

Scottish Borders Council use AWARD® to support their major Capital Projects programme

Customer profile

Scottish Borders is a region within South East Scotland covering over 1,800 square miles of some of the most scenic countryside in Europe, and with a population of about 110,000. The Scottish Borders Council is charged with delivering major services including Education, Social Work, Roads and Transport, and Planning. There are 18,000 children across the Borders, with nine secondary schools and 65 primary schools.

Project overview

In 2003, the arrival of new management at the Council triggered a major review of the schools in the area. Following the outcome of the review, two multi disciplined teams were set up to create a schools design brief, which was subsequently agreed by the Council. Out of this, the 3HS (three High Schools) Project emerged. The 3HS Project is a PPP project that has been created to develop the educational facilities of Berwickshire, Earlston and Eyemouth High Schools.

All three high schools will be new builds on green field sites. The project is valued at about £70million. The Council's objectives for its new schools are to:

- Enable effective, modern learning and teaching
- Raise levels of achievement
- Enable the integration of pupils with special needs
- Enable community access and use of facilities
- Improve on the existing facilities management (FM) delivery
- Meet the realistic expectations of a wide stakeholder base

The scope of the project includes the design, build and servicing of all three schools. A full range of standard FM services has been included in the scope, with the exception of catering, which is likely to be retained by the Council.

Project procurement challenges

This is a very high profile project as it is one of the largest that has ever been carried out by the Council.

The key challenges of the project were:

- To ensure high levels of objectivity during the procurement process
- To provide regular debriefs and management information
- To manage the workload of up to 20 evaluators on any one day – all of whose input was key to the decision-making process
- To ensure that the evaluators were able to provide their input efficiently and effectively
- To maintain the involvement of the large number of stakeholders, and to keep them up to date with the project
- To minimise the intense time pressure on the project team during the evaluation cycle
- To satisfy the requirements of the regular and constant audits by specialist interest groups
- To maximise the level of teamwork in order to ensure the success of the project



Role and value of Commerce Decisions and AWARD®

Commerce Decisions has worked on a large number of projects of this size and nature, as part of the "Building Schools for the Future" programme. This enabled the company to bring considerable expertise and knowledge to the project team.

"Along with the invaluable help that Commerce Decisions gave us in the development of the evaluation strategy, they also supported us with a series of excellent training sessions. This provided the team with all we required to ensure we made the most effective use of AWARD®."

Mike Clifford, School Liaison Manager 3HS Project, Scottish Borders Council



Commerce Decisions were involved two months before the bids were received. In all, there were three bidders. The first step was for Commerce Decisions to work with the project team on the evaluation strategy, which formed the central component of the contract letting process. Once created, it was presented to the key stakeholders for final sign-off.

“Along with the invaluable help that Commerce Decisions gave us in the development of the evaluation strategy, they also supported us with a series of excellent training sessions. This provided the team with all we required to ensure we made the most effective use of AWARD®,” observed Mike Clifford, School Liaison Manager, 3HS Project, Scottish Borders Council.

Once all the bidders’ responses were received, they were uploaded to the AWARD® server. This enabled the huge amounts of information that were contained in the bidders’ responses to be accessed easily and quickly – this would not have been possible with a paper-based system.

“AWARD® allowed us to search the responses rapidly, which saved us a considerable amount of time, particularly with the technical, aesthetic and architectural issues,” said Mike Clifford.

The evaluation task was further complicated by the fact that each bidder was responding not just to proposals for the three schools but also to options for two of the schools to be built on either a new site or the existing site. The AWARD® system is designed to deal with such complications and allowed the team to evaluate in a straightforward manner.

Once the evaluation was completed, the responses were presented to the stakeholder board. AWARD® allowed the project team to take the Council through each of the bids, clearly illustrating both the strengths and weaknesses of each across the five key areas of consideration: technical, environmental, educational, financial and legal.

“During the evaluation process, we called on support from Commerce Decisions when it was required, which ensured that momentum was maintained on the project,” commented Mike Clifford.

The preferred bidder was identified at the beginning of 2006. AWARD® was used to assist in the debriefing of the losing bidders, allowing the team to identify clearly where the individual bids had failed meet the project team’s requirements.

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.

