

Joint procurement of TFT monitors in the UK

As one of the joint procurement (JP) activities within the LEAP project¹, the London Borough of Lewisham led a consortium of UK local authorities in tendering for energy efficient TFT monitors. As with cleaning products (carried out by ESPO, and also included in this CD-ROM), TFT monitors were selected as an appropriate product for JP, given the relatively uniform needs of different public authorities, and also the potential for substantial environmental gains in terms of energy efficiency.

JP activities are relatively common in the UK, with permanent organisations such as the London Contractors and Suppliers Group (LCSG) routinely organising joint tenders on behalf of members.

Recruiting additional authorities

Given Lewisham's experience in working with the LCSG as a member, it was routine for this group to be included in the tendering activity, which brings all 33 London Boroughs into the arrangement. In addition the LEAP partners Sandwell and the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO, which itself covers a number of authorities in the Midlands, see the case study on JP of cleaning materials in the UK) were also brought into the group of participants. This ensured that a large number of UK public authorities were able to take advantage of the procurement arrangements.

Model and contractual arrangements followed

The majority of the tendering work was carried out by Lewisham, the lead authority. However each participating authority was given an opportunity to provide comments on the tender documents prepared, which caused some delays in implementation.

In the role of lead authority, Lewisham took on a number of specific roles:

- Discuss contract approach with other Authorities
 - Research approach and identify possible contracting strategies
 - Prepare OJEU notice, contract documents
 - Circulation of tender documents
 - Deal with requests for clarification from interested suppliers
 - Evaluation of tenders and selection of winning supplier

ESPO took on responsibility for testing of products from interim winner of evaluation.

The tender was itself run as a framework call-off contract, whereby the tenderers provide a fixed discount from the list price for the given products meeting the specification for the contract period. The models covered include any additional models that become available during the contract period that meet the specification. Each participating authority and any additional authorities that wish to have a contract with the winning tenderer, will then set up their own contract with the winning tenderer as part of the call-off. As such, at the initial tendering stage no specific obligation to purchase on behalf of the participating authorities was set.

¹ www.leap-gpp-toolkit.org

In the evaluation model used financial criteria were weighted at 70%, and non-financial at 30%. The low weighting for non-financial criteria was the result of the strong emphasis on environmental issues in the product specification, effectively minimising the need for heavy weighting in the evaluation.

Results and benefits

Following the publishing of the Contract Notice 56 expressions of interest were received. Of these 16 were considered to be compliant, and provided a useful element of competition to ensure that an attractive offer was finally selected, with no noticeable difference in price from non-energy efficient models.

Additionally, other benefits were achieved:

- Reduced administrative costs for the non-lead participating authorities who were essentially able to “piggy-back” on the tender procedure carried out by Lewisham
- The process acted as a useful communication activity, raising awareness of environmental issues and future market demands among participating public authorities and suppliers of monitors

One problematic area was the difficulties between the partners in agreeing on technical evaluation of submitting proposals and testing of equipment, which caused delays. There is a need for clear a definition of roles and timeframes. There was also some confusion and concern regarding liabilities and obligations to purchase, although the contract structure proposed prevented this. Some authorities may have had existing arrangements that did not fit in with the timeframe or needing to clear the process with others i.e. IT within their authorities and may not have been able to clear this within the timeframes.

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