



Brisbane City Council

The Council

Brisbane City Council is the largest local government in the Asia Pacific Region. With the help of more than 6,400 staff, the Council is responsible for the delivery of core local government services including water and sewerage, public transport, urban management and city administration to a population of almost one million people. Brisbane City Council manages a budget of over AU\$2 billion annually and has assets in excess of \$14.6 billion.

The Problem

Brisbane City Council was seeking to extend the functionality of its existing, internally-developed eTendering system. Suppliers to the Council were well-used to the idea of eTendering, as the Council had been advertising tenders and making tender documents available for download for some years.

However the in-house solution had a number of limitations including the ability to receive electronic uploads of tender documentation. The Council was keen to move to a browser-based solution that would allow diagrams and drawing files to be downloaded with Request for Tender documentation. It also required a secure facility that could accept any format of electronic tender. A major concern was that the chosen solution could not involve a user fee for the Council, nor should it seek to pass costs onto the supply market.

Brisbane City Council procures over \$730 million per year in goods and services excluding special projects. Its business units encompass a range of activities as diverse as bus and ferry operations, social policy, road construction, sewage, heavy engineering, water treatment and distribution, and information technology. Tender documentation frequently varies and responses may be sought in a range of formats. It was essential that any eTendering solution had to be capable of catering for the variety of documents that the Council may be required to handle. Flexibility was also an important factor, ensuring the ability to move to the most up-to-date technology as changes occurred in the market place.

A prime business driver for the eTendering project was the imperative to improve customer service by allowing an anywhere/anytime facility for conducting business with the Council. As a government authority, it was also critical that the eTendering solution operate according to the highest levels of accountability, transparency and value for money standards.



The eVALUA Solution

The Council looked at a number of eTendering possibilities including in-house development and external vendor eTendering solutions. However the requirement to handle electronic tender submissions presented a challenging technical problem that involved cryptography, the need to maintain supporting source code and the capability to link with other applications.

After deliberation eVALUA was awarded the contract to provide a solution that could be implemented and maintained behind Council firewalls. The objectives set for eVALUA were to:

- establish an electronic tender box functionality that would allow electronic receipt of tender offer documents from tenderers via the Internet;
- meet stringent security requirements around the transmission and receipt of electronic information;
- provide a secure facility that ensures the probity of tender and request documentation;
- develop functionality that would allow for tender documents comprising diagram and drawing files to be downloaded from the web; and
- provide a facility to 'register interest' in future tenders.

By June 2004 eVALUA had the solution complete, achieving all the objectives, along with a new facility enabling tenderers to upload diagrams, drawing and other files. eTenderBox™ was born. The solution also incorporated a capability to import Tender response information into VFMOOnline®, providing the Council with the capability to manage the tender evaluation process electronically for the first time in their tender management history.

Recognising that a small percentage of suppliers have not yet taken up electronic technologies, the eTendering solution works in conjunction with a physical Tender Box, thus maintaining choice in methods of response and ensuring good supplier relationships. Details of the paper-based responses are entered into the system manually providing a single record of responses for probity and audit purposes.

The Result

The results of the eVALUA application have been extremely positive, benefiting staff, vendors and ultimately, through greater cost savings, the citizens and ratepayers of Brisbane.

The solution meets Council's exacting security and architecture requirements and ensures that tender information is doubly encrypted and only available after the tender closing time.

Tender closing times can now be set to timeframes dictated by business requirements (rather than technological constraints) while still allowing potential suppliers the ability to upload documents from their desktops. The electronic Tender Box has also saved many suppliers significant costs in the preparation, collation and lodgement of tenders – savings that are expected to be passed back through the supply chain to Council.

Documents forwarded electronically through the Tender Box are available for scrutiny far earlier than was previously possible in a hardcopy format. This, combined with the ability to download into online folders, means that authorised Council staff can now access tender information on the Intranet from their desktops. Tender evaluations have the potential of being conducted from a user's desktop resulting in savings in travelling time and workshop costs.

Staff acceptance of the eVALUA solution has been extremely positive and many have been surprised at how easy the application is to use. A training database and website has enabled Council staff to conduct one-on-one training and guidance for contract and project management personnel from remote locations, further reducing training costs.

