



INDUSTRY SECTOR: LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
SOLUTION: TENDERLINK E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL

## NPDC STEPS UP A GEAR WITH ITS OWN INDIVIDUAL TENDERLINK E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL



Te Kaunihera-ā-Rohe o Ngāmotu  
**NEW PLYMOUTH  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
newplymouthnz.com

*Sharing makes a lot of sense - in the beginning. Take living with friends. Cleaning is - ideally - a collective effort, bills are split equally and group-think determines processes which support our shared living arrangement. At the start, everything seems easy.*

*But eventually, most of us outgrow this lifestyle. We want to watch a different TV show, let the dog sleep in our room, or prefer the dining room table be used in the backyard. Most of all - we want our own space, to do our own thing, in our own way.*

In most cases, it seems a shared solution is the first logical step in us branching out on our own - and this is a statement that holds true in many industries, but especially in procurement. In the beginning, there's a benefit to using an e-Procurement solution shared with others: our feet get wet, we get used to the functionality and we see the benefits of not having to deal with so much paper. But eventually, some organisations seek the freedom to move the dining room table, so to speak.

The New Plymouth District Council (NPDC) is one such organisation that outgrew shared quarters and has since branched out on its own.

The NPDC services the largest district in the Taranaki region, New Zealand. Providing services to approximately 74,000 constituents, the NPDC undertakes a large number of procurement projects per month - covering everything from roads and construction, managing its extensive parks network and drilling water wells.

NPDC has a long history with TenderLink, having provided input into TenderLink's e-Procurement portal prototypes as far back as 2005. Through this collaborative working relationship, the NPDC quickly came to appreciate the fundamental benefits of e-Procurement: through making the manual procurement process digital, probity requirements are more easily met, plus countless hours and costs are saved through consistent, automated and built-for-purpose processes.

Denise Cooper, Administration Officer, Infrastructure Support at NPDC, believes their procurement processes have changed immensely since the council began using TenderLink's e-Procurement solution, and for the better.

"The pre-TenderLink days required a lot of manual leg-work, including dealing with a lot of paper," she said. "The TenderLink system is easy to use and takes all of the time-consuming paperwork out of it. The project developers draft up the documents and then we load them into the system. We don't see a single piece of paper, and there's no double or triple handling of documents."

However, as is the case with all technology, things change.

NPDC's early use of TenderLink was through the collaborative LG-Tenders portal, shared by nearly 50 local councils around New Zealand. This arrangement worked well for the better part of 10 years and for many councils, it still does. But a shared portal brings compromise, with the "one size fits all" approach necessarily restricting the full range of functionality on offer.

Over time, NPDC found that their procurement requirements had matured, and the functional trade-offs of a shared portal arrangement became more telling.

### Greater flexibility and more competitive bid responses

NPDC met their increased functionality needs through shifting to their own portal, this providing them with a nuanced e-Procurement solution tailored to their individual needs.

"Moving to an individual portal opens up the full breadth of system

**“ The automation of such processes enables much greater adherence to probity requirements. Every company logging into the system leaves a digital footprint... ”**

**Denise Cooper**  
Administration Officer, Infrastructure Support  
New Plymouth District Council



**INDUSTRY SECTOR: LOCAL GOVERNMENT**  
**SOLUTION: TENDERLINK E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL**

functionality ” said Leandro Fossá, TenderLink’s New Zealand-based Business Development Manager. “NPDC - along with the Christchurch, Hamilton, Dunedin and Rangitikei councils, for that matter – now has its own branded identity and its own dedicated digital marketplace. And importantly, they now have greater choices about how they want to customise their portal to align with their specific procurement processes. And procurement professionals recognise instantly how options like pre-qualifying suppliers, pre-approving tenders prior to release, loading specific supplier support resources and setting default e-tenderbox closing times all combine to offer a pretty powerful bundle of functionality improvements.

The other interesting trend we are noting with the individual portal option is that once a council commits to its own portal, they tend to use it more. With an individual solution, suppliers register for free and so councils tend to attract more suppliers. This gives councils a sizeable and engaged supplier base, allowing them to conduct private/closed tendering - all within the portal - instead of using risk-prone and ad-hoc systems such as spreadsheets and emails. And not surprisingly, when councils opt for their own portal, we are also seeing increased usage of our evaluation toolset”.

And just as in 2005, when the NPDC saw the benefits of a shared portal, this time around they have been equally quick to recognise the additional benefits accruing from having their own.

As Cooper notes, “If we need to send out a notice to prospective bidders, the system automatically issues the notice to all the companies who have downloaded documents. We don’t need a long list of emails anymore and it’s saved us countless hours. I can go into the system at any stage and it will show me a list of the companies who have downloaded documents. It will also provide details about the number of people who have viewed specific opportunities.

The automation of such processes also enables much greater adherence to probity requirements. Every company logging into the

**“ The great thing is that TenderLink is tweaking the portal functionality all the time, providing extra bits and pieces, all of which are available to us now that we have our own portal. It just keeps getting better.**

**Denise Cooper**  
**Administration Officer, Infrastructure Support**  
**New Plymouth District Council**

system leaves a digital footprint, outlining the time and date they logged into our portal, what they viewed and downloaded, when they began their submission uploads - everything”.

But Cooper has found the major benefits to the council having its own NPDC-branded portal have been an enhanced market presence and more supplier engagement, resulting in increased competition for procurement projects. This delivers cost savings and ensures the best possible outcome for the NPDC - and by extension, its ratepayers. So, in a way, the system can be viewed as indirectly paying for itself.

“More supplier companies are coming on board and registering on our portal now, because it’s free for them to do so,” she said. “We are getting more submissions for each tender, and having our own portal better advertises us to suppliers as well.

“And the great thing is that TenderLink is tweaking the portal functionality all the time, providing extra bits and pieces, all of which are available to us now that we have our own portal. It just keeps getting better. The system is simple to use and TenderLink’s support during our move to a branded portal has been excellent.”