

Commerce Decisions supports Aberystwyth University in making a high-risk procurement on behalf of the Welsh Assembly

Customer profile

Founded in 1872, Aberystwyth was the first university institution to be established in Wales. It aims to fulfill its special responsibility for the educational needs of Wales, and to maintain and develop partnerships with industry and other institutions both within Wales and beyond. It also seeks to promote collaboration in teaching and research between the constituent parts of the University.

The devolved government for Wales is responsible for most of the issues of day-to-day interest to the people of Wales, including matters concerning the economy, health, education and local government. The role of the Assembly is to exercise those functions devolved to it in order to:

- make decisions on matters that affect people's daily lives
- develop and implement policy
- make subordinate legislation (e.g. regulations and statutory guidance)
- propose Assembly Measures (Welsh laws)

Project overview

The People's Collection project represents commitment number 206 in the Welsh Assembly Government's 'One Wales Delivery Plan'. It aims to establish and develop an innovative approach to collect, interpret, distribute and discuss Wales' cultural heritage in an online environment.

In summary, the People's Collection will deliver an online multimedia platform that will store and provide links to bilingual content created by Welsh museums, archives and libraries in addition to user-generated content created by individuals and local societies.



This project has been funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and is managed by Aberystwyth University.

Project procurement challenges

The key challenges of this project were:

- dealing with a complex set of requirements
- managing a large, high-risk project with a very small team
- ensuring that the project met the objectives of a large number of Stakeholders
- coordinating a geographically dispersed team of 15 evaluators
- managing a significant number of documents and volume of data that needed to be accessed easily and rapidly
- dealing with multiple file formats from the responses of the bidders
- managing a complex Invitation to Tender (ITT) with 30 questions, each with a large number of alternatives

- ensuring the effective debriefing of the bidders and meeting current legislation requirements

- providing a clear and transparent audit trail

Role and value of Commerce Decisions and AWARD®

Commerce Decisions was engaged at the beginning of the project, with the Professional Services team providing input into and direction on establishing the evaluation strategy and process. They also helped in giving some 'best practice' advice on the PreQualification Questionnaire (PQQ).

"The Professional Services team at Commerce Decisions made us think about the way we were going to evaluate the bids for this project in a completely different way."



“They helped us establish the evaluation process. This proved to be immensely valuable to us and helped ensure a successful outcome to the whole procurement,” said Mike Smith, Procurement Manager, Aberystwyth University.

When the ITT responses were received from the ten bidders, they were loaded into AWARD® in preparation for the evaluation. At the same time both the project team and all 15 evaluators, who represented the eight stakeholders, were trained in the use of the software.

“Following the training we had very few queries from the evaluators, which proved not only the effectiveness of the training but also the ease of use of the AWARD® tool,” said Mike Smith.

The whole evaluation process, using AWARD®, took about four weeks. The project team estimated that this was about 50% less than the time taken for previous procurements of this nature using a paper-based process. In addition, the evaluation was carried out over a holiday period with a geographically dispersed team who all worked remotely.

“The ease of use of AWARD® combined with its functionality, flexibility and process transparency gave us a great deal of confidence, providing us with checks and balances throughout the process,” observed Mike Smith.

“Working with Commerce Decisions and using AWARD allowed us to show the market we were serious about taking a ‘best practice’ approach. We were able to tap into the deep knowledge and experience of the Commerce Decisions’ consultants who understood the needs and approach of both the private and the public sectors. I would have no hesitation in using AWARD again and in recommending it to others for use on strategic procurements.”

Mike Smith, Procurement Manager Aberystwyth University

One of the key aspects of this project was the need to debrief all the bidders effectively, ensuring that regulatory commitments were met. The content of the debrief material was based on guidance from the legal team and was easily pulled together from AWARD®. Using the information captured and generated by AWARD®, the project team were able to go into great detail with the bidders, drilling right down to the individual criteria, question and answer level if required.

“We did not have a single complaint from a bidder about the quality of the debriefing material. AWARD® helped us make sure the decision we came to was robust and defensible and gave us all the supporting detail we required,” said Mike Smith.

“I am delighted to see that Commerce Decisions continue to strengthen the relationship with Value Wales, and that we have another successful Welsh project under our belts. It has particular significance for me, not only as our first University project, but also because I attended Aberystwyth University,” commented John Thompson, Managing Director, Commerce Decisions. “It has been an excellent opportunity to re-establish the association.”

AWARD® Benefits

AWARD® delivers a transparent audit trail that underpins the bidder debriefing process and manages any challenges to the outcome of the procurement.

AWARD® is highly flexible, enabling full integration of the tender requirements and policies.

AWARD® enables project users to be managed centrally, optimising the time spent on evaluating suppliers.

AWARD® is delivered via a security accredited hosted service. Users can access AWARD® from any workstation with an internet connection and web browser.

Powerful reporting capabilities allow a range of selected reports to be generated quickly and tailored to your project.

Enhanced controls allow better management of tender stages leading to efficiencies and on time project delivery.

AWARD® provides a structured and compliant approach to the execution of a procurement.

The eSourcing package is available via the Value Wales xchangewales project. This includes the use of BravoSolution eTendering and AWARD® Evaluation software from Commerce Decisions. AWARD® has already established its credentials in other high-profile projects within the Welsh Assembly. Under xchangewales, Value Wales has provided enterprise licences to the Welsh Assembly and the Welsh public sector for the use of AWARD®.