



Fire Service Headquarters,
99 Vauxhall Road, Birmingham B7 4HW

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
Case Study: Framework Agreement for the supply of
High Visibility Surcoats conforming to Class 3 and
Class 2

Background

Firefighters within the UK wear high visibility surcoats conforming to Class 3 and Class 2 protection over their personal protective equipment (PPE). A range of high visibility colours and role names are utilised on the surcoats to distinguish between different roles undertaken on the incident ground. National Operational Guidance (NOG), the foundation of Incident Command gives clear identification of command roles. Please see the below diagram:



West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) identified a requirement to replace all operational high visibility jackets conforming to Class 3 during 2015 due to the age and quality of the jackets. Previous requests for quotation for the supply of surcoats to WMFS resulted in a poor response due to the low level quantities required and the Authority's specification of jacket being bespoke to WMFS.

WMFS Procurement engaged with other regional FRS's to establish what surcoats were worn operationally and how these were procured. It became evident that others were experiencing difficulty in supply because individual FRS's quantities were too low to manufacture.

Following regional engagement, WMFS Procurement acknowledged that there was a potential to run a procurement exercise to establish a sector led Framework Agreement accessible by all UK FRS to call off for the supply of surcoats. Wider consultation via CFOA Communities resulted in positive feedback and evidence (from 7 FRS) and WMFS acted as the lead authority to develop and implement a framework.

Process

The scope of the Framework Agreement was to provide a mechanism for FRS's to establish call off contracts for the supply of high visibility surcoats conforming to Class 3 and Class 2 protection for operational staff to wear at a range of incidents and training activities.

The Framework Agreement is split into two single supplier lots:

Lot 1 – Supply of high visibility jackets, Class 3 (3/4 length sleeves) conforming to Incident Command roles

Lot 2 – Supply of high visibility tabards, Class 2 (no sleeves) conforming to Incident Command roles

To ensure surcoats would be fit for purpose and conform to relevant standards the WMFS Procurement lead worked with a Watch Commander from the WMFS Research, Development, Technological and Innovation team to produce them.

Specifications and research gathered from London Fire Brigade (LFB) were also used to produce the Framework Agreement specifications. LFB had previously conducted a tender for high visibility tabards (Class 2) which conformed to the Incident Command guidance detailed in NOG

The specification was developed taking into account: -

- NOG Guidance
- Clear identification of roles
- Material breathability to assist with heat loss when worn over structural PPE
- Range of sizes (Small to XXXL) – provides a correct fit, doesn't compromise safety and provides a professional look
- Provision of inter-operability between FRS
- Differences between class 2 and class 3 requirements

The tender opportunity was published during December 2015 as an open procedure. The bids were evaluated using the following criteria/weightings:-

- 55% price
- 40% quality
- 5% social value

Samples were only requested from the two preferred bidders under each lot to check for adherence to the specifications.

Outcome

The Framework Agreement went live from August 2016. Nine FRS's have called off from the framework since it went live including WMFS and Scottish Fire and Rescue who have placed a two year call off order with the Class 2 supplier. Most recently Northern Ireland FRS have also expressed an interest in using the framework.

WMFS Procurement section undertake the management of the Framework Agreement including monitoring the supplier's performance and spend through the Framework.

The Framework Agreement provides the following benefits to participating FRS's:

- Reduced resource and time to access goods
- No requirement to reopen competition

- Supplier Management - Performance monitoring by WMFS
- Competitive fixed pricing
- Price breaks for bulk ordering – opportunities for collaborative procurement
- Low volume orders can be placed if required
- Standardised specifications
- Greater interoperability between organisations

The Lot 2 Supplier (Oxford Safety Supplies) also offered WMFS 2% social value on the organisation's initial order. WMFS were provided with £800 worth of child and adult high visibility tabards. These tabards were included in school boxes that the organisation's Road Casualty Reduction Team were donating to schools to promote road safety. The social value offered added additional value to this contract by providing safety clothing for school children and adults for when they are out on the road during school trips for example, which ensures they are visible to drivers whilst walking.

For further information on the Framework Agreement please contact Liz Davies, Contracts Manager at: liz.davies@wmfs.net