



## SCHOMS Conference 2018 – Procurement Workshop

### Collated responses to the three questions asked of all groups (tables)

**Facilitator:** James Trotter, Head of Procurement for the universities of Leicester and Loughborough

**Participants (over 100):** HE sector AV specialists/buyers (delegates) and AV supplier reps (exhibitors)

#### **Executive Summary:**

*You are encouraged to draw your own conclusions from the written up responses from the 14 tables of delegates/exhibitors (below), as to the key messages from the workshop.*

*From my perspective as facilitator, framework agreements were seen as a useful procurement route for AV, with suppliers already pre-vetted. However, there was concern that suppliers often didn't quote for mini-competitions, and there were (framework) supplier capacity issues during peak demand in the summer. It was strongly felt that frameworks should be better managed, with suppliers' performance measured and taken account of during subsequent call-offs. The sense in having a single national AV framework was mentioned, structured to better reflect the market/requirements, particularly covering broadcasting equipment and AV consultancy.*

*Delegates use frameworks in a number of ways, including in terms of the proportional split between direct award and mini-competition, and the threshold at which they use a framework / undertake a mini-competition. It was noted that the varied use of frameworks also led to a fair number of non-compliant call-offs, and there is certainly room for better educating AV specialists/buyers in how to use frameworks.*

*There was a suggestion that universities are moving towards larger, AV contracts, where calling off of a framework to establish a single supplier. This obviously necessitates better institutional planning to understand future demand. Delegates had a range of in-house AV design capacity and therefore need to buy-in such services. A challenge for procurement professionals is to facilitate innovation / manufacturers ideas/input (early) in the procurement process in a compliant and efficient fashion.*

*The importance of having AV specialists, procurement professionals and Estates colleagues all on the same page, when designing and purchasing AV solutions was flagged.*

*James Trotter, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018*

### **What do you think of the HE sector AV framework agreements?**

#### Positives

Well structured. (x2)

Helpful pre-vetting.

NWUPC framework saves on time; no need to run an EU tender each time.

Gives clear direction as to the products wanted by universities, so not letting the integrator decide.

Good for supply of goods, but do they offer the best solutions?  
Frameworks work well, but would like to see something around post-install quality assurance.

#### Negatives

Availability of suppliers on framework not consistent. Need more suppliers on frameworks to deal with peak demand period. (x4)  
Admin heavy. (x3)  
Don't allow account to be made of suppliers' past performance. (x3)  
Procurement processes choke supplier relationships.  
Many framework suppliers don't quote.  
Difficult for smaller suppliers to get on frameworks.  
Unable to use local companies as not on the framework.  
Industry standards tend not to be covered.  
Lack of feedback for suppliers when unsuccessful in getting on a framework.  
Margins getting smaller from a manufacturer perspective.  
Have to go outside of framework for broadcast equipment.  
Broadcasting is a grey area.  
Benefit Procurement departments rather than AV departments or suppliers.  
Installation teams of NEUPC framework suppliers not consistent, due to wide geographical spread.  
NEUPC's rankings are restrictive.  
APUC framework offers limited choice.  
The suppliers in the Northern Ireland lot of the NWUPC framework don't respond. Therefore, use smaller local companies not on the framework.

#### Further questions

Why do some HE consortia charge for their frameworks?  
Why do the various frameworks differ in approach (incl. call-off mechanism)?

### **How do individual HE institutions procure audio visual equipment?**

#### General points

Often supplier selection is based on who Estates likes to work with.  
Find it difficult to draft an agnostic tender spec without contravening institution's standards.  
Discussion between Procurement, AV and suppliers needed earlier on.  
Build direct relationships with manufacturers in some cases in order to help get what you need, ensure 'fit for purpose'.  
Universities' AV departments are disappearing so internal expertise is being lost.  
Procurement legislation, dependent on cost, can lead to a mixture of equipment.  
Introduced to new products through company reps and shows.  
Through, and in collaboration with, integrators.

#### Use of frameworks

Always use framework. (x4)  
Universities don't call off frameworks in line with the call-off mechanism (x2)  
Use frameworks for general AV, but not specialist kit. (x2)  
Generally use frameworks; making direct awards where a small value purchase. (x2)  
Framework considered advisory, as Procurement Department has different rules.  
Undertake mini-competition under framework where over £25k.

80% mini-competition / 20% direct award.  
30% mini-competition / 70% direct award (Keele)  
95% direct award (Exeter)  
10% of our AV procurement is via a framework direct award.  
Never direct award.  
Sometimes use suppliers off other frameworks if usual suppliers are busy.  
A lot of universities are moving towards sole supplier.  
London Met award to one supplier for the framework period.  
Undertook a mini-competition to establish a sole supplier to ensure consistency.  
UCL has its own framework, where they factor supplier performance into mini-competitions.  
Long-term contracts.  
Struggle to commit finances for longer term contracts.  
Single source open ended contract off back of a framework.  
Exeter and Keele award per project.  
Procure AV through main contractor.  
Summer "Refresh" would be a project and procured via a mini-competition.  
(Supplier view) Poorly written mini-comp RfQ documentation.  
Use Amazon/eBay below £1k where not core infrastructure so Ts&Cs don't matter (and benefit from refunds policy)

#### Design/innovation

AV design part of tender 80% of the time.  
AV design through a mixture of in-house and integrator.  
Mix of in-house and bought-in AV design.  
Innovation happens well before the tender (x2)  
Design and project management bought in.  
Depending on project, might go out for supply + install / spec + install / full design + spec.  
London Met might co-design tender with integrator specialist.  
Direct award can stifle innovation.  
Limitations to innovation – 1. Structural tech 2. The industry pushes an agenda 3. Influence of integrator relationship 4. Suppliers and integrators have a 'comfort zone'.  
Sometime integrators don't have a clue and need direct support from the manufacturer.  
(Supplier view) Prefer to deal direct with client than via integrator as things get lost in translation.  
Often follow, rather than innovate.  
Hard to sell innovation to users. Students more likely to use new equipment.  
Still on-site oversight.

#### Sustainability

More and more Estates projects have green ratings and awards.  
Make use of Electronics watch membership.  
Sustainability information hard for integrators to obtain.

### **How could universities improve the way they procure AV equipment?**

#### Supplier performance

Factor supplier performance (positive and negative) into mini-competitions. (x6)

#### Framework structure

A national framework is required, rather than the current patchwork.

Add an AV consultancy lot framework. (x2)

Broaden the range of AV frameworks with lotting that accounts for Lecture Capture, AV, Consumables, Video Conferencing, Network, Broadcast, Consultancy.

Better planning. Short timescales create supply issues.

#### Stakeholder engagement

Give staff a better understanding of how to use frameworks.

More communication with manufacturers.

Is there value in OEM manufacturer tenders based on technology, excluding price?

Ensure that aware of new products/innovation ahead of projects/procurements.

AV-specific procurement managers (category managers).

Better influence/integrate with Estates processes.

Speed up resolution of snags.