



How Well Do You Know Your Suppliers?

Get to know them better by using Link-up



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Link-up® is the UK rail industry supplier registration and qualification scheme. Used extensively by procurement, engineering, safety and quality professionals, as well as organisations who need to comply with European Procurement Legislation and other standards and legislation.

The scheme has made a significant impact on the rail industry by providing a single common qualification process for suppliers. Shared by Network Rail and other buying organisations, including principal contractors, rail and underground infrastructure companies, construction companies and train and freight operators.

Today more than 3000 suppliers are engaged with Link-up and the Achilles rail portal is searched by over 100 buying organisations who can rely on Link-up's fair, open and transparent process to meet their organisation's needs. On average over 11,000 buyer searches take place each month.

What our customers say about us...

“Provides a constant measure of competence across the rail industry”

“Assists Kier in maintaining our own high standards”

“A valuable interface between us and the supply chain.”

Jem Bezodis
Safety & Assurance Manager
Kier Construction (Group)



How does Link-up work?

www.rail.achilles.com

The Achilles Rail Portal is the rail industry website for supplier qualification and the means by which Link-up buying organisations access Link-up qualified suppliers. With so much information to be collated in a fair, open and transparent way, Achilles has to ensure the process used is robust.

The exact qualification process used depends on the products or services a supplier expresses an interest in offering.

Firstly, suppliers have to select product codes and life cycle activities to create their own unique footprint that is a reflection of their business portfolio.

Product codes

Each product code and activity is defined as R, S or A: Registration, Scored Evaluation or Auditable based on a risk review.

R - Registration

Goods and services with little or no risk to the infrastructure:

Registration product codes are designed for suppliers of non-critical goods and services, which are deemed not to be business-critical or import risk to a Link-up subscriber.

S - Scored Evaluation

Goods and services which do not offer a significant risk to the infrastructure:

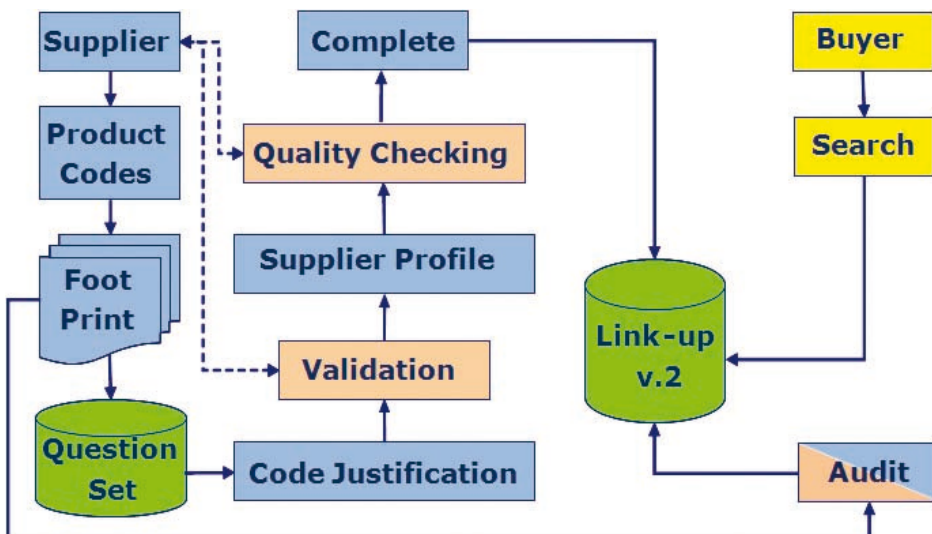
Scored evaluation product groups are designed for suppliers of business critical goods and services that import risk to a Link-up subscriber.

Additional information for these product codes are collated through the questionnaire which is evaluated and scored.

A - Auditable

Auditable product groups are designed for suppliers of products and services which relate to works undertaken on the railway infrastructure. In addition to the completion of the Link-up questionnaire, a suppliers capabilities are assessed via an on-site audit.

The process for both suppliers and buyers is as follows:



Once a supplier has finished their product code and selection process, this creates a bespoke question set and allows the supplier to move onto the next stage called the Code Justification Questionnaire (CJQ).

The CJQ seeks information as to the supplier's specific offering against a product code, along with past experience, geographical coverage and level of sub-contracting. Achilles then reviews the CJQ answers before releasing the bespoke Supplier Profile Questionnaire (SPQ) for completion. The SPQ is quality checked and any resulting issues resolved with the supplier before it is moved on to the scoring and evaluation stage.



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The information collected, processed and generated by the scheme is made available via the on-line portal.

Suppliers that have registered under the scheme have access to their own record. Organisations that require access to the full list of suppliers and their information must 'subscribe' to the scheme as a Buyer customer.

How is Link-up used within Buying Organisations?

The Link-up scheme offers a comprehensive supplier management solution which includes (but is not limited to) the following key applications:

- Sourcing and qualification of suppliers in relation to specific UK contracts
- Compliance with EC Procurement Legislation and Audit Trail
- Monitoring and development of existing suppliers
- Integration with procurement strategy, procedures and systems.

Sourcing and qualification of suppliers in relation to specific UK contracts

Link-up is primarily used to source and qualify in the rail industry in relation to a specific contract or tender to be awarded, but is also used by many members for their non-rail industry requirements too. The majority of Link-up users access Link-up on-line and use the available criteria selection tools to create list(s) of suppliers for further enquiry or tender. Achilles also provide additional support with sourcing suppliers for specific contracts.

Compliance with EC Procurement Legislation and Audit Trail

Using Link-up assists with compliance with EC Procurement Legislation by enabling all suppliers to be selected through a fair, open and transparent process, with the option of recording an audit trail as proof. Achilles publishes a QSN in the OJEU each quarter to inform suppliers that Link-up is the means of qualification for the stated list of buying organisations falling within the scope of EU procurement regulations. This negates the needs for individual calls for competition to be published though these may still be published if desired.

Monitoring and development of existing suppliers

Link-up includes a facility to monitor specific suppliers specified by a user for events such as changes in their qualification status or information, changes in financial risk score and addition or discontinuation of products or services. Such notification is sent directly by email.

Suppliers that are qualified on Link-up are scored using an industry specific marking scheme. This enables benchmarking of suppliers and the identification of specific areas where a supplier may need further development.

Integration with procurement strategy, procedures and systems

Link-up should be used as an integrated part of the procurement strategy and procedures, and is often used in conjunction with additional parts of the tender and contract award process such as on-line tendering and reverse auctions. Link-up has the capability to integrate with other systems used in-house and often the nomenclature is used as a convenient means of reporting on spend.

The on-line portal is updated daily, with suppliers updating their questionnaires at least annually and with the option of providing interim updates at any time. A search and view facility is also available for the product codes covered by the scheme, allowing access to suppliers under each code. The Link-up Auditing Scheme has been a significant step forward, with the executive audit summaries and full audit reports available via Link-up on-line to all Buyer level subscribers.

The Scheme is managed by the Link-up Governance Group, which is supported by a number of Special Interest Groups representing specific sectors of the industry.

"The Link-up Qualification Scheme enables rail industry customers and suppliers to do business in a fair and transparent market place. It is integral to Network Rail's procurement process and our approach to supply chain risk management.

Link-up supports the commitments set out in the Network Rail Supply Chain Charter and is governed in a manner which is consistent with our values of Determination, Respect, Teamwork and Pride. "

Stuart Norfolk, Head of Supplier Assurance and Account Management.



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“The Link-up and Audit schemes are an essential management tool which VolkerRail regularly use to:

- Select suppliers for tendering purposes
- Qualify new suppliers
- Assist in the regular audits of our existing supplier base
- Monitor our suppliers on a daily basis.”

Liz Quinn
Procurement Manager
VolkerRail



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Subscription Services at a glance

All Buyers (EU Buyers and Non-EU Buyers)

- Basic supplier search
- Supplier tracking
- Summary supplier information including financial risk score
- Multiple user access
- Supplier information export
- Summary audit report information
- Single, basic supplier subscription
- Assistance with supplier sourcing and review of internal supplier lists
- Special Interest Group membership
- Full supplier information including financial risk score
- Supplier scores for product codes
- Advanced supplier selection tools - including the new configurable search facility
- Full audit report information (dependent on approval of supplier)
- Access to Account Management.

EU Buyers

- Online OJEU notice creation, submission management
- Dedicated Account Manager for EU compliant companies
- Premium access to support
- Qualification System Notice (QSN) placed by Achilles (Buyers can avoid placing Individual Contract Notices).

Scheme Subscription Costs

The costs to subscribe are dependent upon the amount of information required and there is a pricing structure in place to reflect this.

There are no restrictions on the number of users that are allowed to access the Link-up on-line portal.