Early Market Engagement
Principles and Examples of Good Practice

www.ogc.gov.uk
1 Introduction

This booklet is for anyone involved in setting procurement policy and/or conducting procurement exercises in the public sector. It provides an introduction to a number of techniques for successful early market engagement. Illustrated with case studies, it demonstrates how a variety of public sector organisations have benefited from this activity. The final section provides a useful reference to more detailed guidance on these topics.

The OGC’s Kelly Programme Team have produced this booklet, as part of their work on improving two-way communications with industry.

2 Strategic Supplier Input

Both your organisation and your suppliers can benefit from clear two-way communication when you are first setting your procurement policy. You can benefit from suppliers’ knowledge of markets and trends, and develop an understanding of the capacity available to meet planned demand.

Early two-way communication encourages industry to get ready to meet demand, as government initiatives and policies change over time. It also gives industry the opportunity to highlight any possible effects of a policy change on existing markets, allowing you to respond appropriately. Strategic engagement can take several forms and these are discussed below.

2.1 Public/Private Reference Groups (PPRGs)

PPRGs are a way of facilitating supply side consultation before new policies are implemented. Their composition might include public sector officials, industry groups and CEOs of major suppliers. These groups can inform the feasibility and potential effects of a policy change by providing advice on relevant aspects of market performance and behaviour.

Setting up PPRGs requires concerted effort, resources and management time and they are unlikely to meet frequently. But they can be invaluable in seeking supplier input/buy-in to changing government policies. Some PPRGs can represent a number of different public sector bodies and could be used to examine cross-cutting issues such as new or changing policy, as well as systematic issues that occur in groups of projects or programmes (discussed in Section 3.1).

2.1a Case Study – The Strategic Supply Board

Role

The CIO Council Strategic Supply board was formed by the Supplier Management Initiative to support the Transformational Government Agenda. It brings together the CIO Council with CEOs from the leading ICT Suppliers to government. It meets quarterly.

Objectives

The SSB’s strategic objectives are:
- Improving the overall quality and reliability of the delivery of critical government IT programmes.
- Delivering improved services and systems that offer better value for money for the UK citizen.
- Delivering an improved acquisition process that reduces time, costs and exploits standardisation.

The SSB’s strategic objectives are underpinned by aspirational delivery targets.

Membership

Membership of the SSB comprises a sub-set of the CIO Council and ICT industry leaders.

2.2 Supplier Input into Horizon Scanning

The aim of “Horizon Scanning” is to systematically examine potential threats, opportunities and likely future developments in markets, which are at the margins of current thinking.

Strategic discussions with your suppliers can form the cornerstone of this activity, alongside examining wider issues such as global politics and the UK political agenda. It is an opportunity to discuss science and technology innovations and obtain suppliers’ views on socio-economic trends shaping society and the labour market.
This type of engagement with suppliers helps you to explore novel and unexpected issues, persistent problems or trends within specific markets. This allows you to consider early on what implications these issues will have on the distribution of resources, existing priorities and service delivery.

In the following case study 2.2a, Horizon Scanning is undertaken by a supplier working in partnership with a public sector body. Further information on Horizon Scanning can be obtained on the following website:
http://www.hse.gov.uk/horizons/

2.2a Case Study - Health and Safety Executive - Horizon Scanning

HSE uses Horizon Scanning to ensure it is aware of changes in the medium to long-term future that could have an impact on its operations. A new horizon scanning team is being established at the Health & Safety Laboratory (HSL, formerly part of the HSE, now HSE’s key supplier) to gather and analyse information on trends and developments across a wide range of subjects and disciplines.

The new team will call on a variety of sources including the considerable numbers of skilled policy and frontline operational and technical staff in HSE, who are able to identify emerging issues and evaluate their likely impact.

HSL is the primary means of taking work forward, but other suppliers can also be used, where appropriate, to provide in-depth studies of emerging issues. External input is also obtained through informal networks and advisory committees.

As an example of its horizon scanning activities, HSE commissioned three separate reviews to help scope the extent of potential health and safety issues, presented by particulate material produced for use in nanotechnologies.

2.3 Market Sounding

Market sounding focuses on suppliers as a whole, rather than the merits of individual suppliers. It includes no element of supplier selection (choosing suitable suppliers) or bid evaluation (looking at proposals and prices). There is no commitment of any kind involved – on either side.

There is no defined process for market sounding; the approach taken will vary from project to project. Market sounding is not part of regulated procurement and is not subject to any detailed procedures or rules. A market sounding exercise will not take the form of a sequence of prescribed steps; it is a question of selecting the approaches that will provide the most useful, balanced view of the market and its likely attitude to the requirement.

It is vital to ensure that the market sounding process remains open, and that the suppliers involved are treated with fairness and equality. All possible efforts should be made to preserve a ‘level playing field’ and the process should be formally documented.

Market Sounding is beneficial at both a strategic and project/programme-specific level and involves gathering knowledge in these key areas:

- **feasibility**: whether what is sought is actually feasible, or has ever been done

- **capability**: the ability of the market (whether through a single supplier or a consortium) to achieve what is required

- **maturity**: whether there is an established market for the requirement, and whether there are enough suppliers in existence for a competitive procurement

- **capacity**: whether the market can achieve what is required quickly enough, or on a large enough scale.

Other additional areas of interest include the way supply chains work in the market, cultural concerns, and attitudes towards customers.

A key aspect of market sounding is that it can help you translate desired outcomes into a high-level statement of business requirement that is well aligned with the market, which makes it much more likely that the desired outcome will be achieved. Thus market sounding becomes a dialogue between your organisation and ‘the market’ aimed at resolving the content of the requirement.

Customer flexibility over the content of the requirement provides the opportunity for unforeseen, innovative solutions to be proposed. A key to success is that discussions should centre on means rather than ends: you stay focused on the desired outcome, while suppliers explain how they could help you achieve it.
2.3a Case Study – Essex Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy – Soft Market Testing

In 2002, Essex County Council, 12 District and Borough Councils within the county of Essex, along with the unitary authority of Southend-on-Sea formed the Waste Management Advisory Board (WMAB).

The WMAB developed a Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex. It is the key strategic document, which is being developed in consultation with the public and sets out targets for high recycling and landfill diversion (through mechanical biological treatment/anaerobic digestion).

It also states how the collection and disposal authorities will develop a system of sustainable waste management. In parallel, under the umbrella of the WMAB, three Area Joint Committees have been established to help achieve these targets. The Partnership has been exploring the benefits of a joint procurement exercise to deliver integrated waste management contracts.

The Partnership hosted two soft market-testing events. The first was held in summer 2004. Attendees included major players within the waste industry, bankers, financiers and technology providers. The events had two objectives. Firstly to inform the marketplace of the Partnership’s intentions for an integrated, area approach to waste management. Secondly, to seek feedback from industry regarding whether the project was a viable size, the strategy was feasible and what capacity was available to them.

To accomplish this, a series of presentations were made, followed by open discussions and workshops. In addition, one-to-one interviews were used to discuss issues that some attendees were unwilling to reveal in front of their competitors. The feedback gained from the first soft market-testing event enabled Essex CC to test and shape their procurement approach for the integrated project.

The second event was held approximately a year later, and involved the attendees of the first event in addition to smaller contractors. This event was used by Essex CC to inform the market place of how the project was moving forward. The feedback received was used to further scope its future procurement strategy, particularly the bidding process it was to adopt.

2.4 Market Creation or Development

At a strategic level, you may need to create or develop a market that will be called upon to satisfy a range of requirements over a period of time, resulting in a number of procurements as specific needs arise. This could be in response to a new policy.

A lack of interest in responding to new opportunities might arise from the scale of the requirement(s) (too large or too small), the geographical or organisational scope, perceived problems in the commercial viability of the resulting contract(s), concerns about risk, etc. Early strategic engagement with suppliers is essential in both identifying the need for Market Creation and subsequently, creating the market.

In these instances you need to demonstrate strong marketing skills and be proactive in your approach to the marketplace in order to persuade a possibly reluctant supply side to take an interest in your requirements and to enter and maintain a competition for the supply. This is an unusual position for most public sector bodies, and may require a culture shift in your organisation.

It will require the continued strong support of senior customer management, and may involve the participation of specialist consultancy support for the exercise. Market Creation can also be undertaken at a project/programme level and this is discussed in Section 3.2.

2.5 “Selling to” Events

You could host events periodically, in order to encourage new and existing suppliers to consider doing business with your organisation. This gives both sides the opportunity to find out more about each other and to raise and address any queries.

It provides you with the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the marketplace and identify any potential capacity issues. It may be useful to engage with your suppliers on specific issues, which may be affecting, or about to affect, the marketplace. You may also identify risks and barriers in the marketplace overall through these events.

These events (in particular, “Meet the Key Supplier” events) can also be used as an opportunity for smaller suppliers to meet with larger ones. They are an effective means of creating strong linkages in your supply chains.
2.5a Case Study - Trade Days and Events - Ministry of Defence

In the MOD, there is engagement with industry through “Industry Days” where industry is invited to talk to MOD, to demonstrate cutting edge products, etc. The MOD procures a wide range of products and services, so it is likely that most suppliers will have something the MOD will want to buy at some stage. Industry Days provide opportunities for smaller suppliers to team up with larger ones in supply chains to work indirectly with the MOD.

The Defence Diversification Agency has run a series of “working with MOD” seminars across the UK and they deliver these through local Chambers of Commerce, Business Links, etc. They also attend several exhibitions for informal discussions and provide a brief “selling to MOD” presentation at some of these events. Audience sizes can be from 30 people, up to 500 for larger events.

An example of one of these events was a local area network (LAN) systems shop window event in Bath. Integrated Project Teams mixed with prime contractors, many of whom exhibited. The aims of this were to encourage partnering and discuss ways in which suppliers could work with MOD now and in the future.

3.1 Public/Private Reference Groups (PPRGs)

PPRGs can be set up to advise on the management of government-wide programmes, or groups of programmes. In particular, they can be beneficial in any sector where demands are being made on the same supply base from a number of sources across the public sector.

PPRGs should be fed information on current/future demand, new and existing legislation affecting that market; details of any known issues and barriers to entry.

The PPRG should then be able to make informed decisions for management of projects and programmes, for example, by gearing up industry in some areas in order to ensure adequate competition and capacity is available to meet planned demand.

3.2 Market Sounding and Market Creation/Development

These two techniques have already been discussed in detail in Section 2. However, they also have applications at a project or programme level. You may face the need for Market Creation/Development at a project/programme level, not only because of a lack of market interest, but also where there is an incumbent supplier, or if you have a novel requirement.

Engaging with the supply side:

- Engage early and widely with the supply side; give them an opportunity to shape the requirement (provided that care is taken not to gear the requirement in favour of any particular supplier(s))
- With the above point in mind, ensure suppliers are aware that any resulting procurement will be conducted competitively
- Work with the supply side on an equal basis: ensure openness of access to staff and information.
- Establish good communication channels and keep bidders informed.
- Be transparent about the procedures and top-level criteria for evaluation of bids.
- Maintain the commercial confidentiality of information received from suppliers.
- Be willing to consider commissioning pilots, paid studies, Proof of Concept exercises, Design and Build exercises, etc.

3 Project/Programme-Specific Engagement

Early engagement with suppliers on specific procurement projects and programmes also brings benefits. Through this process, a detailed understanding of your requirements, and the market's likely response can be developed. Greater mutual understanding facilitates effective and efficient outcomes and demonstrable value for money (VfM) gains.

Early supplier engagement can also help to highlight the benefits of innovative solutions, which you may not have otherwise considered. Care must be taken of course, to ensure that you maintain an objective view of input from suppliers, whose interests will be commercial in nature.

A number of the techniques described in Section 2 can also be undertaken in a slightly different form (and for different reasons) at project/programme level. They are therefore included below.
Framing the requirement

- Be open to novel approaches.
- Focus on the desired outcomes.
- Be willing to reconsider the requirement and scope, and the packaging of the requirement for procurement.
- Be willing to consider a range of commercial/contractual options, e.g. multiple suppliers, geographical split.
- Consider what the position will be in the event of re-tendering – frame the requirement in a way that will help to avoid lock-in of the supplier.

Commitment and organisation

- Ensure you have the commitment and support of senior management in dealing with the marketplace.
- Have a good understanding of the risks involved for both sides.
- Apply rigorous project management procedures to any procurement exercise, and make these visible to the supply side.
- Ensure that all the necessary skills are available to the procurement project team.

3.2a Case Study – Dorset County Council Street Lighting PFI Project – Market Consultation

In 2004 Dorset County Council developed a business case for its long-term street lighting PFI project. Soon after this was approved, they organised a market consultation event in which they planned to meet with suppliers who would be interested in taking on the project. The event was advertised on a nationwide scale, with adverts being placed in nationally distributed media and the technical press.

The one-day event was held in London and was focussed on promoting Dorset County Council as a good procurer. In order to do this in an effective way, Dorset collaborated with the local government procurement experts, 4Ps and also invited a representative from the Department for Transport to present at the event. Between 20 and 30 of the leading players in the industry attended the event, which was opened by a Cabinet Member.

The day consisted of presentations that outlined both the strategic intent, as well as the technical aspects of the project. This was followed by a series of discussions and questions relating to the project that enabled Dorset County Council to gain feedback on their intended approach. Attendees also had the option to submit feedback via correspondence after the event if there were issues they did not want to discuss in front of their competitors.

In addition to promoting themselves to industry, through this event Dorset County Council gained a greater focus and knowledge about the market, and was able to gauge the interest of the supply base in the project. They also received useful feedback from the potential suppliers that enabled them to further define and develop their strategic approach.

3.3 Prior Indicative Notice (PIN)

If a specification is unrealistic or needs to be adjusted after the Invitation to Tender (ITT) stage, it can be difficult to make major changes to a requirement without potentially breaking EU procurement regulations, or at the very least, creating unnecessary work and incurring unacceptable costs, both for your organisation and the bidders.

By publishing a Prior Indicative Notice (PIN) and seeking supplier feedback pre-ITT, you can be better informed and so can write more realistic and suitable specifications.
The EU Directives allow you to publish annual PINs in the OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union), for procurement in each service/supply category above a certain monetary threshold. Do this as soon as possible after the budgetary year begins (with the exception of works categories, where PINs should be published once the go ahead for the procurement has been given in principle).

This is an important method of alerting the market to your upcoming procurement needs prior to the advertisement of individual contract notices. Suppliers will have the chance to respond to your PIN by expressing an interest in bidding for the contract (although formal involvement will not commence until the contract notice has been published. You can then seek supplier feedback at this stage and the information can be used to inform your specification as well as the selection process prior to the ITT stage.

**3.4 Competition of Ideas**

You may wish to approach suppliers directly to seek new and innovative solutions to current areas of concern in order to identify priority areas for further research and development and (potentially) procurement. OGC has produced guidance on finding and procuring innovative solutions which contains a number of different approaches that you can implement.

One such example is through a “competition of ideas” which essentially involves disseminating problems or issues to the market and seeking proposals. To be successful, you need a clear idea of what the issues are and adequate expertise and time in-house to analyse responses.

Any procurement of resulting ideas cannot be seen to be prejudiced through early engagement with a representative group of suppliers. So, when writing your specification, focus on the outcomes you wish to achieve, rather than on specific technologies or products.

You may find it useful to think through the following points before deciding on this route:

- Have I identified a clear need for innovative solutions? It would be frustrating for all concerned if the exercise were carried out with no clear aim.
- Is the demand related to a business case or strategy? Approval must be sought from senior management before making requirements public.
- Do I have a budget for the exercise or for the eventual outcomes?
- Does my team have the expertise and resource capacity available to carry out the publication of requirements and eventual analysis of potential solutions?

- Have I the capability to understand and test the “innovative solutions” suggested?
- Have I established a defined format and selection procedure for responses to aid analysis?
- What communication channels should I use to ensure I get the best responses possible to my requirements?
- Is there a well-established and cooperative supply base at which to direct my request? You could work initially with known suppliers before seeking wider input.
- Have I ensured the exercise is transparent and accessible, such that there can be no question of potential respondents being unwittingly excluded from the exercise?

**3.4a Case Study -
Health and Safety Executive - Competition of Ideas**

Each year HSE publishes its Strategic Research Outlook (SRO) detailing the key issues being considered by HSE that require Science & Technology input. It is more detailed than a strategy, making public more articulated requirements. It is an important element in ensuring even-handed treatment of all suppliers. It is published on the HSE’s website and a copy is sent out to all suppliers on their database.

This database holds current and potential suppliers and is used to update potential tenderer lists. In the Competition of Ideas initiative, HSE specialists identify and specify problems to be addressed, asking for innovative solutions from suppliers. These issues are published in the appendix of the SRO, usually in February.

Suppliers are requested to send in a 3-page dossier, outlining their proposed solutions. A panel of HSE specialists review these proposals and determine which are worth taking forward.

Whilst there is no guarantee of work at the proposal stage, those selected are worked up to a full specification in discussion with the supplier and contracted where a priority business outcome, value for money and scientific quality can be achieved.

The market responded well to this process, but to some extent it was a victim of its own success and it was put under a moratorium for some time, although there have been discussions regarding its re-launch.
3.4a Case Study - Health and Safety Executive - Competition of Ideas (Cont.)

There were several reasons for the moratorium:

1. **Scale** - publishing everything at once created a huge bottleneck in the workload in the planning year. To overcome this issue, the plan is to publish smaller groups of issues, throughout the year, thereby spreading the workload.

2. **Scope** - The previous organisation of HSE meant that specialists would often include topics that were not necessarily business priorities.

3. **Complexity** - It could take a long time for large, complex projects to get off the ground and so in starting this up again, there is a need to try and reduce timescales and resource requirements.

4. **Openness** - HSE specialists often had their idea of the solution, creating a blinkered view. This is being tackled by ensuring proposals are evaluated more objectively by a panel of those with knowledge of HSE’s business.

The aim is to support and improve success rates in IT-enabled projects. Feedback from departments and suppliers, who have engaged in this process, showed that they value Concept Viability as a useful tool to assist them in the early stages of projects and programmes.

To date, several departments have used the Concept Viability Service, including Land Registry, ONS, DCA, Home Office, DWP and DFES. Further information:

**Email:** concept@intellectuk.org

3.5a Case Study - Department for Constitutional Affairs - DISC Programme

Concept Viability is a way to help new programmes take market soundings and test the “do-ability” of their ideas as early as possible. Concept Viability was used to assist the DCA DISC Programme in addressing its “Packaging and Procurement Strategy”.

The process allowed a number of options to be explored. It enabled the programme team to gain a better understanding of the achievability of their ideas and engaged suppliers at an early stage. The process followed is outlined below:

**Stage 1** - The programme provided a short, written description of the business need.

**Stage 2** - Intellect circulated the proposal to a selection of companies and invited them to comment on the feasibility.

**Stage 3** - A workshop was held with the programme team and suppliers, facilitated by Intellect.

**Stage 4** - A report was produced from written comments of workshop attendees, which was collated by Intellect.

3.5 Concept Viability

Concept Viability is designed to maximise the benefits from the customer-supplier relationship and support good project governance. The service is provided by Intellect, a leading trade body for the ICT industry, and is available at no charge.

The service allows IT-enabled projects to test the “do-ability” of their ideas at an early stage by taking a market sounding.

A workshop with suppliers is arranged to explore a project brief that outlines the business need. Following the workshop a summary report is collated which captures the views of suppliers into a “market” view.

**What are the Benefits?**

- It is quick and provides useful insights into possible solutions.
- It is anonymous, so suppliers tend to be more open with ideas.
- Concepts that are technically unfeasible, flawed or high-risk can be identified at an early stage.
- It helps ensure analysis of risks and implementation options has taken place.
- It informs any subsequent work on feasibility or proof of concept, but is not intended to replace these activities.
4 Website and Publications

How information is communicated is an important part of any procurement strategy, particularly one that has an integrated approach to supplier engagement. There are a number of ways in which you can share information.

4.1 Department and Procurement Websites

A number of public sector organisations already have a procurement section on their website, and some even have procurement portals. A procurement page/section could contain, at the very least, an introduction to the procurement function of your organisation and contact details for suppliers wishing to make enquiries.

It is important to ensure that any procurement section is easy to access from your organisation’s main homepage, site map, A to Z listing and search engines. Below are some useful guidelines on what further content you might consider including on your procurement section/portal, particularly in terms of promoting avenues of early market engagement:

- Advertisement of trade days/meet the buyer events.
- Announcement of upcoming Concept Viability exercises and publication of Concept Viability assessments.
- In the case of research funding, publication of details of key topics to be addressed and invitations to interested parties to send in expressions of interest, proposing more specific research projects.
- As a communications tool in Market Sounding exercises.
- Publication of early draft specifications prior to tender, for comment or information.
- Publication of Prior Indicative Notices.
- Publication of strategy documents that could be useful to industry in terms of planning capacity.
- Details of the procurement function and details of any procurement initiatives/toolkits.
- Lists of awarded contracts, dates of expiry and details of who they have been awarded to, i.e. prime contractors, as this could be of use to potential subcontractors. This includes contact details of whom the supplier/subcontractor should write to for information.
- Subcontracting opportunities and details of key suppliers.

There is also some general information that would be useful to suppliers. This includes:

- A section on selling to the organisation.
- Contact details of the procurement team.
- Guidance on how to tender.
- Project-specific events/workshops.
- Standard forms used by the organisation, including sample terms and conditions of contract.
- Online prequalification questionnaire - for sub-OJEU opportunities, this should be based on the OGC standard:

http://www.ogc.gov.uk/tools___services_pqq.asp

Advertisement of Opportunities

You are encouraged to advertise your lower value opportunities on the national procurement portal. As a buyer you will be able to use the portal to publicise your lower-value (sub-OJEU) contract opportunities and attract businesses that can deliver innovation, choice and increased value; so benefiting you and your local economy. The portal is free to register on and is available at www.supply2.gov.uk

4.2 Publication of Demand Information

Dependent on the size and type of your organisation, you might choose to publish forward-looking demand plans to allow suppliers to consider how they might wish to approach bidding for work. Such publications may include procurement opportunities, as well as currently let contracts and details of when these are due for renewal.

Whilst some larger organisations, such as the MOD, have specialist publications in which to communicate requirements to suppliers, (see below case study) your organisation may not have the resources to undertake such activities. A good alternative is to advertise opportunities, PINs, trade days, etc. in specialist trade journals, as well as on your website.
4.2a Case Study - Publications - MOD Defence Contracts Bulletin

The MOD Contracts Bulletin contains details of prime and sub-contract opportunities arising from the MOD’s larger value requirements. It is published fortnightly and is available on subscription.

Every year the Ministry of Defence spends around £15 billion on equipment, works and miscellaneous stores and services. Contracts are grouped into value bandings, making it easier for suppliers to find the right opportunities. The MOD Defence Contracts Bulletin contains four main sections:

1. Possible Future Purchases - provides companies with advance warning of potential forthcoming MOD tenders or contracts.

2. Tenders Invited - identifies those organisations that have been invited to tender for Possible Future Purchases, enabling prospective sub-contractors to contact tenderers directly to offer their services.

3. Contracts Awarded - provides notification of the award of competitive and single-source contracts.

4. Sub-Contract Opportunities - allows MOD’s prime contractors to advertise sub-contract opportunities valued in excess of £250,000 and arising from their prime contracts with the MOD.

The advantage of this approach is that at every stage of the procurement process, large and small companies are able to decide where and when to pitch their interest in bidding for defence work, either directly as a potential prime contractor or indirectly as a potential sub-contractor.

4.3 Bidder Conferences

Once your requirement and specification have been finalised and put out to tender, another successful approach to supplier engagement is to hold a bidder conference. Typically, you would invite all your key bidders to seek views on the commercial and technical aspects and risks of your procurement, as well as to give potential suppliers an opportunity to learn more about the detail.

Bidder conferences can be useful, but suppliers tend to be reluctant to ask questions with their competitors present. Providing bidders with a list of questions that will be asked and answered at the conference should help to generate useful discussion though. Document the questions and answers and make this information freely available, following the event, in order to maintain a level playing field.

5 Ongoing Engagement

Engagement of suppliers does not need to stop once a contract has been let. Through continually engaging with your suppliers throughout your supply chains, you can seek their strategic input into long-term policy, service delivery, market capacity, new technology, etc.

This will prove highly beneficial in continuously improving your service or programme. It will also help to inform your re-competition strategy and/or similar new procurements.

5.1 Maintaining Strategic Relationships

Once you have identified your key suppliers, you may wish to consider setting up regular meetings to measure and review performance and to seek input into project and strategic issues.

This approach has been proven to build confidence in the marketplace and is effective in gaining advance warning of any problems. Further information on maintaining strategic relationships can be found at: http://www.ogc.gov.uk/documents/cp0078_Effective_partnering.pdf

5.1a Case study – Jobcentre Plus and the Strategic 5 Suppliers Forum

Jobcentre Plus London has instigated a forum with five providers who deliver the largest percentage of client facing contracted services in London. From the outset it was made clear to the providers that the focus of the meetings was to look at ways of achieving improved performance from their contracts, through more effective and consistent service delivery.

The providers also agreed that they would share commercially sensitive information at the meetings with each other in order to develop the partnership working with themselves and Jobcentre Plus.

The meetings need to be carefully managed to ensure there is no perception of preferential treatment for these providers; whilst at the same time consulting them and gaining views on agreed policy changes, or ways of working. The meetings are lively and participative. They have proved a very useful forum for sharing performance issues and looking at how quality and value for money could be improved.
Further Reading

The links below provide more detailed information on tools and techniques discussed in this document.

Market Management
http://www.ogc.gov.uk/policy_and_standards_framework_market_management.asp

Innovation
http://www.ogc.gov.uk/delivering_policy_aims_through_public_procurement_innovation.asp

OGC Best practice guidance

The National Opportunities Portal:
www.supply2.gov.uk
OGC 1 Horse Guards Road, London SW1A 2HQ

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