



Customer Success Story

Bonfire & GLWA

Great Lakes Water Authority improves evaluation timelines, vendor relations, and buyer satisfaction

The Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), a leading provider of water and wastewater services in the United States, supplies water to 40 percent of the state of Michigan's population, as well as wastewater services to nearly 30 percent of Michigan's population. With such a large scope, it was becoming increasingly difficult to manage paper-based workflows. The time-consuming and error-prone nature of these workflows caused a lot of frustration for both internal stakeholders and vendors. Implementing Bonfire led to faster evaluation times, improved stakeholder engagement, and the ability to engage more small-business vendors.



KEY CHALLENGES

- Long or delayed evaluation periods
- Lack of visibility across stakeholders
- Heavy administrative burden with inability to optimize buyer roles

KEY RESULTS

- \$1.8 billion in contracts managed with 100% compliance
- 2,400+ vendors digitally maintained in Bonfire including professional services, engineering services, construction, design build, and regular maintenance services
- Five to seven day decrease in evaluation periods
- Improved stakeholder engagement because of ease-of-use and transparency
- Improved vendor relationship management making it easier to engage more small-business vendors



Challenge: Lengthy evaluations, lack of stakeholder visibility, and strained vendor relationships

With 21 GLWA buyers who oversee purchases that include numerous internal stakeholders and evaluators per project, and a vendor pool of more than 2,400 vendors, complex paper-based practices were no longer sustainable. Internal stakeholders were frustrated because evaluation times were long and contract statuses felt like a black box. GLWA was also concerned that these project delays and lack of visibility would jeopardize vendor relationships, which are critical to project success.

“We had a lot of missed opportunities for improving evaluation timelines and managing contracts. GLWA quickly realized these could be addressed with software.”

Sonya Collins, Procurement Director at GLWA

“Previously we completed all of our procurements via paper, which was painstakingly difficult,” explained Collins. “We had a lot of missed opportunities for improving evaluation timelines and managing contracts, and we quickly realized these could be addressed with software.”

Solution: Executing existing processes in a way buyers and vendors love

GLWA had strong foundational processes in place but needed a way to execute efficiently. “I really didn’t want to see a software purchase that would turn all of our processes upside down,” said Joan Byrne, Management Professional, Financial Services at GLWA.

GLWA required an eSourcing solution that would:

- ✓ Reduce evaluation timelines
- ✓ Increase stakeholder engagement and effectiveness
- ✓ Improve vendor communications and relationships

Bonfire was able to digitize GLWA’s existing workflow, from solicitation to award, and then through contract management and vendor performance.

GLWA understood that a more efficient and stakeholder-friendly process would result in more satisfied customers and partners. “It’s not just GLWA—it’s GLWA and its customers...Bonfire is a tremendous improvement over what it was before,” commented Jeff McKeen, GLWA Member Partner.



Results: Centralization and ease-of-use lead to satisfied stakeholders and vendors

GLWA's stakeholders and vendors started using Bonfire immediately and without formal training. The smooth implementation for both buyers and vendors was due to the easy-to-use and intuitive tools, as well as a simplified layout of information within the eSourcing platform.

Stakeholders can now see all the solicitation details in Bonfire, allowing evaluators and project managers to see the status of any project. GLWA embraced Bonfire tools that helped them more efficiently collect quantitative and qualitative data, run evaluation and scoring online, and manage active spend and vendor databases. Subsequently, GLWA was able to introduce a new level of consistency in their procurement process, without sacrificing their established processes. Evaluation times improved by five to seven days.

With the added transparency and efficiency, Collins explained, "We're now able to structure our

buyers in more strategic positions so they can be more effective in their jobs."

Implementing Bonfire has made GLWA's vendors happier, too. Vendors can submit proposals and keep related materials updated in a more efficient and cost-effective manner. "Bonfire is our tool to communicate with our client," said Dennis Tinkler, Preconstruction Manager at Kokosing Industrial, a GLWA vendor. "Bonfire is really straightforward, and really easy to work with."

GLWA launched a small business initiative, with the goal of reaching out to small vendors and bringing them into the bid process. By managing competitive events and collaborating with the market through eSourcing, it was easier for GLWA to engage more vendors, increase their vendor pool, and manage relationships with those vendors.

"Bonfire has been tantamount in helping us in our outreach to our small business community," said Collins.

If you're interested in learning how you can reduce evaluation times, improve stakeholder relationships, and grow your vendor pool with eSourcing—contact Bonfire today.

See Bonfire for yourself

Learn how our intuitive, powerful,
and easy-to-use platform can help you
make better, faster sourcing decisions.

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