

SWRLS Grant feedback to Regional Council Meeting – March 2012

Grant to LibrariesWest

Background

LibrariesWest were granted £2,500 from SWRLS in the 11/12 round of funding. Our original application specified -

Procurement advice	£1,000
Financial modelling (and comparisons nationally)	£3,000
IT development	£1,000

To examine the procurement options that would enable the consortium to expand and include other authorities.

To develop the financial modelling of the consortium to enable future development (this would include examining issues of governance)

To deliver efficiencies and savings which will help public libraries to continue to deliver a public library service.

To support IT developments that will allow for growth in the consortium and to run services more efficiently

To compare LibrariesWest with other consortia (e.g. London Libraries) to ascertain value for money and service offered.

LibrariesWest also contributed £2,500 with an additional £1,500 at a later date.

Procurement

As there was an urgency to reach an agreement on procurement or changing from a supply contract agreement to a framework agreement with the LMS, we concentrated on exploring procurement. We believed we would need independent legal advice on our current contract. It soon became apparent with internal discussions with South West One and then with Axiell that we were limited in changing our current arrangements due to the close expiry date.

Therefore we extended the LMS contract with Axiell for another 5 years – with expiry in 2016 and a procurement process to start in 2014. At this point the contract would be changed to a framework agreement and we would be in a good position to talk to other authorities about joining LibrariesWest consortium as full members with a joint LMS.

1. Financial Modelling

We discussed internally the future of the consortium and agreed that being able to demonstrate the value of working - as a consortium would be very beneficial. We agreed that quantifying the value for money benefits of 5 authorities working together as well as the non-cashable benefits could be shared with other SW authorities. We agreed that the audience had to be both internal – our own directors and councillors and external to other local authorities.

2. Shared Service/ICT development

At the same time, we discussed a development of a paper already in internal circulation about closer working within Libraries West and how more benefits could be realised and also if there were opportunities that we still needed to work on.

Current Work

- VFM

Black Radley were commissioned with the SWRLS grant to undertake an independent and external view of the VFM of LibrariesWest, looking at indicators to demonstrate the value of consortium working. They are also talking to other consortia about their experience of quantifying value and to colleagues in the South West about potential for LibrariesWest to develop.

- ICT shared development

Another Black Radley consultant is working on a high level report on more shared work through ICT.

- Future opportunities

We are also working on modular offers that can be accessed without the full membership in the framework agreement. They can be standalone services such as the Enquiry service that channels reference enquiries to a telephone service.

The work was commissioned in January and will report on March 14th. We imagine the report will be a challenging and firm steer on how the consortium can develop and what is needed to get us into a more businesslike customer focused partnership. It will also show what stages other consortia are at in looking at their VFM and will highlight some indicators that can easily demonstrate VFM internally and externally.

- LibrariesWest Conference

We have the exciting opportunity to jointly host a conference on May 3rd at the Guildhall in Bath with London Libraries. With Axiell as our conference sponsors we will be jointly explaining and talking through the experience of working as a consortium and offering workshops on how to advance more

consortium working. This report will greatly aid our thinking about development and it is likely Black Radley will attend.