

AWARD® from Commerce Decisions plays key role in the selection and evaluation process in major multi-million pound MOD project

Customer profile

The MARS IPT is part of the Land and Maritime cluster. Its role is to investigate and procure solutions to meet the logistics support requirements for the future Royal Navy as a major part of the wider afloat support fleet.

Project overview

The MARS programme is defined by the DPA as a Cat A project, valued at over £400m, and will deliver the following core capabilities over a project life of 44 years as part of the Afloat Support system:

- Bulk Consumables – the provision of fuel, oils, ammunition, food, water etc. to embarked forces
- Joint Sea Based Logistics – the provision of logistic support from afloat to joint forces ashore
- Forward Aviation Support – the provision of support to maritime rotary wing operations

The initial business case for the project was submitted in March 2004 and formal approval to enter the assessment phase was granted in July 2005. The preferred contractual route was to create an alliance with an integrator whose key role would be to embed best project management and partnering practice throughout the MOD/industry delivery team. Expressions of interest were invited in 2005 with 16 potential bidders replying. Nine companies eventually responded, and the IPT spent five months assessing their responses. Three companies have been selected, and are working with the MARS IPT as part of the down-selection process to identify the single preferred integrator with whom an alliance will be formed to seek final project approval in late 2008.

Project procurement challenges

This is a large and complex project being executed over a long period of time, which will include the delivery of the MARS ships and their subsequent support. The key challenges associated with the project are:

- Delivery to time and cost over the lifetime of the project
- Identification and mitigation of the major programme risks, which is particularly important and challenging
- Contractor selection – a full and comprehensive justification must be provided for each of the potential contractors, both successful and unsuccessful
- Significant challenges associated with establishing and gaining value for money – contractor selection is seen as key to achieving this
- Large and broad-based stakeholder community – the requirements need to be developed to meet the needs of all sectors of the armed forces (Navy/Army/Air Force)

Role and value of Commerce Decisions and AWARD®

The IPT built an innovative procurement strategy, which involved developing collaborative arrangements with potential suppliers that was not based entirely on price. They looked at both the past performance of interested parties and their exhibited behaviour.

“To achieve our objectives, the MARS IPT needed a rigorous selection process and decided to use a pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) to down-select from the nine companies in the competition to three. It was at this stage we involved Commerce Decisions,” observed Anne Holden, MARS IPT leader.

Commerce Decisions became involved in the project at the pre-qualification stage. Using their Structured Criteria



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Development (SCD) method, they played a pivotal role in converting the requirements that the IPT had identified into questions that could be posed to the potential suppliers. The SCD process ensured that the evaluation criteria clearly addressed the major programme risks perceived by the IPT, and that the resulting questions solicited the correct information from the potential suppliers to enable a rigorous evaluation.

The AWARD® tool was then used to support the collection and organisation of the substantial amounts of information submitted by the bidders, and the subsequent evaluation process.

“We used Commerce Decisions’ highly skilled and knowledgeable consulting team and the AWARD® tool to convert our requirements into questions and then to collate and analyse the results. This enabled us to underpin the procurement strategy and to execute it effectively and efficiently in a very complex working environment,” said Anne Holden. “The output that AWARD® generated enabled us to successfully debrief all the companies involved in the competition. This approach was extremely well received by the competing companies and aided us enormously.” Given the sensitivity and complexity involved in this project, the IPT engaged the services of the OGC (Office of Government Commerce) to carry out an independent audit of the process they used.

The OGC said, “The review team find that the process for down-selection to three potential integrators is well

designed, robust and defensible. We found little to criticise in the method employed or the overall process, which is clearly and demonstrably open and highly visible.”

One of the key benefits of using AWARD® was that the project team were able to generate reports rapidly. They found it simple to work with, generating analysis that was easy to read and interpret. “AWARD® provided us with an auditable structured approach that would enable an intelligent customer to articulate the information required in a way that was easily understood by an industrial bidder in an unambiguous format,” commented Anne Holden.

In addition to the MARS IPT using AWARD® Commerce Decisions provided a training session to the bidders to demonstrate how AWARD® works.

“With the help of Commerce Decisions, this critical selection process went to time and to cost. We will be using them for the next stage of the selection process to identify the preferred integrator.”

Anne Holden, MARS IPT leader

Support was offered to any of the bidders who wanted to understand more about how AWARD® was being used in the selection process.

“Commerce Decisions are a very professional organisation, and played a key role in helping us carry out a very successful competition. They were committed to getting the project right and were prepared to go through the required iterations, working very closely with us to do so. They were also very responsive to our requests. I was very impressed with the quality of their consultants, the value that the AWARD® tool delivered, and the way they worked with us throughout the project”, said Anne Holden.

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.



Note

Office of Government Commerce (OGC) is now Crown Commercial Service (CCS)

MARS IPT is now the Afloat Support Project Team and the project was renamed Fleet Tanker.