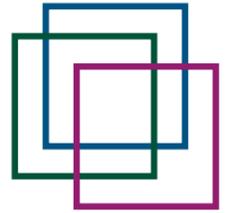


Case Study

Adding Strategic Value Through Transformational Change to Procurement and Planning



SUMS group

Who We Worked With

Aberystwyth University, a public research-focused university regularly recognised as a leader in research impact and learning and teaching quality.

The Challenge

The University wanted to move from reactive, compliance-driven procurement activities to a proactive, strategic approach that added value to the institution as a whole.



“The Aberystwyth Team knew that they could be getting greater value through their procurement. The Team’s openness and willingness to learn - and their knowledge of the university and its culture - has made for a successful partnership.”

LINDA CROTTY

SUMS PROCUREMENT ASSOCIATE CONSULTANT

Programme and project management was also mostly reactive, with little time to standardise professional structures and processes to support successful delivery of change.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services recognised the potential to drive significant savings and other benefits through a category management approach, enabling:

- > Efficient, responsible procurement and change management
- > Improved cross-institutional relationships and collaboration
- > Improved planning and commercial skills.

The teams wanted guidance in the best ways to achieve this long-term sustainable transformation. They also needed to find support from consultants who understood the context of the Welsh Higher Education environment,

including the need for bilingual communication.

What Happened

The SUMS Group consultants worked with the teams at Aberystwyth on an ongoing basis, guiding them through a multi-phased approach. Their early involvement was more hands-on and over time they have been able to support from a distance, as required.

The activities undertaken included:

- > Using the nationally recognised existing Procurement Maturity Assessment (PMA+) structure and experience to assess and introduce best procurement practice ideas and make recommendations for improvement.
- > Analysing and displaying institutional spend data in ways that had not previously been used, such as by category spend rather than just



“Initially, I was like a fish out of water, but I never felt I was alone. Our consultant and the wider team gave me moral support and guided me in a two-way process to ensure outcomes were appropriate for our University’s context. We still have more to do, but we feel supported to drive the change we need.”

MIKE SMITH

PROCUREMENT ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME MANAGER

- > traditional department spend
- > Supporting the build of a business case for investment in procurement transformation. This included providing guidance in presenting to the senior team and demonstrating that the value added by procurement goes beyond cash-releasing savings to other quantifiable benefits.





- > Supporting adoption of a higher level of change programme management, including skills, planning tools and structure.
- > Developing a series of category initiatives to be run as pilots, with a longer term aim of process-design.
- > Mentoring the Procurement Enhancement Programme Manager and building his confidence to operate at a more strategic, less reactive level.
- > Supporting the recruitment of

category managers and upskilling existing team members to take on category management roles.

- > Providing practical training, tools and templates.

The Covid-19 pandemic began in the middle of our work with the University. This necessitated adjustment of the potential savings plan and flexibility in deciding which new approaches to take forward and which to pause.

The Difference it Made

Active support from the University Executive Board, and a willingness to learn and change from the Procurement team and Planning Office, has led to significant transformation.

Data-informed decision-making

Improved data use and analysis means there is a more proactive, planned approach to decisions and activities. New, improved pictures of institution-wide spending have led to an increase in cross-department collaboration.



“The success of our procurement transformation programme has given the Planning Office a voice across the organisation. We are now adopting the higher quality project methodology with other change work and seeing the benefits more widely. This skills transfer has been a central part of working with our consultant.”

DEBBIE PRYSOR
SENIOR PROJECTS OFFICER

Better use of procurement data has also had a knock-on effect on other areas, such as the University’s student data.

Adding value to planning

The Procurement team is more involved in the University’s business planning round and can build a forward-looking view of requirements. The team is developing a procurement pipeline to assist with planning. As the Welsh Government is encouraging procurement pipelines for public sector organisations, the University will hopefully be an early adopter of this approach.

Sustainable skills transfer

The University is in a more resilient position to adapt and flex in changing circumstances, as in-house procurement and planning skills have increased. Some Procurement team members are now working towards CIPS qualifications. Undertaking change management qualifications has also proved beneficial to planning work.