



## LCE Highways - Early market engagement

### **LCE Sustainable Procurement project & London Borough of Croydon**

#### Supplier Engagement Focus

*Early market engagement with suppliers of products used within a specific contract*

In April 2007 a Meet the Buyer event was held to bring together suppliers of products relevant to the Minor Highways Works Contract, Local Authority Engineers, Consultants and Contractors.

The purpose of the event was:

- Early engagement with suppliers of sustainable products
- Identify solutions to overcome barriers in using more sustainable products within a London Authority contract
- Encourage innovation in product development through knowledge sharing

#### Why.....

This initiative was part of the London Centre of Excellence Sustainable Procurement project led by Camden to assist in improving the sustainability of a contract through tendering. Croydon wished to update the Schedule of Rates for their Minor Highway Works contract with more sustainable and innovative products at contract renewal. Early market engagement has been demonstrated that collaboration between the public sector and the supply chain can bring much needed innovative solutions.

#### How.....

- The supplier engagement exercise was undertaken in collaboration with the DTI/DEFRA Forward Commitment Procurement (FCP) project, which resulted in the issue of a Prior Information Notice (PIN) and the subsequent Meet the Buyer event.
- The PIN provided forewarning that Contractors would be asked how they could assist Croydon in improving the sustainability of the contract at tender and requested responses from suppliers, manufacturers and designers with more sustainable and innovative products.
- The Centre for Sustainability at the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) was commissioned to review PIN responses.
- 31 responses were received to the PIN and on review 21 were recognised as relevant to the contract and were invited to attend the Meet the Buyer event.
- Representatives from Highways teams, consultants and contractors of London Boroughs were invited to the event.

#### Outcome of event.....

- Over 70 people attended the event, with engineers and consultants representing 12 local authorities, 19 suppliers, London Remade, NISP, and TRL. Contractors were invited but none attended.
- Feedback responses show all attendees identified new sustainable products to use in their contracts, with 64% finding some and the remaining 36% finding many new products.
- Croydon identified 50% of suppliers had new products suitable to their Minor Works contract, a further 30% suitable to other Croydon contracts such as Highways Maintenance and Parks and a further 10% were suited to large scale developments or utility companies.





### Lessons learned.....

- Considerable effort in finding the right people within an organisation to invite is needed up front with regular reminders.
- Hosting the event as a pre-tender meeting could be useful for small contractors with limited resources and who may not understand the benefits of attending such an event.
- If the event could be linked to several contracts and hence increase the value due for tender more interest may have been generated from Contractors.
- The format of the event limited the suitability of more affordable or even free venues. Council facilities could have been used if the format was exhibition only without the breakout groups for any forum held.
- Bringing in external expertise to review the PIN responses proved very useful. If a forum is to be held external assistance can be beneficial if additional staff are not available to assist in the short term lead up to the event and during the event.
- Use of a PIN to engage with the market is not common practice, considerable promotion is required, particularly linking to best practice organisations and industry associations.
- The clear opportunity for further uptake of suppliers products through the upcoming tender created strong interest from suppliers.
- To attract innovative suppliers with emerging technologies who may have limited funds for promotion and it is beneficial to run such an event without any attendance fees.
- Held regionally such an event can encourage much needed information sharing between local authorities as well as the suppliers.

### Resources Requirements.....

**Staff Time:** PIN: 25% of one person's time for 2.5 mths.

Event: 50% one person, 30% one person, both increasing towards the event.

**Cost:** Venue, catering & other facilities: £6K (potential to use Local Authority facilities, depending on size and format of event).

Consultancy: Review of responses £2K (could use internal technical expertise);  
Concept viability £5K (useful where the event combines a forum).

**Planning:** Approx. 2.5 months to allow adequate response time for the PIN and a further 2.5 months to allow for event organisation.

### What next.....

Specifications will be developed to cover products identified as suitable to add to the Schedule of Rates. Croydon is considering replicating the event at future contract renewal intervals.

### Resources for Replication.....

The following can be downloaded from the LCE Sustainable Procurement project website:

- PIN, prospectus, and response form
- Meet the Buyer event presentations

[http://www.lcpe.gov.uk/sustainable/Highways\\_contract\\_update.asp](http://www.lcpe.gov.uk/sustainable/Highways_contract_update.asp)

### Contact

The Planning and Transportation Department  
London Borough of Croydon

Nicole Fletcher  
Strategic Procurement Unit  
London Borough of Camden

