



**Financial Services
Procurement**
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Memorandum

Date: March 8, 2018

To: Audit Committee
Operations & Resources Committee

From: Sonya Collins, Procurement Management Professional

RE: Procurement Group Process Improvements - Implementation of Bonfire

Background: The Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) Procurement Group relies on a fragmented set of tools to manage the sourcing cycle from scope development through contract administration. This includes heavy reliance on various tools such as Excel, Word, Adobe, SharePoint, email, Bidnet/MITN, and various network drives and intranet pages. In addition to gross inefficiencies, the lack of cohesive tools hinders consistent business process, timeliness, ability to measure performance, reduction of human error, and stakeholder satisfaction.

Analysis: Along with our partners in the GLWA Information Technology Group, software options were evaluated that could provide a business process framework that aligned with our needs that was also innovative, demonstrated public sector expertise, and is user-friendly. After considering the options available, the clear leader was Bonfire, a software as a service (SaaS) solution. In Fall 2017, the Procurement Group conducted a live pilot of Bonfire for a few key procurements. Feedback from the vendor community, Procurement staff, and internal and external customers was very positive. Based on that hands-on experience and a relatively low cost and condensed implementation timeline, it became apparent that Bonfire was an excellent fit for GLWA's urgent and foreseeable needs. Bonfire spans the "end-to-end" cycle from soliciting suppliers, receiving bids and proposals, evaluating & scoring, documenting awardee decision, and managing the contract.

A few items of note for GLWA's needs.

1. Bonfire can archive all the current and closed solicitations for the public and vendors to view at their discretion along with all supporting documentation. This creates an efficiency because we can now have a link on the GLWA website that directs vendor

to Bonfire for current and/or past solicitations instead of staff posting the request through Public Relations. This reduces redundancies of effort.

2. Bonfire can post award notices (shows what has been awarded) which will archive the original solicitation along with an executed contract in which the public and vendors will also have access to view. Based on other public-sector users' feedback, this reduces the amount of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests received.
3. We will now be able to demonstrate GLWA's commitment to transparency and satisfy our requirements to post contracts on our website via the link to GLWA's Bonfire site.
4. Other complex contract management tasks, such as Construction Change Directives (CCD), can also be aligned with the Bonfire program.

The negotiated fee per seat (user) is \$3,900. GLWA's annual cost for 30 users is \$117,000. There is no charge for training and implementation. The contract is for one year with two one-year extensions at GLWA's discretion at the same rate. The fee negotiated for GLWA members and affiliates is \$4,500 per user with a minimum of five users.

The implementation timeline is below.

- February 2018 – Data gathering and project planning
- March 2018 - Contract signed
- March/April 2018 – Configuration, Procurement Group training, testing, and piloting
- April/May 2018 – Internal and external stakeholder training and communications including a Vendor Outreach event (Date TBD)
- June 2018 – Complete launch
- July 2018+ - Stakeholder feedback, continuous improvement (Plan-Do-Check-Act), and rollout of lower priority features

Attached is a case study from a public-sector Bonfire client. On page three of that case study is a link to a short minute video which provides a brief view of Bonfire (<https://bonfire.wistia.com/medias/hdtgn1so2w>).

We will continue to provide updates as the important initiative rolls out.

Recommendation: Receive and file report.

Supercharging RFP submission and evaluation efficiency

 Customer Success Story

Metropolitan Transportation Commission

When the number of projects is growing faster than your team’s resources, you need to become more efficient and effective. MTC knew their existing hard-copy submission and paper-based scoring processes were holding them back. With Bonfire, MTC streamlined their submission and RfX evaluation to slash project times, improve operational efficiencies, and make better decisions with confidence.



Organization Profile

Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) is the transportation planning, financing and coordinating agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. MTC supports the roads, transit systems, airports and other transportation resources that help the region’s seven million residents and visitors get to where they need to be.



Key Challenges:

- Entirely hard-copy and Excel-based processes
- Offline and time-consuming scoring and aggregation
- Increasing pressure on team to ‘do more with less’

Solution:

Implemented Bonfire to streamline their procurement activities, enable easier and more powerful evaluation processes, and bolster their data and reporting capabilities.

Impact & Results:

- Elimination of hard-copy and manual processes
- Improved efficiency and effectiveness of team
- 200% faster project cycles versus old process

Procurement at MTC before Bonfire

The Contracts group at MTC manages all the competitive bidding and RFX projects for the agency, serving the San Francisco Bay Area. This includes over 75 RFPs and many more lower-spend solicitations and projects. It is the team's responsibility to the agency to deliver the best value for public funds, ensure open opportunity to bid, be as efficient as possible, and maintain perfect compliance to applicable local, state, and federal laws.

In late 2015, the Executive Office tasked the Contracts team with improving the efficiency of their procurement process. It was clear to Denise Rodrigues [Assistant Director, Contracts Compliance Manager], Michael Brinton [Principal, Contracts Manager] and the rest of the Contracts team that their existing manual, paper-based processes were no longer sustainable.

"We have a very small team relative to the volume of procurements and contracts" states Brinton. "In our old method, everything was via paper... Our confidentiality and conflict of interest statements were signed via paper. We had a paper-based evaluation scorecard, where the evaluation panel members would have to fill out their scores and handwrite out their notes." Scores and comments were manually aggregated and tabulated in Excel, along with frequent in-person consensus meetings to follow.

Not only was this existing process creating operational hurdles, it also made responding to public information requests a difficult and time-consuming challenge.

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"In our old method, everything was via paper..."

We needed some way to deal with it."

- Michael Brinton,
Contracts Manager, MTC

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Finding the right software

The team at MTC began exploring their options, looking for a software platform that would help their procurement activities become more effective and efficient.

With the rise in project volume, they needed to be able to run more projects in less time with the same amount of resources. More specifically, they needed software that not only streamlined their activities and handled complex RFP evaluations, but was also incredibly easy to use, reliable, and stable for their use.

Another requirement was for the software to help the agency respond to public data and information requests, and make it easier for the Contracts group to find, gather, and share relevant project information as needed.

Implementation of the platform needed to be simple and straightforward, with stakeholders able to learn and become proficient in the system quickly and without major disruptions or extensive training.

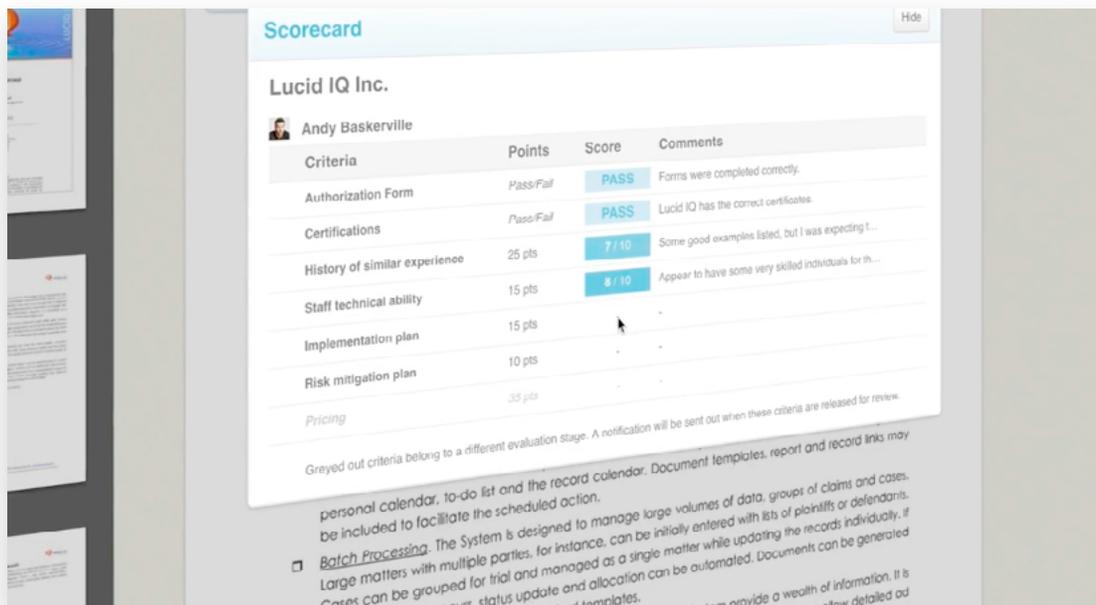
Choosing Bonfire

Many of the options that Denise, Michael, and the team evaluated had individual components of what they were looking for, but ultimately they lacked the full functionality, ease of use for all users, and the modern look and feel they wanted.

“The way that the [first] demonstration was run, we could tell that [Bonfire] was going to be really easy for us to adopt: not a whole lot of training to do, it was intuitive”.

In particular, Bonfire’s PDF evaluation features had the potential to significantly improve their evaluation efficiency. Bonfire’s ability to bring their submissions online, structure their solicitation data, streamline their activities, and allow evaluators to review, score, and apply justifications all in a single place were all crucial features for MTC.

Bonfire would eliminate the inefficient and manual hard-copy processes, improving the efficiency of data and scoring management, the effectiveness of evaluator panel meetings, and overall slash project times to allow the team to tackle the growing number of procurement projects coming their way.



See Bonfire's evaluation tools, for yourself, including PDF evaluation.

[Watch the video here!](#)

This is an example of what PDF evaluation looks like in Bonfire. This powerful evaluation tool allows your evaluation team to review, score and provide justifications - all in one place.

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“I couldn’t imagine the implementation process **being any simpler.**”

- Michael Brinton, Contracts Manager, MTC

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Getting Started with Bonfire

"I couldn't imagine the implementation process being any simpler" states Brinton.

The team at MTC was up to speed and proficient in Bonfire almost immediately. "It usually only takes about one time experiencing the whole Bonfire process... We walk [new team members] through one project, and they're off on their own".

Suppliers have also given Bonfire "universal positive feedback and acceptance". In a recent satisfaction survey, the MTC supplier community on average scored Bonfire's 'ease of use' as a 9.5/10, system stability as 9.5/10, and indicated average cost savings of approximately \$200 to over \$500 per submission.

Bonfire's impact at MTC

The impact of Bonfire at MTC has been significant. Project times have been slashed by as much as 200%, allowing the team to run complex RFPs in about a month versus the 60-90 days required by their old process.

Operationally, Bonfire has enabled the team to be more consistent across all projects and team members: not only are projects run more efficiently, but project setup, documents, and reporting are now more highly organized and consistent.

"It's really the ease of use, the utility of [Bonfire], the reliability of it, and how much quicker it is for the project manager to get from evaluation to signing a contract. It's made things more efficient" says Brinton.

Bonfire has also had an impact beyond the performance gains of their procurement projects: Bonfire has also helped to increase the confidence in what the agency is doing from a procurement perspective. According to Brinton, "Bonfire has been a really big success for us".

"Bonfire does more than we expected it to do, and still has more potential to change the way we do things."



200%
faster projects

Using Bonfire, MTC was able to complete RFPs in approximately 1/3 of the time of their old process - down from 60-90 days to approximately 30 days.



Learn how easier collaboration, richer data, and deeper automation can transform your procurement:

[GoBonfire.com](https://www.gobonfire.com)
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800-354-8010

