

Commerce Decisions supports Welsh Assembly in pan-Wales Workforce Development procurement project

Customer profile The Workforce Development Programme is sponsored by the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS). With the assistance of Value Wales (through the xchangewales project) and the support of Commerce Decisions, the team concluded a highly sensitive and complicated procurement exercise. As part of the Welsh Assembly, DCELLS contributes to the Welsh Government's vision for better public services. The Department aims to improve children's services, education and training provision to secure better outcomes for learners, business and employers. Value Wales acts as a catalyst for change, providing leadership, strategic direction, procurement training and best-practice guidance to help organisations achieve real and sustainable improvements. The xchangewales project has been developed to provide an eProcurement system available to all Welsh public sector organisations. It aims to deliver best-in-class solutions for:

- eTendering (including Requirement Management Auctions, Vendor Management and Contract Management)
- eEvaluation (including Contract Review and Collaborative Document Authoring)
- eTrading (including Catalogue Management, P2P systems, Schools, ePayments including the Welsh Purchasing Card)

xchangewales will enable online access to a range of contracts and other arrangements such as regional agreements or Office of Government Commerce (OGC) frameworks.

Project overview

The DCELLS Workforce Development Programme encourages and supports employers to increase productivity and competitiveness by improving the skills of the workforce. It provides advice, guidance and access to support, particularly for SMEs.

This project relates to the re-tendering for all contracts associated with the DCELLS Workforce Development Programme over a three-year period across Wales. The total contract value is more than £30 million and involves fixed contracts with a strong focus on the quality of provision.

Expressions of Interest were received from over 260 suppliers and the project generated more than 2,500 response documents.

The tender evaluation process consisted of three stages: qualification, technical assessment and a competency-based interview. All tenderers had the opportunity to be fully debriefed on the evaluation result and on their performance against each evaluation stage. Project procurement challenges The key challenges of this project were:

- working with a large number of stakeholders, bidders and evaluators
- managing a complex procurement and ensuring adherence to all regulatory requirements
- managing and distributing over 2,500 documents for evaluation
- delivering a clear and transparent audit trail
- ability to debrief losing bidders effectively
- delivering a robust evaluation process
- maintaining consistency and neutrality
- having a small project team, who were not procurement professionals, with limited resources



Role and value of Commerce Decisions and AWARD®

It was decided at the start to use the eSourcing package available from the Value Wales xchangewales project (awarded under the OGC Framework). This included the use of BravoSolution eTendering and AWARD® eEvaluation software from Commerce Decisions. AWARD® had 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®.

AWARD® was introduced at the design stage of the tender documents. Given the nature and sensitivity of the contract it was deemed appropriate to evaluate the submissions blind. This would have been difficult in a paper-based submission but was managed through AWARD® in the evaluation phase.

"Without AWARD®, the team would have been physically unable to carry out a 'blind' evaluation considering the large number of suppliers who tendered for the contracts.



In addition, AWARD® managed all the documentation and allowed us instant online access to information as and when it was needed,” said Helen Oliver, Senior eSourcing Project Manager, Value Wales xchangewales project.

Commerce Decisions assisted the project team with configuring the project and ran regional training sessions for the evaluators, all of whom were new to eEvaluation.

“AWARD® proved to be extremely easy to use and evaluators required less than 30 minutes training to get up and running with the tool,” said Helen Oliver.

The evaluators involved in the project found AWARD® extremely beneficial to the procurement process.

“As the main user for generating evaluators and results reports using the format provided by the AWARD® tool, I found them very beneficial to the whole process, particularly as a means for monitoring the progress of the evaluators and moderators,” observed Julie Martin who works for DCELLS.

She continued, “Under the role of Issues Manager, it allowed me to have full access to each tenderer’s submission, which also enabled me to review what answers they had actually given when dealing with queries raised by an evaluator. The whole AWARD® system gives an accurate audit trail of information to support each stage of the project, which again is extremely supportive in the environment in which I work. I believe that the main reason that this project was as successful as it was, can be attributed to the system being web-based and therefore allowed individuals to log on in our all offices or work from home to complete their evaluation part of the process.”

Another evaluator, Stephen Chaplin, commented: “I have been involved in this process on the last two occasions, the first time having to trawl through hundreds of pages by hand to read and score the evidence. For the second process we used AWARD® software which I found to be far more effective.”

A key part of the procurement involved meeting regulatory requirements. In particular, AWARD® allowed the team to meet the needs of the ‘Alcatel’ standstill period. These rules require a mandatory period of at least ten days between communicating the award decision to all tenderers and concluding the contract.

Commerce Decisions Professional Services team assisted the project team in managing the electronic evaluation. They helped ensure that the relevant pieces of information were viewed and interrogated and appropriately scored by the evaluators. AWARD® managed over 10,000 inputs from both bidders and evaluators during the procurement cycle.

“AWARD® allowed the project team to audit the whole process. They could see the evaluation in real time, which meant they could manage progress proactively and deal with issues and risks as the evaluation progressed. This definitely helped to improve the outcome and was a huge benefit in adhering to project deadlines,” said Helen Oliver.

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.

