

# Advanced Procurement for Universities and Colleges Limited (APUC)

APUC's core vision is "to work jointly, as one team with client institutions, to maximise the contribution that advanced procurement makes to Scotland's investment in teaching, research and knowledge transfer such that institutions can deliver more with the funds that they have available".

## The Customer

APUC (Advanced Procurement for Universities and Colleges) Ltd is the procurement centre of expertise for Scotland's universities and colleges. Established in 2007, APUC aims to meet and exceed client expectations through the delivery of four client service streams:

- 1) Collaborative Contracting
- 2) Development and Sustainability including Policy and Best Practice
- 3) Institutional Procurement Shared Services
- 4) eSolutions

APUC has 44 members including many of the world's leading Universities and many international class Colleges. In addition, APUC also has close links with the Scottish Government, the other sectoral Centres of Procurement Expertise, the Scottish Funding Council as well as with fellow members of the UK Universities Purchasing Consortia group and the (UK) Higher Education Procurement Association.

"The ability to transfer documents and map questions directly between PCS Tender and AWARD® is a fantastic timesaving feature; the integration between the two systems has made our process seamless."

**Stephen Richardson**  
(Head of eSolutions)

## AWARD®

The APUC eSolutions team provides support across the Higher Education/Further Education (HE/FE) sector for a range of tools provided by the Scottish Government's eCommerce shared service, as well as developing and supporting specific tools in house such as Hunter (UK sector collaborative resource and contract management tool). One such product used is the Public Contracts Scotland (PCS-T) Tender portal, which is used for electronic tendering across the Scottish public sector. PCS Tender is underpinned by BravoSolution technology and provides a secure and efficient means by which buyers and suppliers manage tender exercises online.

The AWARD® electronic evaluation software provided by Commerce Decisions is used by APUC and its member organisations. AWARD® is a collaborative web-based software solution designed specifically to support strategic procurements. AWARD delivers a powerful document management capability supporting and enhancing the tender management process to deliver greater control and transparent audit trail, underpinning the tenderer debriefing process and managing challenges to the procurement outcome.

Commerce Decisions and BravoSolution are established partners, having worked together across the UK public sector for over 12 years; BravoSolution providing the eTendering capability and AWARD® supporting the more complex, high risk, strategic projects. For APUC, AWARD®



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complements the PCS Tender application by providing an evaluation environment which supports the complex and collaborative procurements which are a common feature in APUC's programme of work – particularly given its remit for collaboration and the geographic distribution of stakeholders.

AWARD® is used across all APUC procurements and provides a consistent and repeatable method of engaging stakeholders and collating the evaluation scores together with the justifications into a robust and defensible decision.

"AWARD® has significantly enhanced and accelerated the procurement process for us. In most cases we can get procurements set up for evaluation in under an hour. Our clients are becoming increasingly familiar with AWARD® and are realising the benefits. With our support, many are implementing AWARD® for use on their own procurements."

**Vicky Shanley**  
(Ops and Communications Specialist)

## Case Study – Waste Management Framework Agreement

The APUC Waste Management Services procurement was designed to establish a tailored Framework Agreement for the provision of

essential Waste Management Services available to all institutions across Scotland. The Framework Agreement covers waste awareness and segregation programmes, waste collection, uplift and disposal treatment – all of which were to be compliant with legislation. The Framework Agreement has a potential lifespan of 4 years and is worth in the region of £10M.

Due to the nature of waste management and the requirements of the HE/FE sector specifically, the Framework Agreement was split into a number of lots covering geographical areas and different materials/waste stream schedules.

Key considerations of the Framework Agreement was to reduce overall waste volumes and support initiatives led by Zero Waste Scotland, avoiding disposal to landfill. Additionally, APUC was keen to engage local suppliers; using their lotting strategy to secure SME partners where possible. This not only follows current best practice but also complies with the changes to Scotland's Public Procurement legislation including the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014.

In order to secure local knowledge and buy-in from the collaborating organisations, APUC engaged stakeholders from across its client base with representatives from each regional lot. In total there were 18 evaluators logging into AWARD®. APUC is committed to promoting positive environmental impacts through their activities wherever possible and this procurement was no different. AWARD® has proven to be an effective way of improving the evaluation process and has significantly reduced the

requirement for evaluators to travel. APUC was able to make use of web conferencing for consensus sessions and they expect this to be implemented more widely going forward.

"Evaluators love AWARD® - it makes their engagement in the procurement process simpler. They log in and they are evaluating with little training and no fuss! We're starting to see the efficiencies of using AWARD® in time, travel and subsistence costs, printing, paper and CO₂."

**Stephen Richardson**  
(Head of eSolutions)

"Historically we used spreadsheets to evaluate these types of procurements – generally due to the complexity and level of collaboration we require. Making use of other tools for these types of procurements proved to be manual and limited collaborative evaluation across multiple stakeholders. This didn't provide us with the robust reporting or audit trail we required. It's comforting to know that whatever we throw at AWARD® it can handle the complexity (for example, large volumes of questions, large teams of evaluators, lots/regions and so on).

**Jonathan Slack, (eSolutions Systems Manager)**

25 suppliers elected to submit tenders for one or more of the lots, and evaluators were assigned questions on the basis of their area of expertise and geographic region. The combination of the high number of tenderers, the complexity of the procurement, spread of evaluators and the number of lots made AWARD® the evaluation tool of choice.

## The Future

APUC is facing the on-going challenge of dealing with the biggest ever set of changes to public procurement legislation in Scotland.

"Debriefing is a real strong point of AWARD®- it gets right to the heart of where a tenderer was strong or weak. Tenderers appreciate the detail, and have confidence in the process as a result. AWARD® provides a very robust and defensible way of following our legal requirements – we've never been challenged and rarely hear from dissatisfied tenderers!"

**Vicky Shanley (Ops and Communications Specialist)**

## Making Use of AWARD®

AWARD is available to the Scottish Public Sector (and wider UK Government) via the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) GCloud Framework Agreement. The service is listed on the CCS's Digital Marketplace (SaaS):

[www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/g-cloud/services/](http://www.digitalmarketplace.service.gov.uk/g-cloud/services/)

"Having a repeatable approach across all of our procurement Framework Agreements delivered by well-trained internal staff is very important to our business. AWARD® has proven to be a key part of APUCs procurement solution and our offering to our clients. With the changes to procurement legislation in Scotland APUC will ensure awareness of AWARD® to its clients as a tool for delivering an efficient and inclusive procurement solution. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend AWARD® to other contracting authorities."

**Claire Skinner, Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Operational Procurement and Compliance**