

Critical MOD food supply contract successfully let on time and to cost using AWARD® software from Commerce Decisions

Customer profile

The Defence Food Services (DFS) IPT is part of the commodities cluster within the DLO (now part of DE&S). It is responsible for:

- Support to Operations and peacetime feeding
- Subject Matter Expert advice to Front Line Commands on Pay As You Dine (PAYD) roll-out
- Food supply (letting and managing the MOD's global food supply contract)
- Providing all policy and doctrine on food service for all three of the Armed Services
- Providing consultancy advice on major catering refits and new buildings from an equipment and infrastructure perspective
- Quality Assurance on all foodstuffs entering the MOD food supply chain
- Development, procurement and management of operational ration packs.

Project overview

The new Food Supply Contract is a five-year contract worth approximately £300m with an option for two 2-year extensions. The MOD has enjoyed firstclass support from the current contractor but was obliged to let a new contract in the light of European legislation which precluded the IPT from extending the existing contract. To complete this project the IPT used a procurement strategy that had been developed by the Food Category Management Team - part of the Procurement Reform Implementation Organisation (PRIO).

This contract seeks to build on tried and tested processes in order to deliver food solutions with the primary focus being on operations.

Project procurement challenges

This is a critical project in that the provision of food plays a vital role in maintaining the morale component of fighting power. The Armed Forces have become used to receiving high quality food cooked by high calibre individuals in combat situations. This large and complex project represented a number of challenges to the project team.

Key challenges were:

- Time - the team within the IPT to let this new contract, which had to be up and running in 22 months, had only been formed in January 2005
- Resources - no additional resources were available so existing internal resources had to be used
- It was important to achieve a seamless transition from one supplier to another
- There were a large number of stakeholders including front line command and the permanent joint HQ. In all, there were almost 20 stakeholders whose buy-in was required, making communications very important
- The need to create competition - there are not many organisations in the UK that have the capabilities and the infrastructure to meet the requirements of the contract.

Role and value of Commerce Decisions and AWARD®

Evaluation plan preparation

Following the response to the invitations for Expressions of Interest and a subsequent industry day, a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) was issued - at which stage Commerce Decisions and AWARD®



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became involved. AWARD® was used to coordinate and consolidate the responses to the PQQ. In all, three companies responded.

In order to ensure the smooth running of the project, Commerce Decisions delivered briefings to a number of the evaluators and stakeholders on the use of AWARD®. As the project gathered momentum, Commerce Decisions Professional Services worked with

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the DFS project team to develop the evaluation plan. This included the weightings and the scoring methodology for the specific questions, of which there were 56 of a technical nature and others covering risk, commercial and soft issues. "Commerce Decisions played a significant part in developing the scoring methodology for the questions for the ITT. This gave us a great deal of confidence in the process.

Commerce Decisions played an invaluable role in helping us simplify a potentially complex evaluation process," commented Lt Col Mark Beardsell, Food Supply Contract Team Leader.

Use of AWARD®

The ITT and supporting documentation were then loaded into AWARD® and the system configured to deliver the evaluation plan.

Once the tenders were received from the bidders, there was a very short period of time allocated for the evaluation process, due to the time pressures on the project team to complete the contract.

"Remarkably, in the light of the size and complexity of the bids, with the help of AWARD® we managed to evaluate the responses and gain consensus from all of our stakeholders in less than seven weeks. We could not have done this without using AWARD®," said Mark Beardsell.

To speed up the process further and reduce the complexity for the evaluation team, all

the bidders were issued with electronic questionnaires as part of the ITT. This enabled their answers and supporting documentary evidence to be loaded into AWARD® for the project team to access and view. By using AWARD®, the evaluators were able to search the considerable volume of documentation easily, and to cut and paste relevant evidence to demonstrate why an individual score was achieved. This was particularly important as the contract had to go through an extremely rigorous approval process.

"Using AWARD® facilitated a very rapid and effective evaluation. The system was extremely user-friendly and was fundamental in producing evidence to support the decisions that we made," observed Mark Beardsell.

Legal challenge

As with all contracts of this nature, the ability to show a full and transparent audit trail was very important - particularly as one of the losing bidders mounted a legal challenge to the contract award. Using AWARD®, the IPT was able to demonstrate clearly that the decisions had been taken properly and the contract awarded fairly.

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.

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