

Environmentally-friendly cleaning services in Reykjavík

REYKJAVIK CITY COUNCIL, ICELAND

Procurement objectives

Reykjavik City Council aimed to achieve the following through its GPP action:

- Set a good example and promote a more environmentally-friendly cleaning service
- Contribute to providing a good working environment for the city staff in the new office premises, by providing good quality office cleaning services through the use of environmentally-friendly cleaning products.
- Eliminate all unnecessary cleaning and waste of resources.

Background

Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, has approximately 120,000 inhabitants (37% of the Icelandic population). Green procurement has been an objective of the City's Local Agenda policy since 2001, and has seen the inclusion of environmental criteria in tendering for various products and services.

The City Council - through its schools, kindergartens, offices and other buildings - is a major consumer of cleaning services and therefore has the potential to exert considerable influence over the Icelandic cleaning services market.

A new contract for cleaning services was needed in 2007 following the re-location of the City Council's main departments to new premises (covering 10,218 square metres).



Criteria used

The criteria and processes included in the tender documents were thoroughly researched, and a cleaning expert from Iceland's National University Hospital was also employed to analyse Reykjavik's cleaning needs. The pre-tender analysis showed that the cleaning frequency could be considerably reduced, generating positive results for the environment and the City's budget. Furthermore, by cleaning the offices during office hours, staff reacted more positively about the quality of the cleaning service provided, despite the lower frequency.

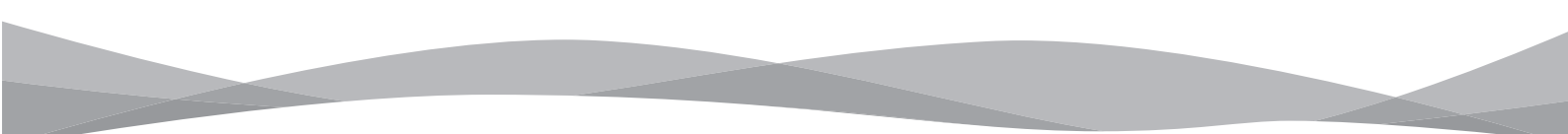
Technical specifications

- Cleaning products: Non-allergenic, readily biodegradable and free of high concentrations of volatile organic compounds
- Contractor is required to keep the City informed about the use of all products for the cleaning service, to ensure their compatibility with the requirements.

The main source of information for the criteria was the [cleaning and maintenance products and services criteria](#) from the Procura+ Sustainable Procurement Campaign.

Award criteria

- 15 out of 100 points were allocated to environmental management and 85 points to price. Bidders with a certified environmental management system, ISO 14001 or equivalent, or an ecolabelled cleaning service, such as the one certified by the Nordic Swan, or equivalent, were awarded 15 points.
- Bidders with a non-certified management system were awarded 7.5 points. The management system was required to be in operation for at least six months.



Environmentally-friendly cleaning services in Reykjavík

Results

Eleven bids were submitted but only one was awarded with points for environmental management. That bid was ranked fifth relative to price but obtained the highest total score and was thus awarded the contract. The winning company provided cleaning services certified by the Nordic Swan. Subsequently, the tender process led to a considerable increase in the number of applications for the Nordic Swan ecolabel in Iceland for cleaning services, as well as a number of companies setting up and implementing certified environmental management systems.

Environmental impacts

Lowering the cleaning frequency resulted in a decrease in the use of cleaning products, water and less wastewater production. By signing a contract with a cleaning company awarded with an ecolabel, the environmental impacts were lowered and quality of the service was assured.

The Nordic Swan ecolabel covers a number of other key aspects related to providing a 'green' cleaning service, such as staff training, limiting chemicals used per square metre, minimum proportion of ecolabelled chemicals and classification requirements for non-ecolabelled chemicals. It also requires that a system is in place for monitoring cleaning quality, written work instructions, transport, and waste requirements.

Lessons learned

Including sustainability criteria in large public contracts can have a rapid and significant effect on the supply of products and services, particularly in small markets. The effect in Iceland was visible one year later when a tender for cleaning services for kindergartens in Reykjavik was published. The result was that a number of companies with certified environmental management systems or ecolabelled cleaning services participated in the competition. Cleaning frequency was lowered without affecting the quality of the service. The change in service was positively received by office staff as it was switched to take place during office hours.

Awarding points to environmental management had not been done before in Reykjavik's public procurement practice for cleaning services and some bidders complained that the notice given was too short. However, by setting environmental management as an award criterion, not as a technical specification, flexibility was given. Given the market expansion, it may be possible to include the more ambitious criteria as part of the technical specifications in future tenders.

This particular procurement practice has provided a clear signal to the market that the impacts of such services on the environment and working conditions are important factors to consider.