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Flexible Framework



What is the Flexible Framework?

The Flexible Framework is a widely used self-assessment mechanism developed by the Sustainable Procurement Task Force (SPTF), which allows organisations to measure and monitor their progress on sustainable procurement over time.

In the 2005 Sustainable Development Strategy, the UK Government stated its ambitious goal to be amongst the leaders in the EU on sustainable procurement by 2009. It recognised that current initiatives alone would not deliver that. Subsequently, in May 2005 the SPTF, jointly funded by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and HM Treasury, was established under the direction of Sir Neville Simms (Chairman of International Power Plc) and a leading private sector proponent of sustainability (including George Martin of Willmott Dixon).

The purpose of the SPTF was to devise a National Action Plan to deliver the UK objective, 'Procuring the Future', was delivered in June 2006. One of the key recommendations from this report was to develop an overarching approach to help organisations understand and take the steps needed at an organisational and process level to improve procurement practice and to make sustainable procurement - "the Flexible Framework".

What is Sustainable Procurement?

"A process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment." Sustainable Procurement Task Force.

Essentially, sustainable procurement involves looking at:

- environmental concerns like energy emissions and the materials used in manufacture, to things like where a product is coming from and how long its lifecycle is;
- social criteria, where these can be identified. For example, it can include ethical issues – such as whether organisations provide fair and safe working conditions for their staff;
- economic factors, measured across the whole lifecycle of a product and taking account of the real cost of manufacture, supply, usage and disposal of a product.

What's involved?

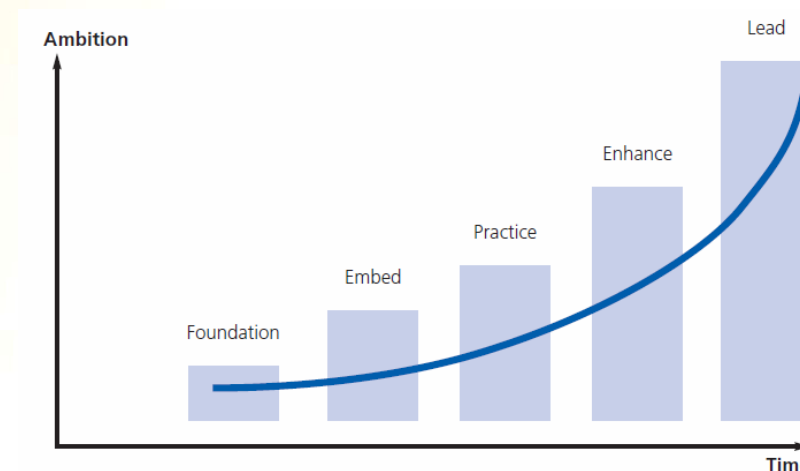
As documented within 'Procuring the Future' report, the Flexible Framework identifies 5 key themes:

- People;
- Policy, Strategy & Communications;
- Procurement Process;
- Engaging Suppliers and
- Measurement & Results

And there are 5 stages of progression:

- Level 1 – Foundation
- Level 2 – Embed
- Level 3 – Practice
- Level 4 – Enhance
- Level 5 – Lead

Figure 1 Stages of progression through use of the Flexible Framework ('Procuring the Future')



Please view the following document for the requirements associated with each level; <http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/documents/full-document.pdf>

Action Sustainability have produced a 'Flexible Framework tool' to allow for quick and easy self-assessment - http://www.actionsustainability.com/evaluation/flexible_framework/

Why sign up?

Willmott Dixon have adopted the Flexible Framework approach to assessing the sustainability of procurement processes in order to improve procurement practice for the benefit of suppliers and ourselves.

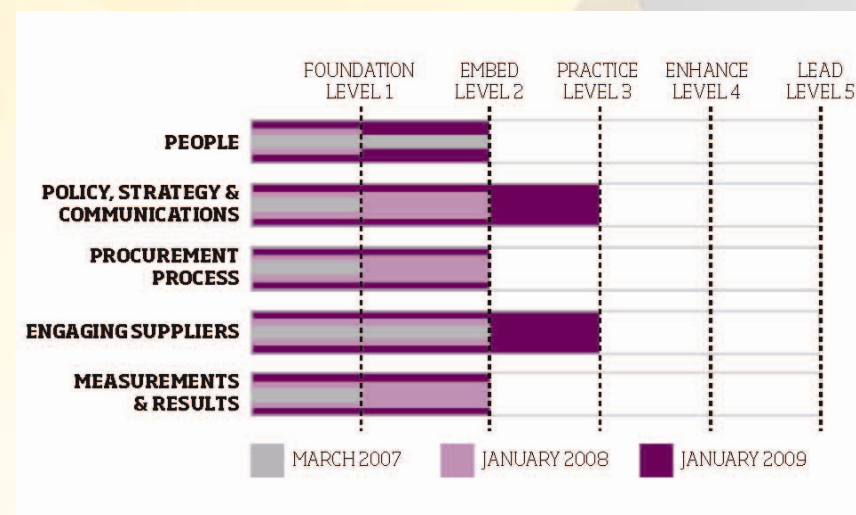
Willmott Dixon believes that sustainable procurement is an organisational priority because it questions the need to spend; cuts out waste, seeks innovative solutions and hence will reduce, rather than add, to spending in both the short and the long run.

What are Willmott Dixon doing?

Willmott Dixon have worked closely with Shaun McCarthy of Action Sustainability (a not for profit social enterprise).

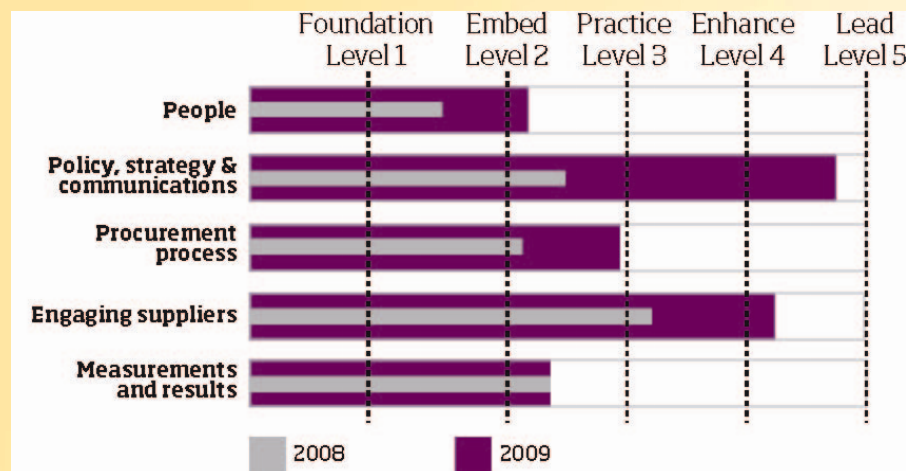
In the last review of progress (January 2009) against the Flexible Framework, undertaken by Action Sustainability, Willmott Dixon Construction were found to satisfy the requirements of Level 2 in all areas and are working towards Level 3 in two areas - please see the figure below.

Figure 2 Flexible Framework progress for Willmott Dixon Construction



In the last review of progress (October 2009) against the Flexible Framework, undertaken by Action Sustainability, Willmott Dixon Housing satisfy at least Level 2 in all areas and are working towards Level 5 in two areas.

Figure 3 Flexible Framework progress for Willmott Dixon Housing



To date, Willmott Dixon have;

- Developed a 'Supply Chain - Sustainable Strategy' which takes into account both the flexible framework and Willmott Dixon's 10 Point Sustainable Project Criteria.
- Developed a 'Sustainable Materials Policy' (Willmott Dixon Construction) and 'Sustainable Procurement Policy' (Willmott Dixon Housing) – *these are currently being reviewed and amalgamated to be adopted across Willmott Dixon Capital Works in early 2011*
- Identified Sustainability Champions within the 'Top 10' supply chain
- Delivered supply chain workshops (including Environmental Management System training)
- Developed sustainable key performance indicators against which the supply chain are measured
- Included a sustainability criteria under the supply chain Performance Measurement System (PMS)
- Created a process to ensure that the suppliers for any job are identified early on in the process to take into consideration environmental impacts.

BS 8903:2010 Principles and Framework for Procuring Sustainability

This British Standard, published in August 2010, intends to help organisations and individuals consider and implement sustainable practices within their procurement processes, and management of their supply chains.

It is hoped that the development of BS 8903 will:

- Facilitate a uniform approach in reporting and measuring sustainable procurement, and cascading this through the supply chains
- Enable organisations to accurately benchmark their performance in sustainable procurement with others
- Provide organisations with an opportunity to raise their profiles and increase competitive advantage
- Help stimulate a marketplace for innovative sustainable products and services.

Willmott Dixon are currently reviewing this standard to see how it applies to our business and to see if we can comply with the requirements.



References

Sustainable Procurement National Action Plan; 'Procuring the Future', 2006
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/documents/full-document.pdf>

Action Sustainability 'Flexible framework tool'
http://www.actionsustainability.com/evaluation/flexible_framework/

DEFRA published guide; 'Sustainable Procurement in Government: Guidance to the Flexible Framework'
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/advice/public/buying/documents/flexible-framework-guidance.pdf>

DEFRA Sustainable Procurement webpage;
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/advice/public/buying/background/index.htm>

Willmott Dixon Sustainable Development – Supply Chain webpage
<http://intranet/data/usercontentroot/home/group/sustainable%20development/putting%20people%20first/supply%20chain/>

