-26).

Regional knowledge and local delivery

LHCPG's regional teams help clients connect national framework access with local delivery needs. This includes understanding local supplier availability, market capacity, delivery risks and opportunities to support social value.

This regional insight can help clients shape realistic project requirements, understand local market factors and identify the support needed to move from early planning to award and delivery.

Our regional teams can help clients understand:

- which suppliers are available locally;
- how the framework fits the project;
- what local market factors may affect delivery;
- how to support local social value; and
- what support may be needed next.

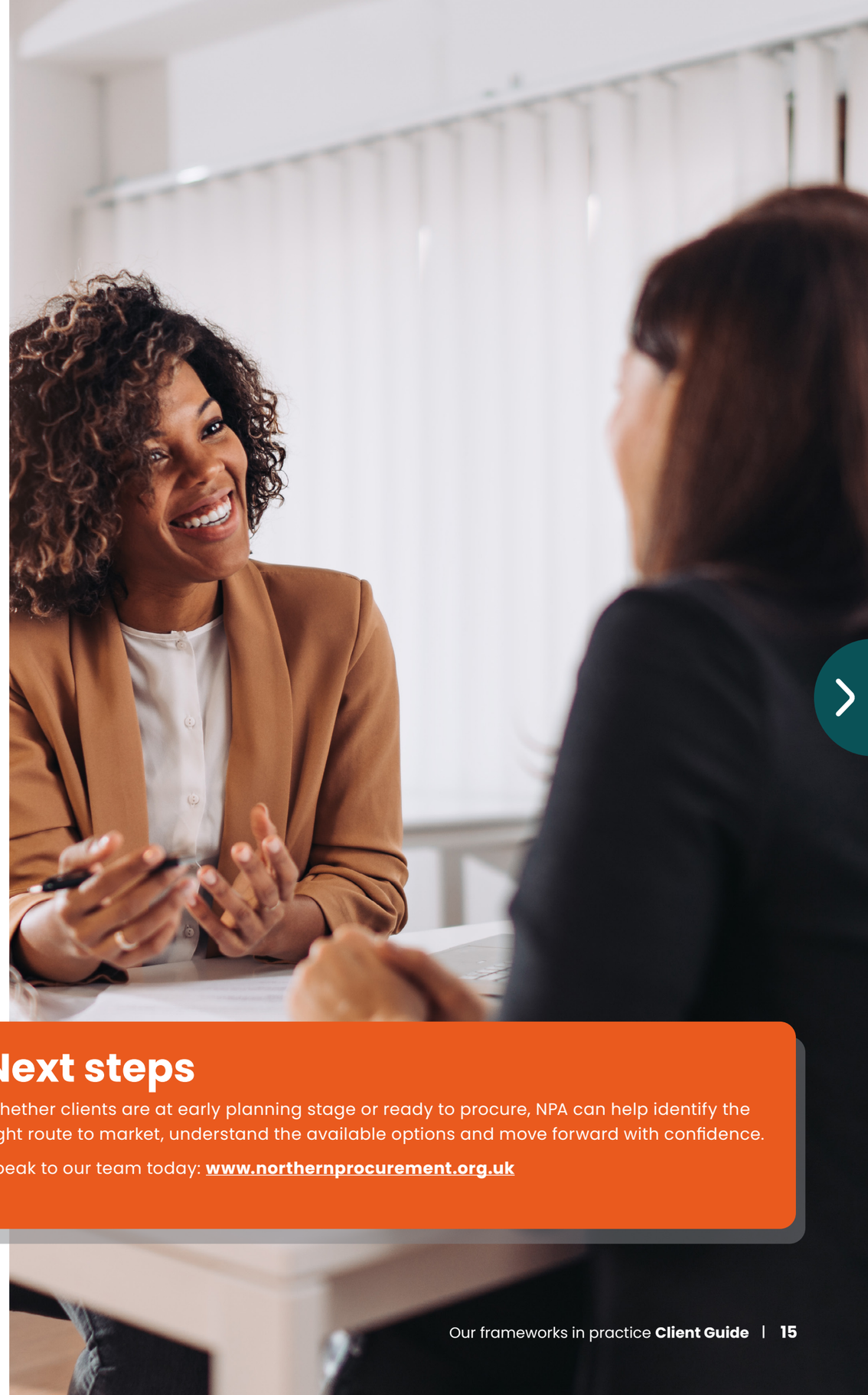
Practical client checklists

Direct award checklist

- ✓ Requirement and budget confirmed.
- ✓ Framework scope, lot and regional coverage checked.
- ✓ Direct award route confirmed as permitted.
- ✓ Supplier selection rationale documented.
- ✓ Value for money and project suitability considered.
- ✓ Internal approvals obtained.
- ✓ Call-off contract completed and retained.
- ✓ Social value assessed and discussed.

Mini-competition checklist

- ✓ Project brief and specification prepared.
- ✓ Eligible appointed companies identified.
- ✓ Evaluation criteria, weightings and timetable agreed before issue.
- ✓ Clarifications managed and recorded.
- ✓ Responses evaluated consistently against the stated criteria.
- ✓ Award recommendation and approval record completed.
- ✓ Call-off contract completed and retained.
- ✓ Social value assessed and discussed.



Next steps

Whether clients are at early planning stage or ready to procure, NPA can help identify the right route to market, understand the available options and move forward with confidence.

Speak to our team today: **www.northernprocurement.org.uk**



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Get in touch with us

For more information about the latest news and frameworks, please visit our website: **www.northernprocurement.org.uk**

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