

# Commerce Decisions supports OGCbuying.solutions in successful letting of pan-government framework agreement

## Customer profile

OGCbuying.solutions is an executive agency of the Office of Government Commerce (OGC). Its primary role is to leverage public sector purchasing power in order to deliver significant savings to its customers.

OGCbuying.solutions source more than 500,000 products and services from over 500 suppliers. Its Framework Agreements, under the brand name 'Catalist', and Managed Services enable public sector organisations to buy what they need, quickly and costeffectively through pre-tendered arrangements that comply with EU procurement legislation.

A new Government strategy launched in January 2007, 'Transforming Government Procurement', highlighted the central importance of procurement in delivering highquality public services and best value for money. The OGC will deliver this by:

- Setting procurement standards and monitoring performance and capability
- Developing a cadre of skilled procurement professionals across Government
- Driving value for money through collaborative procurement
- Playing a stronger role in delivering major projects
- Improving the management and use of the Government estate.

## Project overview

The Legal Services framework agreement is worth an estimated £240 million over the four-year lifetime of the contract. The project scope was to refresh the contractual framework from which a wide range of public sector organisations can procure quality, value-for-money legal services.

Commerce Decisions became involved in the project at the end of the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) stage when the Invitation to Tender (ITT) was sent out to 73 companies. Their AWARD® software was used to collate the responses and to manage the ITT process.

Once the responses had been received from the bidders, the evaluation process was started using AWARD®. The evaluation team comprised 22 evaluators located all around the country.

The bid assessment covered eight key evaluation categories, and between 20 and 30 bidders submitted a proposal for each category.

Within each category, the evaluation was conducted in three stages:

- Compliance with the tender instructions
- Evaluation of the quality
- Price evaluation.

Legal Service framework agreements were awarded to firms that could demonstrate competitive rates as well as an ability to provide high-quality professional services.

## Project procurement challenges

The key challenges of this project for OGCbuying.solutions were:

The nature of the project itself – dealing with the complex legal market

- Providing a clear and transparent audit trail
- Managing a significant number of documents and data that needed to be accessed easily and rapidly
- Coordinating the involvement of a team of geographically dispersed evaluators



- Dealing with a complex set of requirements
- Working to tight timescales
- Gaining agreement among many stakeholders spread across many government departments
- Managing a large number of bidders competing for the eight lots; 73 suppliers were down selected through to the final ITT stage, which resulted in the generation of over 200 bids
- Effective debriefing of the unsuccessful bidders.

**"AWARD® gave me tremendous project control, which allowed me to deliver the project on time and to a consistently high quality. It enabled me to focus on the right areas and gave me clarity of purpose. I will definitely be using AWARD® again."**

**Pat Desmond, OGCbuying.solutions**



## Role and value of Commerce Decisions and AWARD®

This large and complex project started with a PQQ, which generated interest across the eight lots from over 100 suppliers. On average, 70 suppliers bid for each lot.

It was clear that a paper-based system would not be adequate to run a high quality procurement. The project team was concerned about legal challenges, so needed a system that would provide a clear, robust and transparent audit trail. AWARD® was identified as the best tool to help the project team carry out an efficient and effective procurement.

The project was led by Pat Desmond, Senior Frameworks Manager for Corporate Support at OGCBuying.solutions, who commented: "I needed a system that would help me to manage the project across 22 evaluators, all of whom were based remotely. I also needed confidence that I could respond to any legal challenge. It was clear to me early on in the project lifecycle that the capabilities of AWARD® would be perfect for my needs. This proved to be correct."

The project team had put together the criteria for the ITT, and Commerce Decisions advised on how best to instruct the bidders so that their responses could be easily evaluated. "The feedback from the bidders about AWARD® was very positive. They all found it very easy to use" observed Pat.

The project team was put under considerable time pressure to complete the evaluation. Using AWARD® enhanced the quality of the evaluation and significantly reduced the time it took.

The report-generating capabilities of AWARD® enabled OGCBuying.solutions to exercise great control over the procurement process. The project manager could review the progress of individual evaluators in real time, so that those who were falling behind could be identified and followed up.

Feedback from evaluators on the project was very positive. For example, Gary Bolton of HMRC commented, "I found AWARD® to be excellent and it allowed me to work remotely from home and at the office. I was able to access the relevant material quickly, and to input and save my responses without a problem."

AWARD® significantly improved the quality of the whole evaluation, and made it much faster. The evaluators were able to focus on answering the questions rather than churning through vast amounts of paperwork. The evaluation took two months using AWARD®; using the traditional paper based method it would have taken three times longer.

AWARD® also gave OGCBuying.solutions confidence in the accuracy of the evaluation data and the subsequent results. Under EU regulations, it is a requirement to provide a certain amount of feedback to suppliers, whether they are successful at tender stage or not.

Using AWARD®, OGCBuying.solutions were able to improve the quality of the debriefs they provided to suppliers. The system generated timely, relevant information, and suppliers were impressed with the quality of the debriefs they received.

Note: OGCBuying.solutions is no longer a UK government department. Its role has been taken over by the Crown Commercial Service (CCS).

AWARD® and associated services are available via CCS's GCloud framework.

## 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.