

To EURIM Members and Observers
From Philip Virgo, EURIM Secretary General
E-mail: virgo.philip@eurim.org

The Information
Society Alliance
EURIM



EURIM Newsletter January 2009

1) Shortening the Procurement Cycle to Aid Recovery

Changing the culture of public service procurement and delivery: short and long term

On 17th December the Public Service Delivery sub-group looking at procurement identified much generic guidance material and many change programmes coupled with a widespread view that IT is “different”, that long protracted procurement processes are inevitable and that the cause is the need to advertise in the Official Journal of the European Union. The differences between practice in the UK and other EU member states, as well as between public sector organisations within the UK, let alone between public and private sectors, indicate that ***all are wrong***. Low overhead, fast-track, routines for contracts below the OJEU threshold and flexible/incremental routines for those above, appear both possible within current UK/EU legislation and are urgently needed.

The bigger problem appears, however, to be the failure to establish the high-level business case, before the procurement process begins. There is also a common tendency to try to “tick all the boxes” rather than set priorities for what can and should be delivered with the time, funds and people available. The combination dooms projects to failure, however much attention is lavished on contract details.

Meanwhile the cost of participating in the growing number of framework contracts has led even large suppliers to walk away, as margins are squeezed by rising costs for imported products and services. We need to better enable transition from pilot to operational running without re-tendering and large programmes to be phased over time, (with early savings funding later investment). Dispute avoidance clauses, (with underspend as well as risk sharing), appear unknown in the public sector.

Changing mindsets is a major challenge but we also need to move rapidly to enable and ensure much shorter procurement timescales for programmes with rapid payback if public sector spending is to be used to help pull the economy out of recession. The group has therefore agreed a short order exercise (reporting by Easter 2009) to identify current guidance and case studies of good practice. The current state of guidance and plans, including procurement websites and exercises to encourage small firms and third sector organisations as bidders or subcontractors, will be reviewed at the next meeting of the group on the morning of Thursday 5th February. Links to relevant material are being placed on the EURIM website at www.eurim.org.uk/activities/pubproc/pubproc.php as this is identified. Please e-mail davywright2@ntlworld.com with details of any useful material.

An immediate objective is to make departments and agencies more aware of what each other is already doing or planning, as well as of the guidance available from the Audit Commission, NAO, OGC and elsewhere. Those responsible for policy and planning are therefore welcome as observers, receiving material as it is drafted, or as participants. Please e-mail eurim@eurim.org to register for this group as an active participant or as an observer.

2.) The Dragon's Den for Innovation

At the meeting with the DWP procurement team on 9th December we were given the opportunity to suggest how their "Right to Bid" process could be structured: from how to involve small firms and the third sector, either directly or as sub-contractors, to how to protect the IPR of those proposing innovative solutions, large as well as small.

DWP officials were briefed on the value to citizens of initiatives that operate across boundaries to address the complexity of citizens' needs, an issue which resonated through 'Let the People Speak: http://www.eurim.org.uk/activities/tgdialogues/TGD_IntegratedReport.pdf ', the report on EURIM's Transformational Government Dialogues: Whilst the "Right to Bid" exercise is currently confined to DWP, there was a strong indication at the meeting that "there are no constraints on ideas which can be proposed under Right to Bid": http://www.dwp.gov.uk/supplyingdwp/what_we_buy/right_to_bid.asp and this combined with DWP experience of joint contracting with other departments increases the scope for ideas bridging departments to be considered.

At the same time as providing inputs to their thinking, the group also plans to organise a wider exercise, drawing on the experience of EURIM's corporate and associate members and those who have been involved with similar exercises run by other departments and their suppliers. Please e-mail eurim@eurim.org for an invitation to join the planning team.

3) Setting the Information Governance Agenda

The follow up to the Director's Round table gathers pace

Information Governance goes to the heart of the Information Society but is a conflicting term with many possible interpretations. At the planning meeting on the 18th December we were given many references to existing or planned material but there was general agreement that a succinct high-level document placing this in overall context was missing. We had a good crop of volunteers to help produce such a paper, covering the elements that constitute good governance.(clarity of accountability, responsibility, ownership, quality, security, availability, people processes etc.) with links to the guidance that already exists and comments on what still needs to be addressed. The first meeting of the scoping group is on 23rd January.

That exercise is expected to identify areas where work is needed, but, in the meantime, we also appear to have volunteers to organise additional and more detailed streams covering the following areas:

- Information Value

The issues around valuing information as a strategic asset are key to raising information management capability and go to the heart of justifying spend on improved governance in order to transform organisational performance: scoping meeting on 18th February

- Security by design/default:

Much has been said about this over the past decade but there is still no agreed framework within which to bring together the many evolving products and services (people processes not just technology) in anything other than ad hoc customised solutions. This is an ambitious exercise and the EURIM role is mainly to provide a neutral umbrella for bringing major players together: users (public/private, military/civil) and suppliers, internationally as well as nationally: date 12th February (to be confirmed).

- Frameworks for Co-operation

This is a continuation of the group's current work programme to build on past work, such as the £8 million ODPM investment in FAME, the framework for multi-agency sharing, and support and publicise case studies, such as the KUDOS programme.

- Information Quality

Much is said of the need for “evidence based policy” but when the information is systemically flawed, filtered or otherwise compromised, the results can be far more expensive, in human suffering as well as wasted resources, than data loss. The focus on protection has led to widespread neglect of the information systems disciplines necessary to ensure accuracy, availability and meaningful presentation.

- Identity Governance

The issues around the responsibilities of those who would claim to own, hold and/or manage identity information, including when it is compromised, are not well addressed.

Some or all of these streams are expected to be run in co-operation with other organisations and we know that both Demos and the Centre for Policy Studies are organising exercises to follow up on some of the issues raised at the round table. The group also includes some of those working on relevant policy studies for the main political parties.

Please e-mail davywright2@ntlworld.com to request an invitation to the scoping meetings or otherwise register your interest in any of the above streams. Please remember to include a note of the experience, expertise and/or resources that you expect to contribute in a form that can be forwarded to those who have agreed to help organise these.

4) Expediting the Digitisation of Britain

Breaking the Emergency Spectrum and Infrastructure investment logjams?

The meeting on spectrum allocation for the UK emergency services on 10th December: (report in members area at: <http://www.eurim.org.uk/members/commspol/081210report.pdf>) revealed that the Catch 22 of “administrative incentive pricing” (a tax on public sector users based on theoretical valuations in lieu of a genuine market for spectrum) means that over half the spectrum reserved before the formation of Ofcom has still not been allocated. This leads to the routine use of crisis measures to handle predictable peaks, such as New Year’s Eve. Meanwhile, although Airwave now works on the London Underground, the communications interoperability between the emergency services is said to be little better than at the time of the King’s Cross fire. The spectrum decisions necessary are outside the remit of Ofcom and will have to be taken at the political level. A high level briefing on the issues in this space and why they are both important and urgent is overdue.

The Digital Britain announcements in late January are due to be more ambitious than previously expected and include the need to enable players to move from rhetoric to realistic business plans. A meeting to review the current situation, including the forty or so proposals for local, regional and national “Next Generation Networks” is provisionally scheduled for 9th February. Please e-mail eurim@eurim.org to register interest.

5) Creating the E-Crime Reduction Partnership

Eating an elephant v. building ant-hills in the jungle?

Many initiatives are now under way but achieving critical mass will not be easy. At the planning meeting for the E-Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership chaired by the Rt Alun Michael MP, on 6th October last year, Nigel Jones, who runs the Cybersecurity Knowledge Transfers Network, agreed to organise a round table to look at the concerns of small firms and how a partnership approach might address them. This was intended to be the first of a series of round tables looking at the concerns of different groups with the overall aim of assembling a critical mass of support from across industry and government for a strategic audit of the cyber-crime situation, collating what is known and identifying what needs to be done, in overall context: as opposed to doing more of the same. That is an ambitious objective. Those with the skills and experience necessary also have more modest and immediate objectives.

The Cybersecurity KTN and the Information Security Awareness Forum are organising a joint workshop on 3rd February to establish and discuss SME attitudes and expectations regarding Information Security. This is with a view to delivering awareness campaigns more effectively and to explore potential for an e-crime reduction partnership aimed at SMEs. The meeting should help inform Cyber Security KTN and ISAF activities as well as those agreed in October. In addition, the event will provide the opportunity for participants to network and exchange information about their interests and capability in the area of e-crime prevention.

There will be a limited number of places available and priority will be given to those with the practical experience, responsibilities, resources and budgets that make them potential participants in any future partnership. Before the meeting they will be expected to submit short papers on that experience and any relevant current activities to be placed on the KTN website for reference. Please e-mail Karen Barnett: kbarnett@qinetiq.com for an invitation to attend.

If you are interested in helping to organize similar meetings to address the on-line concerns of other communities please e-mail Dan Mount. mountd@parliament.uk . We are currently seeking to identify similar events with regard to the concerns of schools and silver surfers - mainly because they were the other communities in which those at the planning meeting expressed particular interest - not because they were the only communities whose concerns need to be considered or because we were giving them particular priority.

The SASIG meeting on the 28th January at which the plans for the Police Central E-Crime Unit will be outlined, followed by comment from the Rt Hon Alun Michael MP and James Brokenshire MP, is fully booked with a waiting list. The presentations will be placed on their website www.thesasig.com immediately after the event. There are likely to be further presentations of the PCEU plans in February, particularly for those in a position to contribute towards joint exercises to address specific topics. Please let me know if you would like your details to be forwarded to those planning these.

6) UK Internet Governance Forum: Messages from Hyderabad

Report back of actions agreed, lessons learned and the way forward

On 10th February Nominet will host a meeting in the Attlee Suite, Portcullis House at which those present at the Hyderabad IGF, including Rt Hon Alun Michael MP (championing the UK IGF), Margaret Moran MP (chair of EURIM), Ian Taylor MBE MP (Vice Chair) and Andrew Miller MP (Chair of PITCOM) will report back and discuss the lessons learned and way forward including the "Road to Egypt". The next Internet Governance Forum is in Cairo in November. There will also be contributions from stakeholders from Industry, the Voluntary Sector and Government.

The event will also see the launch of the Nominet Best Practice Challenge for 2009.

Please e-mail laura.Hutchinson@nominet.org.uk if you wish to attend.