

What did they do?

- TUCO noticed that in one instance a micro business was by far the best bidder and realised that certain criteria used in their frameworks were excluding some potentially very good options.
- They worked hard to remove the barriers for SMEs by reducing minimum requirements on the size of the company turnover and logistical capacity as well as their geographical coverage. Some suppliers, like the micro business in question only wanted to serve the local area, but they were very good and competitive at doing that.
- To ensure a level playing field for SMEs, TUCO has partnered with Net Positive to help smaller suppliers evidence sustainability. Often they are doing all the right things, but haven't been accredited. TUCO pays for them to go through the process.
- They have introduced some suppliers to national distributors like Bidfood to encourage supply through them.
- They have created smaller one-man stands that are less costly for SMEs at their annual summer conference and host regular regional meetings, which suppliers can attend.
- Each university will have roughly 15 frameworks with spend over the EU spend threshold to undergo the full tender process. Typically, 15 contracts require three full time members of staff for performance management and auditing. TUCO consolidates that bureaucracy into frameworks that span multiple universities while still providing the flexibility for each university to work with local suppliers, who often are a lot more agile and able to adapt to any requests from universities to change.

What are the results?

- Now their supply chain is 83% SMEs.
- University catering teams now have the flexibility of sourcing from more local SMEs, without the additional overheads of managing contracts across a broader supply chain.
- Simply Lunch, a sandwich manufacturer that sources 80% of their 500 ingredients from the UK first started working with a few local universities. The universities encouraged them to join the TUCO framework. TUCO recognised SALSA so they didn't need to achieve BRC standards before applying. They have now grown to be one of the biggest Food-to-Go suppliers on the TUCO frameworks and have obtained the BRC standard.