Government tenders are seriously flawed - the evidence

BECTA tender spec requirements highlighted bold

SF-UK/TLM and The Winning Tender position described for each of the Tender

Requirements. Don't forget that the SF-UK/TLM starting point is well beyond the winning tender proposals. So tax payers money is being used to replicate a subset of what the third sector has already provided through its volunteers.

Provide community seeding and support by providing school sector focussed on-line resources, on-line support and fora

In the SF-UK bid we proposed to donate the SF-UK web site and the INGOT community site to the project and provide hosting as sponsorship. Currently 3000 subscribers to the social networking part, 1300 to the on-line courses and 165 to the SF-UK mailing lists. **The winning bid proposed building a web site that would get 50 participants.**

Community on-line discussion

SF-UK web site with an established mailing list receiving about 1000 posts per year. INGOT community site provides free supervised social networking for children in support of their learning and gaining recognised qualifications in IT and Open Systems. Supports CPD related to the Teacher Learning Academy of the General Teaching Council.
Winning bid has some small scale evidence of success in building on-line communities but none in the context of Open Source, the project context. **BECTA's own on-line communities had only 68 subscribers for the whole of educational IT** and several are BECTA employees.

Identify and recruit initial community members

165 registered on the SF-UK mailing list, around 3000 users on the INGOT community site about 1300 on the INGOT Moodle site since September 2007.

BECTA's target for end of Year 2 and the winning bidder - 50.

Annual workshop on community topics

FLOSSIE conference already established attracting around 60 delegates a year and run by the bidders and other volunteers. BECTA's ex-Chairman, Prof David Hargreaves was the first keynote speaker. BECTA reps at all recent events. Winning bid has no track record in promoting open source conferences and workshops.

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BETT seminar development and delivery to promote open source use

SF-UK bidders have extensive experience giving seminars on FOSS in schools and education based community projects in California, New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Portugal, Poland, Romania, South Africa as well as many UK locations.

Winning bid no apparent experience in providing seminars in the subject matter at national or international level.

Highlight open source software developed with contribution from UK schools using an on-line registry of software and developers

INGOT community site provides blogs by students of work as they learn about open systems. Teachers learn by becoming assessors and strategy targets mainstream teachers who have no FOSS experience. Resources section already catalogues FOSS available and suitable for schools (Click on the left toolbar on Blogs and Resources [1]). SF-UK agreed with Scholarpak [2] and Karoshi [3] to provide an open source MIS system and server management suite developed in schools as a starting point. Bid proposed to produce 1000 lessons in Moodle to support learning under a copyleft license inviting community participation. People responsible already manage one of the most successful on-line closed source resources for SAM learning. [4]

Winning bid - no apparent experience or track record in open source development or in-depth knowledge of what is actually out there.

On-line discussion open by 30/10/08, seeded with 10 active members

SF-UK already achieved several times beyond this and not all are Open Source converts. In fact the vast majority on the community sites are ordinary teachers and learners learning about FOSS.

See above to see why we have cast iron evidence that far more than this can be achieved with long term sustainability. It's a wierd risk assessment that puts unproven process ahead of demonstrated outcome.

In addition the SF-UK bid identified £60,000 of further sponsorship from partners and pledges of further support from all over the world. No-one working on the project would get paid until after delivery and to an agreed spec. removing financial risk. BECTA simply dismissed this without any checking of references.

Winning bid has no evidence or track record of starting such an on-line discussion but of course they could pay 10 people £1000 each to participate and meet the target.

Summary of the marks allocated by BECTA

MARK CATEGORY	SF/UK/TLM	WINNING TENDER	MAXIMUM M
Capability and experience	30.2	30.8	40
Quality of proposal	14.4	16.4	20
Value for Money	10.8	15.0	20
Ability to meet time scales	13.3	15.6	20

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Total Average Weighted Scores	68.8	77.8	10

The marks allocated to SF-UK/TLM for value for money and ability to meet time scales are impossible to justify when the starting point for the tender exceeds the tender targets. Since it is a Schools **Open Source** Project. Allocate say 16 of the 40 marks for education professional experience etc in schools, 16 for experience of building FOSS communities and 8 more if you have both in an integrated way. One wonders what one would have to do to score 40 marks. This is why not providing the details of the mark scheme at the time of bidding is a serious problem. BECTA has given virtually no weight at all to Open Source experience and massive weight to their own bureaucratic view of the world. A reasonable view might be that some clear experience in schools and community development related to FOSS was essential and without it a bid would be rejected on the grounds that the risk outweighs any quality procedures around management and administration.

Members of the SF-UK team are now co-operating with the tender winners to try and make the project work. That does not take away the fact that there is clear evidence that this was not a fair and objective competition. This is made worse by the fact that BECTA responded to a complaint with an internal review promptly exonerating itself without apparently questioning how such an anomalous result could arise? What confidence can anyone have in fair government tender process? Or maybe it was a foregone conclusion? Why would any newcomer ever bid for such a contract again under these circumstances

Source URL: https://theingots.org/community/BECTAsham

Links
[1] ttp://www.theingots.org/community/resources/other
[2] http://www.skegnessgrammar.lincs.sch.uk/managed.php?page=specialisms_maths
[3] http://karoshi.linuxgfx.co.uk/
[4] http://www.samlearning.com/

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