

Winning the deal – Selling to public sector

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Training camp description

Winning the deal – Selling to public sector helps life science startups understand how public healthcare systems buy, decide and implement new solutions. The training camp introduces procurement logic, key decision-makers, value propositions, business cases, partnerships and market entry strategies.

Participants work hands-on with where their solution fits, who to approach, and how to communicate value in a way that resonates with public buyers.

Key takeaways from the workshop

Understand how the public sector makes decisions – Public healthcare organisations are not primarily looking to innovate; their role is to deliver safe, equitable and high-quality care within budget and legal frameworks. Startups need to understand the decision layers from clinical teams and super users to department management, procurement, finance, hospital leadership, regions and municipalities. A strong sales approach must address the “Big 6”: motivation, strategic fit, gain, risk, effort and cost.

Sell the problem, not the product – Public sector buying is driven by rational decision-making, measurable impact and shared priorities. Founders need to fall in love with the problem, not their solution, and show why the current situation is costly or unsustainable. A compelling story can open the door, but the case must quickly translate into facts, data, trust, outcomes and a clear business case.

Build the right route to market – Startups can sell directly or work through partners, distributors or larger established suppliers. Direct sales can create deep market learning and founder-led trust, while partners may offer customer access, local knowledge and procurement experience. In Sweden and Norway, understanding local procurement systems, HTA logic, pilots, RFIs, direct purchase limits, clinical ambassadors and public-private collaboration models is essential.

Best practices

Map the customer system before outreach – Identify who uses the solution, who feels the pain, who owns the budget, who approves, who blocks, and who can act as an ambassador. Make it easy for people inside the public organisation to explain your value upwards. Aim to involve both a passionate ambassador and a leader with decision or “signature” power.

Create a value proposition that speaks public sector language – Communicate measurable outcomes such as reduced waiting time, lower administrative burden, better resource utilisation, improved clinical outcomes, higher capacity, compliance or sustainability. Use a structure such as: We help [region/municipality/hospital] reduce [cost/waiting time/admin burden] by [X%], so [patients/staff] get [benefit] — without [common pain], supported by [proof].

Use pilots, evidence and timing strategically – Start with a “foot in the door” through a department that clearly sees the problem and has the ability to test. Design pilots so they can lead to a real decision, not just learning. Document results, quantify value, and align outreach with public sector timing: budget cycles, RFIs, implementation windows, political decisions and procurement processes.