



Case Study: Becta

KEY ASPECTS:

- Increased value for money in ICT procurement
- Enhanced coherence, reliability and sustainability of systems
- Improved outcomes for learners

“The framework and the advice and guidance from Becta gave us confidence that we’d be able to find a supplier who could offer us best value, quality and reliability, and deliver to our requirements.”

Becta:

Harnessing technology for education, skills and children’s services

The government’s lead agency for ICT is spearheading a drive to make the benefits of technology available to learners of all ages. Through its strategy and procurement work, Becta is helping learners to achieve their full potential, while transforming the education experience.

The challenge: a fragmented picture

The picture of ICT provision in schools in past years has been a fragmented one. With 23,000 separate institutions buying equipment and services, influenced by 150 local authorities, the needs of learners and teachers have not always been met consistently or cost-effectively.

The solution: a system-wide approach to ICT

In March 2005 the government launched its ambitious strategy, Harnessing Technology – a system-wide approach to applying ICT in education, skills and children’s services. With four overarching objectives – transforming teaching and learning, engaging ‘hard to reach’ learners, building an open accessible system and achieving greater efficiency and effectiveness – the strategy described a path to transforming ICT in education that would bring schools and children’s services up to a critical baseline.

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The action: vision, clarity and collaboration

To deliver the strategy Becta set about creating a national digital infrastructure – a new and far-reaching vision for ICT in schools and colleges. “Creating the infrastructure has involved working with stakeholders on both sides of the ICT equation,” explains Mark Wallbank, Director of Procurement Strategy. “With suppliers, we’ve ensured that the right technology and systems are being developed, and with the institutions we’ve ensured that more discerning customers are exercising choice.”

Mark describes Becta’s work on learning platforms – online systems that enable learners and teachers to share and store resources that can be accessed within and outside the school: “We worked with both suppliers and with schools to define exactly what a learning platform should do and what its technical specification should be. This really helped everyone to get a clear, shared picture of the product, right across the sector.

“We then ran an EU-compliant procurement competition to identify providers who could demonstrate an ability to meet those functionality and service standards, which gave the institutions a much easier route to procuring. We’ve also developed support tools to help them define their requirements, so that they can buy more intelligently.”

In another strand of its work, Becta helps institutions collaborate in order to achieve economies of scale. It encourages local authorities to run mini-competitions for schools in their area, making it much easier for them to procure, and opening the way to greater value. Using Becta’s frameworks also saves local authorities the costs and time involved in running their own EU-compliant procurements.

The results: achieving savings

Over the last three years Becta has recorded more than £100m of cost-savings through the use of best-value procurements, gaining plaudits from many of the institutions and bodies it has worked with.

“Using Becta’s learning platform services framework saved us time and effort,” says Christopher Hilditch, Staffordshire County Council’s Children and Life Long Learning ICT Directorate Manager. “The framework and the advice and guidance we got from Becta gave us confidence that we’d be able to find a supplier who could offer us best value, quality and reliability, and deliver to our requirements.” ■



Becta

FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.becta.org.uk