

Telford uses AWARD® to place contract for major £70 million education PFI project

Customer profile

The Borough of Telford & Wrekin is a unitary authority with full responsibility for all local government services in the area, including education, social services and libraries. The authority took on these responsibilities in 1998 and full borough status was granted in 2002. Its focus is on 'building a successful, prosperous and healthy community which offers a good quality of life for all the people of Telford & Wrekin'. With over 5,300 employees, Telford & Wrekin serves a population of close to 160,000 and manages an annual budget of more than £125 million. This puts the investment in this education PFI project of £70 million into context, demonstrating what a major initiative this is for the Borough.

Project overview

The Hadley Learning Community & Jigsaw Project represents a significant commitment by the Borough. The aims of the project are to:

- Address the need for more secondary education places in the right location
- Provide purpose-built accommodation for young people with special needs
- Reduce the need for out-of-county special needs placements

The process of raising funding started in 2001 with the bid for £70 million PFI credits. Approval was secured in March 2003 and the EU procurement process started in June 2003. At this point, Commerce Decisions was introduced to help implement the bidder down-selection strategy and plans. The team aimed to select the preferred bidder by mid-2004, achieve contract signature by the end of the year and meet the September 2006 deadline for opening the new facilities. This is a complex project to provide a wide range of facilities on the Hadley site including a major new secondary school, a primary school children's centre and facilities for youth community sports, lifelong learning and arts, all supported by the latest technology. In addition, a special school is to be built on campus providing care and accommodation for young children with complex needs.

The Jigsaw project providing specialist support for vulnerable children is on a separate site. Project procurement challenges A project of this size represents a significant challenge. The demanding timescales and the requirements of the EU procurement process presented the Telford project team with a difficult and complex task.

Key challenges were:

- Providing a robust and clear audit trail to the two government departments jointly funding the scheme (DfES and DCMS)
- Involving hundreds of stakeholders, all of whom wanted input into the decisions, particularly with respect to scope and design
- Ensuring high levels of objectivity during the decision-making process
- Facilitating rapid responses from the many stakeholders who were external to the core project team
- Providing the regular progress reports required by team and senior management
- Ensuring a successful outcome to the project
- Providing a sound basis for future strategic procurements within the Borough



Role and value of Commerce Decisions and AWARD®

Commerce Decisions was introduced into the programme at the Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) stage. At this point, the ITN consisted of more than 400 criteria on which to evaluate the three bidders. The project team had opted to use the 10-point scale scoring scheme based on the 4Ps methodology.

"The Hadley Learning Community is a major investment in education for the Borough. With the formidable challenges it presented, in particular the difficult funding process, the large number of stakeholders involved and the need to follow a complex process to the letter, we knew we needed to find an organisation that had an in-depth understanding of strategic and complex procurements.

Commerce Decisions was able to demonstrate that it was that organisation."

Tracy Penrose, Project Manager, Borough of Telford & Wrekin



The AWARD® software was easily configured to support this approach, and Telford's processes and documentation were incorporated and imported into the AWARD® system.

"The ability to easily and rapidly configure AWARD® to support the approach we had decided to take was a key criterion in our decision to use the tool in the project," observed Tracy Penrose.

With the support of the Commerce Decisions Professional Services team, the ITN criteria were configured in AWARD®, together with appropriate assessors, scoring scheme and weightings. At this point, Commerce Decisions carried out sensitivity tests on individual criteria weightings to ensure that the overall evaluation would properly reflect the key issues that the project team had identified.

To accommodate the different preferences of the many stakeholders, both within Telford and outside the Borough, a combination of on-line and off-line scorecards was used to allow them to input their scores easily and efficiently.

"The ability that AWARD® gave us to accommodate the large number of stakeholders and make it very easy and flexible for them to input their scores was important in terms of speeding up the whole process and enhancing their contribution to the project," said Tracy Penrose. "Because AWARD® is so flexible and easy to use, we were able to accommodate last-minute changes to assist assessors who couldn't access AWARD® on-line."

Throughout the process, progress and management reports were produced automatically to give the project manager and the team access to up-to-date information and, therefore, the ability to brief key individuals and departments in local and national government.

In July 2004, the preferred bidder was appointed on schedule, and work has begun on the site. Main construction is due to start in 2005, with the Hadley facilities due to open in September 2006.

"A procurement of this nature represents a huge workload and the management of a very complex process. Making it easy for the stakeholders to respond while they deal with their day jobs has had a powerful impact on shortening timescales. AWARD® has given me control over the whole process and has had a significant effect on the quality of the outcome," commented Tracy Penrose.

"Commerce Decisions' involvement has had a major impact on the Hadley Community procurement process. The combination of their professional services team and AWARD® software has had a fundamental effect on our ability to make this project fly. Time to market has been reduced and the overall quality of the procurement process substantially enhanced."

Tracy Penrose, Project Manager, Borough of Telford & Wrekin

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.

