



B4 Supplier engagement - driving innovation

Defra's supplier engagement programme

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Organisation : Defra

Short description: For public sector organisations it may be useful to hear about how Defra developed a supplier engagement programme and how this has helped to drive better relationships between buyers and suppliers

For companies: Our supplier engagement programme has enabled business to improve the management of their operations and influence policy-making.

Executive Summary of your Abstract

Public sector sustainable procurement does not happen in a vacuum. Defra developed a supplier engagement programme to enable a closer working relationship with the market and a better understanding of each other's needs. The ultimate goal is better products and services supplied to the public sector.

Abstract

Defra has publicly committed to be a leader by example in embedding sustainable development considerations in the way in which it procures products, services and construction. To achieve this, the Procurement and Contracts Division (PCD) appointed a team, the Sustainable Procurement team, to lead on embedding sustainability considerations into Defra's procurement, to influence a wide network of stakeholders and provide hands-on advice to procurers on how to buy more sustainably.

The work on embedding sustainability in Defra's procurement has a Management Board champion. Defra has built capacity amongst internal procurers on sustainability issues, has provided sustainable procurement training to Other Government Departments (Ministries) and is continuing to influence Local Government thinking. In delivering this, Defra has paid particular attention to acknowledging suppliers' contribution and role in the sustainable procurement agenda. The approach that we adopted has been widely participative, encouraging dialogue and involvement of all interested and key stakeholders.

Supplier Engagement has been one of the team's most prominent successes; through a range of events and workshops, the team has reached out to Defra's suppliers signaling to them the direction of Defra's sustainability journey and developing closer working relations that will enable a partnership relationship between the buying organisation and its suppliers.

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Conference organisers: ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability in cooperation with the City of Reykjavik

www.iclei.org/ecoprocura2009

Defra is working with its suppliers to ensure that they fully appreciate sustainability targets and commitments and help to deliver them. Defra's programme of activity comprises:

- Annual conference with awards
- Quarterly Supplier Fora (sessions on emerging sustainability issues)
- Workshops (capacity building on sustainability)
- One-to-one meetings (exploring sustainability reporting within supply chains)
- Participation in the Carbon Disclosure Project (selected suppliers disclosing their emissions)
- Sustainability Action Plan (joint commitments with actions)

The benefits of this activity can be demonstrated by:

- Our suppliers' appetite to voluntarily commit to improve their operations
- Messages shared not just with existing suppliers but with prospective ones during market engagement days for new procurements
- Stronger collaboration for the promotion of sustainability policies
- An opportunity for internal policy-makers to test their ideas at informal events

Resumé

Eleni was trained as a scientist but has been involved in public sector sustainable development issues since 2004. She has previously coordinated Defra's interests across Whitehall and has significant experience in policy making. She is currently implementing sustainability issues in Defra's procurement.

Recommended reading: Sustainable Procurement Task Force - Procuring the Future ()
UK Government Sustainable Procurement Action Plan ()
Defra's Sustainable Development Action Plan ()
The Glover Review ()
Joint Note