

CASE STUDY

Framework for Specialist Consultancy Support for the Transport Major Schemes Programme

Summary

With the support of the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP) this project has created 3 frameworks which can be used by all highway authorities in the South West (SW) of England to procure consultancy support for the development of transport major schemes. The frameworks run for 4 years and span major schemes project management, procurement advice and infrastructure design, allowing local authorities to procure the specialised services they require more quickly and effectively than may otherwise have been the case.

Project Background

Developing major transport schemes requires highly specialised skills and has significant peaks in workload. The West of England Multi-Area Agreement (based on the Regional Funding Allocation RFA2 programme) estimates that to bring the sub-region's major schemes through to implementation requires the investment of perhaps £48m in development costs over a 10 year period. Much of this equates to third party consultancy work within scope of this project, say £8m over the life of the framework. Consequently there is potential for significant financial cost savings to be achieved from smarter procurement.

The West of England major transport schemes programme has to date been pursued with the support of a number of consultancies procured in a variety of ways. To improve efficiency and effectiveness it was recognised that there would be benefit in undertaking joint sub-regional procurement for specialist support around the transport major schemes programme, and to gain added value by opening up these frameworks to other highway authorities in the SW.

To this end the project has included:

- Reviewing existing arrangements and wider frameworks in this field,
- Scoping interest amongst SW authorities and identification of potential barriers to use,
- Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) advertisement for expressions of interest,
- Assessing pre-qualification material and identifying a short list to tender,
- Preparing briefs and legal agreements to support wider use and streamlined application,
- Defining tender assessment criteria for initial procurement and framework use,
- Assessing tenders, contract award and completing contract documentation,
- A User Guide and workshop to assist those wishing to access the frameworks.

What were the key original goals and objectives?

The key original goals and objectives of the project were to create major schemes consultancy arrangements which:

- Meet the needs of the West of England authorities and the wider SW region,
- Provide robust and fit for purpose frameworks which enable more responsive and resource-efficient procurement,
- Are cost-effective and provide sufficient capability and capacity for effective delivery of the consultancy services.

Were these achieved?

The project achieved its primary objective in that the new frameworks were awarded in March 2010. A procurement through the framework for support with one aspect of the West of England major transport schemes programme was launched in April 2010 and this has indicated that arrangements support streamlined procurement and provide suitable consultant skills. A number of further West of England commissions are planned in the coming year.

What benefits have been achieved?

Whilst it is difficult to quantify, it is estimated that based upon the RFA2 major transport schemes programme the frameworks could deliver benefits of some £960,000 over their four year duration. This is based upon estimates of financial benefits arising from:

- Mitigating the impacts of delay to schemes within the RFA2 programme arising from lack of resources of suitable capacity and capability when needed,
- Reducing the resources required to undertake procurement,
- Providing cost effective arrangements by balancing responsiveness with competition through 'mini-tenders' amongst pre-qualified consultancies.

In addition is anticipated that non-quantifiable benefits will arise in terms of skills transfer and development of in-house expertise arising from these longer term consultancy arrangements, the learning benefits of undertaking the project, and sharing the outcomes and the experiences with a wider audience.

What has led to the success of the project?

A key positive feature of the project has been the way in which it has been developed in partnership by the West of England authorities using the well established governance and project management approach applied to transport major schemes and other cross-boundary initiatives. It secured the necessary resources (technical, procurement, and legal) and 'buy-in' to ensure it was delivered to time and budget. Valuable feedback was also provided by officers of South West authorities outside of the West of England who assisted in developing the procurement specification and ensuring there were no barriers to wider use.

Transferability

This case study report will be shared widely amongst potential users of the framework, and transport and procurement practitioners. A User Guide has also been produced which provides a step-by-step manual for those within the West of England or across the South West wishing to use the frameworks. A workshop has been held involving the successful consultants and the authorities to explain requirements and processes, and to promote use.

Contacts

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