

## The Woodard Trust - Adding Value to ICT Procurement



Supporting sponsors to reduce risk and add value in the face of reduced budgets and pressures for cost efficiencies.

Novatia is working in partnership with the Woodard Academies Trust to support ICT consultancy services across its growing number of sponsored Academies.

One of our first collaborations with the Trust was to deliver optimised ICT costs across its current and future academies. Novatia worked with the Trust to set in place a procurement strategy leading to selection of a single ICT supplier. The rationale behind the strategy revolved around three key benefits.

1. **Costs are optimised** through:
  - reduced requirements for resource to run discrete procurement exercises, and
  - advantageous pricing on ICT equipment and services through greater economies of scale.
2. **Risks are reduced** as processes are streamlined for stakeholders with efficiencies found through a common provider experience for design and implementation engagements. Lessons learnt and applied to future Academies further reduces risk.
3. **Value is added** through a model of continuous improvement and innovation in service delivery and procurement over the long term of the partnership.

This strategy was agreed by the Trust and has been ratified by the DfE in each subsequent Academy's Outline Business Case. We are actively working with the DfE and PfS to ensure our advice in this area remains current and in-line with the changing educational funding landscape.

The procurement exercise was run via a mini-competition using the Becta Infrastructure Service Framework with Novatia, the Trust and the two initial Academies directly involved on the Bid Evaluation Panel. The most significant risk identified was one in which the different parties involved (each with a stridently independent culture) would not be able to come to consensus around a supplier. This risk was mitigated in two ways:

1. A strategy was agreed whereby each party would contribute equally to the weighting of evaluation criteria. This helped to remove the emotion out of the evaluation allowing the Panel to focus on the merit of the bids.

2. Each Academy was able to provide an appendix to the tender outlining their legacy systems to address fears of a 'one size fits all' approach. Bidders could then confirm their ability to flexibly supply and support a breadth of ICT solutions.

Significant interest was shown in bidding for the project which was further stimulated by Novatia's soft market testing. The Bidders' Day event enabled the interested Bidders to use the day for more focused information gathering and clarification. This approach led to the submission of high quality bids, that were sharply focused on the specific requirements of the Woodard Trust and each of its Academies.

Novatia provided further innovation to the pricing mechanism required of bidders to ensure they provided a clear cost advantage as the number of Academies grew—this was evidenced through comparison to Novatia's own extensive database of market costs.

To ensure strong and on-going contract management, the Trust and selected supplier have a well defined reporting and escalation process which includes the appointment of a ICT Supplier Programme Manager and Trust-vetted Project Managers assigned to deliver each individual Academy project. This rigour of delivery is further supported through the use of strong Service Orders for each individual project. Designed to shape supplier behaviour, these include features such as rigorous User Acceptance Testing and delay penalties ensure the Trust and its Academies receive a punctual implementation to the highest quality.



The Academy at Sunset