



City of Bunbury Turns to TenderLink's e-Procurement Solution to Shrink Workload

Growth is generally seen as a positive. When a city grows, it means everyone is doing something right and further growth is spurred as a result: population figures swell, employment numbers increase and construction booms. But growth in most cases has a directly proportional relationship to pressure. With an increased population comes a need to align capacity with increased demand: new schools, parks, hospitals. And with those new projects comes the need to go to tender more, and more... and more.

The tendering process is time-consuming, even with the assistance of e-Procurement solutions which remove the need for paper trails, automate manual processes and make everything digital. Some councils are growing at such a swift rate that even converting a manual process into a digital equivalent isn't enough to avoid having to add extra staff, because there is simply too much work - unless e-Procurement can manage to shrink the extra workload as it grows.

The City of Bunbury has managed to do exactly that through its use of TenderLink's e-Procurement solution.

Bunbury is one of the fastest growing regional centres in Western Australia. Located just 180 kilometres south of Perth, the City of Bunbury has a population of more than 31,000 people, while the greater Bunbury region is home to more than 80,000, with that number expected to increase to over 100,000 by 2031.

David Russell, Senior Contracts and Procurement Officer for the City of Bunbury, said the council undertakes an

average of 30 public tenders and about 50 quotations a year. The City's internal purchasing policy requires any contracts over \$50,000 to go through a public advertising process. Given this threshold and the growth experienced by Bunbury, one would expect the average number of tenders each year to be much higher than this.

But Mr Russell said the council uses Australasian e-Procurement provider, TenderLink, to shrink the amount of time spent on tenders and quotations, through the process of lowering the number of public tenders and quotations the council undertakes a year.

"One of the major benefits of using TenderLink is that it gives us the ability to create and manage our own panels," he said. "For instance, we have an architectural services contract we've established with a preferred panel of suppliers. Contractually, we must use this panel of preferred suppliers when a need arises, but this arrangement saves us going through the time-intensive tender process every time we have a need for architectural services.

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"We also have an environmental auditor's panel, an electrical panel, a plumbing panel and a surveying panel, just to name a few. The time impost of going to tender for each of those jobs is saved, because TenderLink has made it possible for us to create these panels."

"The panel functionality of our system is often overlooked," said Scott Alexander, TenderLink's Perth-based W.A. Business Development Manager. "Our portals have always offered the flexibility to source and group suppliers into panels and then release notices to these panels on a select basis. But an added benefit is that if these panels need refreshing, you can also access our extensive supplier audience on a more public basis, as and when the need arises."

Automated auditing and measureable return on investment

Having TenderLink's e-Procurement portal take much of the manual process away from staff has saved the City not just time, but money, according to Russell.

"If we didn't use TenderLink and had to undertake a tender the old-fashioned way, we'd need another full-time employee," he said. "Every time a supplier logs in they leave an audit trail of exactly when they logged in, when they downloaded documents and when they began uploading their submissions. All the auditing is automated, whereas if we were undertaking the same tender using the old manual process, we'd have to hire someone else."

"So, although indirect, it means the money you spend on TenderLink is actually an investment that you will see a real return on through cost savings."

"This return-on-investment criteria is now a well-established market trend," said Alexander. "Councils know they can streamline processes and improve probity with a specialised digital procurement solution. But when deciding whether to make the shift, they

also want to reassure themselves of the return on investment which, in our case, is delivered through cost savings."

While the cost of an extra staff member is measurable, quantifying the benefit of the peace of mind that comes with automating much of the process isn't quite so easy. But that doesn't make it any less tangible.

"Using the old system would mean everything had to be done by email or post. If I forgot to attach a document it meant I could come under scrutiny, and that includes if I didn't take into account if their email could receive documents over 10MBs in size or not," said Mr Russell. "With TenderLink, you know that when suppliers download documents, everyone is getting the same thing. The size of the documents doesn't matter either because they are downloading it from TenderLink's servers, direct to their desktop."

"And the more manual the process, the higher the likelihood of missing or forgetting something important, especially when you're really busy. But the TenderLink e-Procurement portal takes care of all of that for you."

The City has also seen additional time savings when an addendum to an existing tender needs to be distributed. Previously, any addenda would need to be emailed out to a mailing list, and the same concerns regarding document sizes were in play. In addition, the responsibility of maintaining an up-to-date email list was left to the City - further increasing the risk of human error. But when using the TenderLink system, once the addendum is uploaded, an email with a link to download the addendum is automatically sent to everyone who has registered an interest in the opportunity and downloaded tender documents.

"It saves us a lot of time, and as everything is automated it protects us from inadvertently creating an audit issue," he said. "It's simple, easy to use and it does what it needs to do."

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