North Western Universities
Purchasing Consortium

Case Study: HVLE Framework Utilisation

October 2018

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The University of Warwick significantly increase their current portfolio of microscopy based characterisation equipment

Summary

The University of Warwick are regular users of the NWUPC High Value Laboratory Equipment (HVLE) suit of frameworks that are available to procure research equipment. As a general rule of thumb, if the framework covers the scope of our requirements and all the key suppliers are available on the framework then we will use the framework.

Project

Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG), an academic department of the University of Warwick, and the Advanced Steel Research Centre wished to significantly increase their current portfolio of microscopy based characterisation equipment. The new characterisation centre houses complementary facilities to the existing central microscopy facility, but with a strong emphasis on analysis in a high throughput (engineering environment) and on metallic (primarily) steel-based materials.

The new systems sought were high throughput analytical (S)TEM, a FEG-SEM/FIB hybrid, an analytical FEG-SEM and a FEG-SEM with low vacuum capability. The project title was the ADVANCED CHARACTERISATION OF METALS USING ANALYTICAL MICROSCOPY.

Geoff West (Senior Research Fellow) working for Prof Barbara Shollock (Academic Director and PI on this project) were the key technical contact for this procurement and Carl Johnson (Senior Procurement Manager) was the Procurement Manager.

The key aims of this tender were to acquire the above outlined equipment, with as much capability and flexibility as possible, within budget and with defined (minimised) on-going costs, but also commissioned within the tight funding deadlines.

Approach

After an initial meeting to discuss the requirements Carl Johnson recommended running a mini competition under the HVLE (REF:LAB3054 NW) FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT which was a new framework at the time.

One of the main challenges was the tight funding deadline to spend the funding, the framework enabled the University to engage with the market in an efficient manner and allowed us sufficient time to complete the procurement so that commissioning could be completed within the required deadlines. Another key challenge was the finite budget available to procure the capabilities that we required, to facilitate this we built a lot of options into the tendering package. We also offered Lots to give us more flexibility with the final award.

Outcomes

The project was delivered and completed within the required timescales; WMG bought equipment that exceeded the capabilities they believed were possible for the budget available. An additional ongoing benefit was securing very competitive pricing for the ongoing maintenance and service contracts for this equipment.

We awarded the final contracts to FEI and JEOL. We paid £1.7m for the final equipment purchase which had a combined list price of £4.3 m and achieved further additional add-ons with values of £108k (FEI) and £7k (JEOL) from procurement negotiations but more importantly, we predict to save £1.3m on the service costs over the 15 year life of the equipment. Universities who purchase and run this type of equipment will understand the necessity but also

the high costs of service contracts for this type of equipment.

Conclusion

The key wins from this procurement were as follows

- Additional capability of the final solution within the budget envelope
- Completed the procurement to the funding deadline
- Significant cost reductions for our service contracts

The framework gave the University an easy and simple route to market which enabled this procurement to achieve its goals.

Carl Johnson stated that he would not hesitate to use and recommend the HVLE suit of frameworks to colleagues and other Universities.