

Case Study - Aster Group

Making procurement information valuable

Aster Group extend the boundaries

As with many organisations, the Aster Group are looking for more ways to achieve better value for less cost from their commissioning and procurement activity. Fundamental to this is having the ability to turn expenditure data into valuable information that can be used for planning, control and savings purposes. But is it possible to do this quickly and without buying any third party software? Aster found the solution.



Business Challenge

As with most organisations, the core purpose of the Group's accounting systems is to manage their financial processes and to produce essential financial and accounting information. The Group's procurement transformation programme, launched in 2014 following a review by SPS Consultancy Services, recommended that the Group should make a big effort to increase the availability of commissioning and procurement information to support better forward planning, category analysis and savings delivery. The challenge was to be able to do this quickly without incurring significant costs or making changes to the existing financial and/or contract and tendering systems.

Business Solution

The first task was to agree on a suitable Procurement Classification (not coding) structure. It was a choice between using ProClass or developing a bespoke model as there are no other off the shelf schema available. It was the former that prevailed given that it is a maintained standard and the procurement profile of most housing associations is not dissimilar to many local councils.

Once that had been decided, there were two main tasks to do; mapping ProClass to the financial subjectives in the financial system and mapping ProClass to CPV which is used in the contract and tendering system (**IN-TEND**)

The first task of retrospective classification (see the Guidance Paper on the [SPS Procurement Classification](#) website) involved cleaning supplier files and mapping them to ProClass via the subjective codes. This was led by [Coding International](#) in two tranches, each of which took 2 weeks. Much to Aster's delight, mappings from ProClass to CPV are already available and can be downloaded at no cost from the [ProClass](#) website.

A 99% mapping of used subjective codes and suppliers to ProClass with a High or Medium confidence was achieved. Individuals in the company are now verifying the allocated classifications based on first-hand knowledge and experience before the mappings are formally signed-off and embedded into the system.

“I was amazed at just how quickly this exercise was done and how little it cost us. It saved my team months of effort and time and has given us a great basis to develop our category strategies.”

*Sue Durston (Group Procurement Manager)
Aster Group*

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Benefits

Apart from using ProClass, the benefits that Aster sees accruing from this work are:

- Making powerful reporting on procurement and commissioning activity a reality without further need for data manipulation
- The ability to support plans for the introduction of a category focused approach to longer term planning and market engagement
- Helping to make procurement a part of the business mainstream
- The potential to share information with hundreds of other public sector organisations when brokering new deals or even shaping markets

“ This work has opened the door to management reporting on our commissioning and procurement activities on a level we never dreamed possible. Information from our accounting systems will be able to generate procurement facing information and match information from our contracts and tendering system (IN-TEND). ”

Alec Pegram (Operations Director)
Aster Group

About ProClass

ProClass is English local government's procurement classification standard. It provides a common, overarching system for local authorities to analyse and compare spend on a like for like basis and does not entail replacing existing coding systems such as UNSPSC, CPV or Thomson as mappings are available for download. ProClass allows councils, housing associations and their partners to pinpoint new areas for collaboration and sources of savings using well defined, unambiguous categories. ProClass is freely available to any UK public sector body under a licence and is managed by [Coding International Ltd](#). More information and useful documents are available on the [ProClass](#) website.

Find Out More

PROclass
PROCUREMENT CLASSIFICATION



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