



EM LAWSHARE : ALL TOGETHER BETTER

Background

EM LawShare was formed in 2005. Originally 13 local authorities (3 county councils and 10 district councils) agreed that by joining together and using our collective buying power we could achieve better quality and value for external legal spend/resources.

The idea was also that, together, there was the ability for added value and benefits both to each other and the private sector partners, which was a key aim behind the consortium. As we know, many local authorities have at one time or another dealt with a problem that is not isolated to that local authority, and the issues will have been tackled and addressed by other authorities too. Together there is a greater resource/knowledge which we can share and use to everyone's benefit.

The first EM LawShare framework contract was put into place in April 2006. There were four private sector partners who were chosen following a competitive procurement process and who launched the EM LawShare branding. At this time, this was one of the first legal consortiums in the country, but one (as explained above) with a difference as we strove to provide more than just a call-off panel or list of law firms for members.

EM LawShare is about bringing more to members and partners for mutual benefit.

Membership

Over the first four year framework period (April 2006 to March 2010) the membership of EM LawShare grew from the original 13 to 50, and the membership currently stands at 53 (and rising).

Alongside county and district councils there are also unitary councils, police authorities, fire authorities, a housing ALMO company, Scape (a local

authority controlled company), and more recently some local NHS Trusts/PCT's.

Benefits

As part of a procured framework, the consortium members benefit from the choice now (in the April 2010 to March 2014 contract) of five leading law firms as partners, who offer competitive and substantially discounted rates from their normal hourly rates. Some hourly rates are discounted between 20% to 40% from what they would charge as a corporate rate.

Partner firms can provide help and assistance when there are capacity issues in-house, but also for specialist and technical areas which might fall outside the day to day work/expertise of in-house staff.

As the framework contract has been entered into following a procurement exercise, the members of the consortium can use the five partner firms without having to undertake a further tender/procurement exercise, thereby saving time and money. This is particularly useful when urgent advice and assistance is required.

In addition, EM LawShare also gives:

- A comprehensive training programme each year with courses run locally within the East Midlands (free to members for this year);
- Briefing notes and updates;
- A free helpline for quick queries and questions;
- A website, hosted by one of the partner firms, allowing for the exchange of information;
- A conference, bringing together members and partners.

In addition to the benefits above with the partner firms, the consortium enables members to talk to each other, share experience and documentation (e.g precedent contracts/advice from Counsel) and where capacity allows undertake work for each other .

Spend/usage

Figures for the years April 2006 to March 2009 showed that approximately £4,500,000 was spent by the consortium members under the framework contract. This was clearly a sizeable amount with a growing number of consortium members during this time.

The latest figures for the year April 2010 to March 2011 show that the spend by members for this year is just over £2,500,000. Based on the discounted

hourly rates (discounted up to 40%) this equates to a saving of up to £1,000,000 for the consortium members in one year alone.

In addition to these monetary savings achieved, we have also enjoyed the additional benefits such as the training programme and free helplines set out above, which give extra non-monetary value.

The Future

EM LawShare continues to grow in numbers, with members keen to explore opportunities for other public bodies to join and benefit within the East Midlands.