



Oslo

Strategic Market Dialogue in Practice



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How has Oslo used preliminary market consultations?

Oslo has used preliminary market consultations in two main ways:

1. First, consultations have been conducted as part of specific procurement processes before the publication of a tender. In these cases, the city has used tools such as Requests for Information (RFIs) and meetings with suppliers to better understand market capabilities and gather feedback on proposed requirements.
2. Second, Oslo has used market consultations more strategically to both gather information and prepare the market for future requirements. This has included larger stakeholder events ahead of introducing standardized requirements in a particular sector. One example is the construction sector, where market dialogue was used to discuss and prepare for requirements related to zero-emission construction machinery.



What knowledge can you gain through strategic dialogue with the market?

Market dialogue helps contracting authorities understand the market and design procurements that stimulate competition, innovation and sustainability. By engaging with suppliers before launching a tender, you can gain valuable insights into:

Area of insight:	What market dialogue can help you understand:
Competition	How many suppliers are active in the market and whether they are predominantly large companies, SMEs, or a mix of both.
Market maturity	How many suppliers are active in the market and whether they are predominantly large companies, SMEs, or a mix of both. How developed the market is and whether suppliers are ready to deliver the requested solutions.
Future trends	Emerging technologies, market developments, and long-term trends that may affect future procurements.
Opportunities	New approaches, solutions, business models, and possibilities available in the market.

Innovation potential	The availability of innovative solutions, including new climate-friendly and energy-efficient technologies.
Documentation requirements	How suppliers can demonstrate compliance with requirements and award criteria.
Competition drivers	Requirements or contract conditions that are likely to increase costs.
Cost drivers	Requirements or contract conditions that are likely to increase costs.
Life-cycle costs	Opportunities to reduce operating, maintenance, and energy costs over the lifetime of a contract.
Procurement strategy	The most appropriate procurement procedure, timeline, contract model, and evaluation approach.

These insights can help ensure that procurement requirements are ambitious, realistic and aligned with both market capabilities and strategic objectives.

What to Remember When Planning a Market Dialogue Event

Before designing a market dialogue event, it is important to be clear about what you want to achieve. Different objectives require different formats, levels of stakeholder engagement, and organizational resources. Defining the purpose from the outset will help ensure that the dialogue generates useful and actionable insights. Based on Oslo's experience with market dialogue event, the following steps are recommended:

1. Make a plan – start early

Make a step-by-step plan for the day itself. Also, make a detailed plan for all necessary stages prior to the event. In this way you will notice potential pitfalls early and get a realistic idea of the timeline, and what date will be most suitable for the event itself.

The actual event should as a minimum include enough time for the city's presentation, potential supplier presentation/panel debate, lunch, group discussions, small breaks and a wrap up.

2. Make a draft proposal to present at event

To make the most of a market dialogue event, focus on a single procurement category, ideally one with high greenhouse gas emissions. Presenting a concrete proposal with

clear targets, helps suppliers provide relevant feedback on feasibility, costs, and delivery capabilities. A clear and targeted scope is more likely to generate actionable input, while a broad or vague approach can result in diverse responses that are difficult to compare and less useful for identifying effective emission-reduction measures.

3. Ensure dedicated staff are available for the entire process

Making a draft proposal for new climate and environmental requirements and targets can be a time-consuming job. The same goes for planning a larger market dialogue event. Making sure the appropriate and dedicated advisors and project manager are available through the entire process is key to ensure a professional and effective process. There should also be enough people as facilitators at the event, so that everything runs smoothly.

4. Engage the political administration early

It is very important that your city's political administration is informed of any draft or proposal for new requirements or targets at an early stage, so that this does not come as a surprise or become a discussion point at the event itself. This can be done by planning for meetings prior to the event where you can present and discuss the draft together.

5. Let a political spokesperson open the event

It is often beneficial to have a designated political spokesperson open the event with a speech from the city administration. The spokesperson should be well prepared and able to clearly communicate the city's objectives, ambitions, and expected outcomes.

The person should also be available for media interviews. In some cases, having a procurement expert available alongside the political spokesperson can help address technical questions and ensure clear, consistent communication.

6. Remember to engage the local media

Media engagement can help raise awareness of the market dialogue, demonstrate political commitment, and signal to suppliers that the topic is a strategic priority for the city. By communicating openly about ambitions and future procurement plans, authorities can create interest, encourage participation, and build broader public support for sustainable solutions.

7. Include a written example of the draft proposal in the invitations to the participants

What do you need the supplier's input on? Do you have a hypothesis, or a suggested solution (or several) that you want feedback on? Example: *"We are planning to phase in requirements for zero emission transport. In 2027 it will be 30%, in 2029, 50% and in 2034, 100%. There will be exemptions for XXX. We want your feedback on timescale, costs and exemptions."*

By including a written draft proposal of what you will be presenting from the city at the event, you give the suppliers and other stakeholders an opportunity to prepare informed input and questions at the event.

8. Remember equal treatment and non-discrimination

Make sure the event is open for everyone, use TED or national tender platform. Send invitations to all relevant businesses and NGOs. Prepare material in advance for all participants. Hang up posters with all relevant information/the city's draft proposal at the event venue.

9. Be prepared for difficult questions and focus on opportunities

When communicating with the media and suppliers, focus on opportunities and positive examples. Successful pilot procurements, innovative solutions, and experiences from Oslo or other cities can help illustrate what is possible and inspire both suppliers and the public.

Where sensitive topics or controversial issues are anticipated, it may be useful to prepare responses to likely questions in advance. Remember that certain suppliers may have a specific product or agenda they are advocating for. However, we need to push the market in a green direction. For example, instead of asking: *"Can you deliver emission free machines?"* ask: *"When can you deliver emission free machines? On what conditions? How can you deliver 10% emission free?"* etc.

10. Cooperate with other stakeholders prior to the event

As soon as possible, you should ask for input on your draft proposal from experts within the field. Cooperate with business organizations, NGOs or other relevant parties; can they contribute with conference facilities/ meeting rooms? Speakers? Network? Lunch and coffee?

11. Find the right venue for the event

It is important to find out how many participants will show up at the event and choose a suitable venue. Preferably, the venue should have one large room with a stage for the city presentation, potential supplier presentations and/or panel debates. If possible, the venue should also have small break-out rooms for group workshops, as a larger room may be too loud for everyone to hear each other properly.

12. Take notes during the event and send out a written summary

If there are many participants, use round tables for group discussions. Let there be one group leader to present the feedback from each table. It can be helpful to use digital tools to give live feedback during the day, such as Mentimeter. Make sure you have facilitators from the city to make digital notes from each table, so that answers can be easily collected and summarized. We recommend sending out a written summary to all participants after the event. Also, give room for written feedback after the conference.

Common question: Is market dialogue legal?

Yes. Under the EU Public Procurement Directive, Articles 40 and 41, contracting authorities are explicitly allowed to carry out preliminary market consultations before launching a procurement process.

The purpose of these consultations is to better understand the market, prepare the upcoming procurement, and inform suppliers about future needs and plans. Authorities may seek advice from suppliers, industry associations, independent experts, and other public bodies. The information gathered can be used when designing the procurement, provided that it does not distort competition or breach the principles of transparency, equal treatment, and non-discrimination.

If a supplier has been involved in preparing the procurement, the contracting authority must take appropriate measures to ensure fair competition. This may include:

- sharing relevant information with all potential bidders and
- allowing sufficient time for suppliers to prepare their tenders.

Suppliers should only be excluded where no other measures can guarantee equal treatment, and all actions taken must be properly documented.

In short: Market dialogue is not only legal but actively encouraged as a tool for better procurement planning, provided that the principles of fairness, transparency, and equal treatment are respected.