

Working with suppliers to achieve social opportunities

Enhancing skills provision and workplace diversity in the supply chain



Image: Pixabay

Procura+ Participant:	Transport for London
Policy/approach:	Suppliers Skills Team Launched: 2009
Targets/aims:	Support suppliers to address skills shortages and underrepresentation in the transport and infrastructure sector

SUMMARY

- The transport sector suffers from a skills shortage and lack of diversity
- Since 2009, TfL has worked in partnership with suppliers to provide opportunities to people from a range of backgrounds, while also ensuring the deliverability of its future business plan
- This approach has been reinforced by the Greater London Authority's Responsible Procurement Policy (2017)
- By inserting Strategic Labour Needs and Training (SLNT) into contracts, and working with other third sector organisations, TfL has successfully increased the routes into supply chain employment
- 5,400 supply chain apprenticeship starts and over 5,000 workless job starts.

Background

[Transport for London \(TfL\)](#) is one of the functional bodies of the [Greater London Authority \(GLA\)](#), responsible for delivering transport services throughout London with around 14 million journeys taking place every day.

TfL has been actively including social considerations into its contracts for many years, after a 2008 study which highlighted a severe skills shortage and lack of diversity in the transport industry. At that time over 90 per cent of engineers were white males with an average age of 55. At the same time, more than one in five young Londoners was out of education, employment or training.

As such, in 2009 TfL established a Supplier Skills Team, in order to lead on partnership work with its supply chain to address skills shortages in the transport and engineering sector. As well as supporting social goals, this partnership also helps TfL ensure that their suppliers have the skills to support their future business plans.

In June 2017, the TfL's approach was reinforced by the GLA's new [Responsible Procurement Policy](#). This Policy defines responsible procurement as "pioneering socially, environmentally and economically sustainable procurement to deliver improved quality of life and better value for money". This includes working to provide employment opportunities, create better working conditions, offer contract opportunities for a range of business sizes as well as community sector organisations, and promote greater environmental sustainability. Together, the GLA Group spends around £11 billion each year and is guided by three principle purposes: economic development and wealth creation, social development, and improvement of the environment.

Implementation of the approach

In order to support TfL's focus on skills provision, as well as the social ambitions of the GLA's Responsible Procurement Policy, the Suppliers Skills Team uses Strategic Labour Needs and Training (SLNT), which it inserts as requirements in relevant contracts. These require suppliers to produce a number of skills and employment outputs as a condition of working with TfL.

These outputs are set in direct proportion to the contract value, and range from providing school visits, offering work placements and 'taster' positions, and promoting interest and knowledge of the industry, to more tangible employment opportunities. However, at least 50 per cent of the outputs must focus on the core areas of apprenticeships or workless job starts.

TfL also supports suppliers by connecting them with a network of charities and employability groups which are able to reach underrepresented or disadvantaged groups and can assist in establishing programmes which can help guide young or disadvantaged people into employment. These programmes are often fully covered by external funding, and have the additional advantage of significantly reducing drop-out rates from apprenticeship programmes.

For example, TfL's Suppliers Skills Team collaborated with social charity Peabody Trust to deliver a six-week programme aimed at helping 16-25 year olds from BAME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic) or economically disadvantaged backgrounds enter into transport and engineering apprenticeships. As a result of completing the programme, participants gained a '[Level 2](#)' qualification as well as the opportunity to undertake work placements with key suppliers.

As well as young people, other social groups have also been supported. For example, in 2017, TfL worked with Gingerbread, a charity which supports single parents, and the organisation, Women into Construction, to deliver a pilot programme focused on bringing more women into roles in transport and infrastructure. The pilot was funded by the UK government's employment service [JobCenterPlus](#) to conduct pre-employment training with 15 women, which included work placements with key suppliers in May and June 2017. All 15 of the women who started the programme completed it, and as of November 2017, 10 of them have found permanent employment in TfL's supply chain. As a result of the successful pilot, an ongoing programme is being established with further involvement of a number of TfL's key suppliers.

Results.

Since the Suppliers Skills Team was established in 2009, TfL has supported the creation of over 5,400 apprenticeships. It has also resulted in the employment of over 5,000 workless people, and supported over 100 ex-offenders back into employment.

The success of TfL's Supplier Skills Team has also been recognised via a number of awards, including winning the [Lord Mayor's Dragon Award for Enterprise and Employment](#) in 2016 - which recognises the achievements of companies going beyond their core work to significantly impact the regeneration of local communities across London - and being highly commended in the Leadership category of the 2017 UK Social Mobility Awards.

The UK Department of Transport has now required other public sector bodies to emulate TfL's approach, thus creating vast potential for many more young people to find employment support across the UK.

Lessons learned

The following factors have all been instrumental to the success of the supplier skills programme:

- Internal buy-in: ensuring that the programme has senior level support and sponsorship through the GLA Responsible Procurement Policy, signed by the Mayor of London, and engagement from TfL's leadership team
- Managing the SLNT contract requirements from the start of contracts and throughout
- Developing a partnership between TfL and its suppliers where the reasons for undertaking activity are clearly articulated and common priorities are addressed so that suppliers 'buy into' the programmes
- Working with the right partners – identifying suitable charities and employability groups and external sources of funding to run programmes
- Celebrating success and recognition for supply chain and third sector partners. Awards and positive publicity allow suppliers and charities to make the business case for continued involvement in programmes and use of resources



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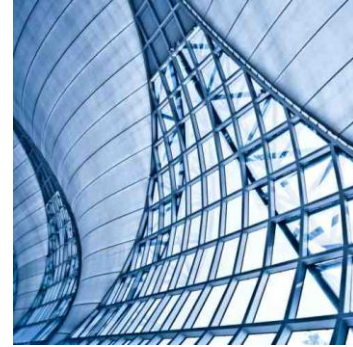
We are a network of European public authorities that connect, exchange and act on sustainable and innovation procurement.

Exchange.



Our combined knowledge and experience allows us to provide advice, support and publicity to any public authority that wants to implement sustainable and innovation procurement.

Act.



The Procura+ Network joins forces to champion sustainable and innovation procurement at the European level.

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