



LCE Meals on Wheels – Supplier engagement forum

LCE Sustainable Procurement project & London Borough of Islington

Supplier Engagement Focus

Pre-tender market engagement.

In October 2006 a Supplier Engagement Forum was held to bring together first and second tier suppliers to the Meals on Wheels service. The purpose of the event was to:

- Encourage dialogue between first and second tier suppliers of community meals service on improving the sustainability of the service.
- Identify good practice in place and opportunities for improvement to inform the procurement approach.
- Highlight the sustainability objectives set for the contract renewal and Islington's commitment to delivering sustainability through procurement.

Why.....

This initiative was part of the London Centre of Excellence Sustainable Procurement project led by Camden. The project team was assisting the London Borough of Islington to improve the sustainability of their Meals in the Home contract and had developed a set of sustainability objectives for the contract. The benefits of engaging with suppliers early to gather knowledge in relation to programme objectives has been recognised by OGC.

How.....

- The supplier engagement exercise was undertaken in collaboration with the London Borough of Islington, London Food Link (LFL), and the Government Office for London (GOL) and supported by the London Borough of Hackney and the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea.
- Islington invited known first and second tier suppliers to attend a brief workshop at their premises.
- Presentations given provided background to Islington's sustainability commitment; the sustainability objectives set and why; and examples of how sustainability has been incorporated into other food contracts successfully. The presentation was followed by a workshop to discuss what contractors were already doing, where the council and contractors could work together to make improvements and monitoring the achievements.

Outcome of event.....

- The event was attended by a number of first and second tier suppliers, staff from Islington Council's social services and procurement teams and representatives from LFL and GOL, and representatives of other London Boroughs.
- Sustainability objectives set for the contract were agreed as appropriate by attendees, who were already looking at many of the issues, particularly waste and energy, where efforts on reduction can provide financial benefits to suppliers.
- Suppliers provided examples of good practice that were in line with or in some cases ahead of expectations on the sustainability objectives set.
- No issues of conflict between sustainability objectives and service delivery methods were raised.





Lessons learned.....

- Suppliers were reluctant to engage in an open dialogue in front of competitors and define specific issues on contract delivery that limited improvements against sustainability objectives.
- The audience in attendance was limited, a broader invite, linking to a relevant industry association and bringing in additional second tier suppliers might have improved the openness of discussions.
- Second tier suppliers tend to be very small businesses with limited resources, several invited did not have staff availability to attend, combining the event as part of a pre-tender meeting would improve the benefits of their attendance.
- Linking the event to the renewal of several local authority contracts would have generated keener interest from suppliers.
- A regional focus for the event including other Local Authorities within London would have brought an added benefit of information sharing between local authorities as well as the suppliers.

Resources Requirements.....

Staff Time: Event: ½ day; organisation: approximately 3 days.

Cost: Nil, Islington council facilities were used.

Planning: 1-2 months in advance to allow adequate response time from attendees and secure a venue.

What next.....

- Information provided by suppliers through from the event was considered in the development of specifications for a toolkit for tendering for sustainability for Meals on Wheels.
- Suppliers were invited to comment on Key Performance Indicators developed for the tendering toolkit, to ensure they were measureable and appropriate, given the sustainability objectives.
- Suppliers were invited to the toolkit launch at the Better Food for London event, held as part of London Sustainability Weeks. The event was also attended by local authority staff, hospitals, primary care trusts, NHS food partnerships and various charities.

Resources for Replication.....

The main event presentation, tendering toolkit and presentations for the Better Food for London event can be downloaded from the LCE Sustainable Procurement project website:

http://www.lcpe.gov.uk/sustainable/meals_on_wheels.asp

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