

Private to public – helping Northern Trains navigate procurement of its winter maintenance contract

YPO Framework | Ref: 827 | Winter Maintenance



Having only moved into public ownership in March 2020, Northern Trains Limited had little experience of public sector procurement under UCR. Using a framework created by YPO provided valuable support to fulfil our Business requirements through a process which was both quicker than conducting a full negotiated procedure with prior call for competition and came with the reassurance of full compliance with the UCR.

The challenge

The winter season poses specific challenges for the rail industry; frost and snow can quickly pose inconvenience or danger to station users if not dealt with swiftly and efficiently. Additionally, rock salt, the traditional frost preventative, cannot be used in proximity to the railways due to the possibility of causing corrosion to the rails. A frost retardant with anti-corrosion agent must be used. These specialist frost prevention and snow clearance measures are referred to as 'Winterisation'. An unusually harsh winter can result in significantly increased costs, and so Northern re-tenders these services regularly.

The solution

YPO took time to understand our business requirement and offer a previously established framework, with candidate suppliers already identified, through which we were able to tender the required services. This removed the need for prior call for competition and pre-qualification stages to the tender.

The experience

As a private sector procurement specialist, having no previous experience of public sector work, I found working with the YPO invaluable. From the outset I was allocated a single point of contact who was knowledgeable, friendly and experienced. She fully understood the process and made it easy for me to understand and follow. A set of clear instructions was provided, and I could contact my advisor at any time if I had queries or concerns.

The result

Through use of the YPO framework, Northern's Winterisation tender was completed in as little as four months from initial contact to signed contract. Using the YPO framework takes away a lot of the administrative side of UCR compliance, freeing up procurement time to focus on the key aspects of service and cost. The re-tender delivered significant cost savings to Northern, without a loss in the quality of our supply chain.

Going forward, contacting the YPO to determine if they have an established framework for Northern's tender requirements will be my first step in any large-scale procurement.