Commerce Decisions supports the Welsh Assembly Government in the procurement of a new pan-Wales Performance Management Software System

Customer profile

The Welsh Assembly Government is the devolved government for Wales. It is responsible for most of the issues of day-to-day interest to the people of Wales, including matters concerning the economy, health, education and local government. The role of the Assembly is to exercise those functions devolved to it in order to:

- Make decisions on matters that affect people's daily lives

- Develop and implement policy

- Make subordinate legislation (e.g. regulations and statutory guidance)

- Propose Assembly Measures (Welsh laws)

Project overview

The Assembly awarded the contract for provision of a pan-Wales Performance Management Software system in February 2007 to Computacenter Aspiren.

The system is available to the 30 identified stakeholders (all Local Authorities, National Parks and Fire & Rescue Services). It will provide a tool for stakeholders to monitor and manage their own performance by bringing a range of information together – performance indicators, risks, projects and milestones, actions etc.

In line with the wider public sector agenda, the system will provide the ability to combine performance information from across local partnership organisations and to see shared pictures of performance. It will also provide an opportunity to benchmark performance across stakeholders.

The definition of the system and the procurement process was managed by the Local Government Data Unit – Wales. Their mission is to help local authorities and the Assembly to use data more effectively so that they understand and improve the services they provide to the people of Wales. The Data Unit is an independent body that sits between the Welsh Assembly and Welsh Local Government.

Project procurement challenges

The Data Unit was given the responsibility for collaborating with the 30 stakeholders to create the requirements, develop the system specification and then to procure it. The key challenges for the project team in the procurement were:

- Gaining agreement among the large number of stakeholders and maintaining their enthusiasm for the project over an extended period

- Developing a system that had to be future-proofed

- Dealing with a complex set of requirements

- Definition of the procurement process itself

- Coordinating the involvement of a team of evaluators from a wide range of backgrounds who were geographically dispersed

- Managing a large number of bidders: 12

- Managing a significant number of documents and data that needed to be accessed easily and rapidly

- Providing a transparent audit trail

- Effective debriefing of the losing bidders

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Role and value of Commerce Decisions and AWARD®

Commerce Decisions became engaged with the project before the tender was sent out by the Data Unit, via Value Wales.* (Value Wales is the centre for procurement excellence that recommended the use of the OGC eSourcing managed service.) The Data Unit opted to use both the eEvaluation software (AWARD®) and professional services support from Commerce Decisions.

Working with Commerce Decisions professional services the Data Unit were able to pre-programme individual weightings for each criterion into AWARD®. These reflected stakeholder priorities yet ensured that the assessors were not aware of the weightings.

"We had almost 300 requirements as part of the specification, which were set up into categories in the software. We wanted to ensure that the assessors were able to access only the information that was relevant to them, and also, being geographically dispersed, that it was accessible wherever they needed to do their work. Using the AWARD® web-based software allowed us to do this very effectively and efficiently," said Denise Phillips.

During the evaluation process, each evaluator was able to enter their score into AWARD®, automatically generating an audit trail and capturing the rationale behind why they had come to particular conclusions.

"Using AWARD® allowed the input from all the evaluators to be pulled into a consensus view, enabling me to identify easily any differences of opinion. I was able to highlight specific areas that required follow-up with a site visit to gain clarification," observed Denise Phillips.

Using AWARD® allowed the Data Unit to reduce paperwork radically and enabled the project manager to monitor the project's progress. During the consensus stage, they were able to link easily to areas that were causing problems.

"Because we were able to link the appropriate response into AWARD®, it made it a much smoother process for the assessors and significantly reduced the amount of paper. At the same time the reporting functionality in AWARD® was very powerful. It helped me to substantiate the assessor team output and to give clear and precise feedback to the losing bidders," commented Denise Phillips.

*Value Wales (Procurement)'s principal services include advice, guidance and support on best practice. It also undertakes a strategic role in negotiating pan-Wales contracts in key areas and leads national initiatives where centralised co-ordination will deliver marked benefits.

Commerce Decisions has provided the evaluation solution, AWARD®, across the public sector since 2002. AWARD® formed the evaluation part of the OGCbuying. solutions eSourcing capability from 2005, and is now available on the government's GCloud framework.

OGCbuying solutions is now the Crown Commercial Service.

"Public sector procurement staff now have a very effective tool to help achieve value for money, and will be able to transact more effectively with the supply market."

Barry Donovan, Director of eCommerce at OGCbuying.solutions (now Crown Commercial Service)

"We used AWARD® extensively throughout the project. I would estimate that it saved us close to 50% in time versus what I would normally spend on this type of assessment. It also improved the overall quality of the outcome. I would definitely use AWARD® again for projects of this nature."

Denise Phillips, Improvement and Development Advisor, Local Government Data Unit – Wales

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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