

Case Study – CRNS Reuse Consortium



Summary

The CRNS reuse consortium successfully bid for a place on the Scotland Excel Domestic Furniture and Furnishings Framework. This allows it to supply quality reuse furniture to 24 local authorities across Scotland.

The consortium, the first of its kind in Scotland, was created by CRNS and its membership consists of 17 third sector furniture reuse organisations.

Background

The Community Resources Network Scotland (CRNS) is the national membership body for community organisations managing waste resources at a local level through recycling, reuse, composting, waste reduction and waste education activities. CRNS has over 120 members which operate in every local authority area in Scotland, with a combined annual turnover in excess of £63 million.

In 2012 Scotland Excel started working with local authorities on the development of a framework to support furnishing requirements for temporary accommodation. During initial discussions with stakeholders the scope of the framework was extended to help councils meet new obligations arising from the Scottish Welfare Fund which was coming into effect in April 2013 to replace crisis loans and grants previously administered by the Department for Work and Pensions.

In early 2014 the CRNS Chief Executive met with Jackie Baillie MSP to discuss reuse furniture and the issues people on lower incomes face in accessing furniture at reasonable prices. A further meeting then took place with the leader of Renfrewshire Council and an introduction was made to procurement staff at Scotland Excel.

Building on the success of the first generation framework, discussions took place in 2015 for renewal of the framework regarding the addition of a second lot for 're-use' goods. Scotland Excel and a technical group, comprising local authority representatives, considered the scope of goods to be supplied, their availability and how to ensure quality and safety.

Scotland Excel then agreed in principle to add a lot on their Domestic Furniture and Furnishings Framework dedicated to reuse furniture. The Framework tender was published in April 2016.

CRNS decided to bid for a place on the new reuse lot of the Scotland Excel framework. A steering group was then formed which agreed that CRNS would take the lead in putting together the tender response and be the lead organisation responsible for overseeing delivery of the contract if it was successful.

CRNS consulted its membership to find out who would be interested in joining the consortium, providing its membership with information on the necessary legal and other requirements they would be expected to comply with.



Once the partnership structure was finalised CRNS took responsibility for co-ordinating all meetings and documentation required for the tender submission. The steering group agreed the consortium's pricing strategy and ensured that all consortium members had in place the required processes and procedures. CRNS used an external consultant to help with completing the tender submission.

At the same time CRNS worked closely with COSLA and they contacted all local authorities on behalf of CRNS.

Shortly after the bid was submitted the CRNS reuse consortium was successful in gaining a place on the framework. Following notice of contract award CRNS engaged with all local authorities to discuss the benefits of purchasing reuse furniture via the Scotland Excel framework.

How the consortium operates

Fife Council, Aberdeen City Council and Renfrewshire Council have opted to purchase reuse furniture through the Scotland Excel framework.

The local authorities raise an order through the bespoke system which CRNS has developed. The 34 items which the consortium can supply are contained within a catalogue on the system. The local authority can select the item they require, input details of the recipient of the goods, and an order is then placed with the relevant consortium member in that area.

The reuse organisation then makes contact with the customer and has 48 hours to supply the item. Once the item is successfully delivered and signed for, an invoice is sent to the relevant local authority.

The system is continually monitored and progress is tracked by the reuse consortium co-ordinator at CRNS. The co-ordinator acts as the main contact for local authorities and Scotland Excel.

Challenges and key success factors

Challenges experienced by the consortium include:

- Completing the tender submission for the Scotland Excel framework in a short space of time. This was more complicated due to the number of consortium members
- Developing relationships with local authorities for them to purchase from the framework
- Ensuring supply meets the level of demand for the particular items required by local authorities,

Factors highlighted by CRNS as crucial to the success of the consortium's development include the following:

- Dedicated resource at CRNS helped keep momentum within both CRNS and with the CRNS membership, as well as collating the documentation required to bid and ensuring organisations had in place the necessary policies and procedures



- External support from sources including Sencot, who helped put together the initial Memorandum of Understanding, and a consultant who supported CRNS with the tender submission
- CRNS, as a membership organisation, was an obvious choice as lead organisation for the consortium
- Pre-engagement with both Scotland Excel and existing strong relationships with some local authorities.

Future plans

CRNS is currently working with a consultant to explore ways in which the consortium can become fully sustainable once development funding from Zero Waste Scotland expires. The consortium is also further developing its supply chain to meet demand from local authorities for white goods.

Impact

The benefits of using the CRNS reuse consortium to provide quality reuse furniture to individuals in need from a local authority's perspective are significant:

- Budgets can be better utilised to support more people in need
- Local authority budgets are spent with third sector suppliers, contributing to their financial sustainability and allowing them to continue to provide opportunities for employment and volunteering to those who are furthest removed from the labour market
- Items are diverted from landfill, resulting in a more circular economy.

During the first year of the contract the reuse consortium had a significant impact, including:

- 5,375 items of reuse furniture purchased by local authorities
- £429,839 income generated for consortium members directly servicing the contract
- 211,542 kg's diverted from landfill
- 560 kg's CO2 emissions saved
- 1,740 families and individuals assisted

Contact details

Alison Brown
Reuse Consortium Coordinator
CRNS
Tel: 01786 469002
Mob: 07387 090759
Email: reuseconsortium@crns.org.uk