

Kenny Rankin is a Senior Manager – Policy, Process and Communications. Procurement and Commercial Department (PCD). Here he gives us some insight into working for the Department for International Development.

I joined The Department for International Development in 2016 after a long career in the Private Sector, working with IBM (and latterly Lenovo). I was regarded as a subject matter expert on procurement transformation, policy and governance having served as a Business Controls manager. When an opportunity for a career transition came along, I recognised that I had a strong set of transferable skills to offer a new employer.

What attracted you to join The Department for International Development?

I was attracted by DFID's ambitious goal to lead the UK's work to end extreme poverty. I may not be working in a Front Line Delivery team but I realised that the work I would be doing would really be making a difference.

My previous career had provided me with a satisfying and rewarding career in the Business IT sector, working in Manufacturing, Engineering, Procurement, Outsourced Supply Chain Management, Transformation, Business Controls and Management but I have always sought new learning opportunities to keep my skillset fresh and relevant.

Not only were the services procured by DFID to deliver programmes very different to those procured by teams I had worked in previously; the legislative framework and regulatory requirements of the EU Directives and Public Contract Regulations offered a new challenge.

Please tell us about your key responsibilities and main area(s) of focus at the moment in your current role?

When I joined, I had responsibility for Procurement data and systems. My job was to make meaningful and accurate data and information available to the Procurement team to better inform their commercial decisions, whilst also looking at our longer term systems strategy.

I was promoted to Manager; Policy, Process and Communications within PCD and I now lead a small team with a broad remit including the responsibility for governance - implementing Procurement Policies and Practices and our Communications strategy.

What project have you most enjoyed working on with The Department for International Development and why?

In my Communications role, I have responsibility to prepare draft responses to any Parliamentary Questions that DFID receive that are related to the Departments Commercial delivery. These responses need to be comprehensive, are prepared to very tight deadlines and must be 100% accurate since they will become part of the public record in Hansard. In order to answer a question, it may be necessary to provide metrics and perform data analytics (e.g. spend data across categories or suppliers; contract values etc.). It may also involve engaging with Procurement Managers and stakeholders to understand the specifics of a bid, a contract or a programme.

I enjoy the need to work at pace to a tight deadline !

How have you personally and/or professionally developed since joining?

I have really honed my data and MI skills since joining DFID, learning from the data subject matter experts within the Department. I also have a much greater appreciation of the need for transparency all the way down the supply chain.

There's never a day goes by that I don't learn something new.

What do you think makes The Department for International Development a great place to work?

Without any doubt – it's the people. We have a strong Senior Management Team who communicate a clear vision for the organisation, a vision that translates into a detailed Commercial Delivery Plan that sets out our priorities. The team are an energetic, committed and empowered team who have established an excellent reputation both in the international development sector and in the wider procurement profession

DFID places great emphasis on personal and professional development for staff nearly 2/3rd of the team are MCIPS qualified or part qualified and with 3 CIPS Fellows members there is a wealth of experience in the team available for support and advice. Civil Service Learning also provides great opportunities to learn new skills.

Is there any advice you would give to someone thinking about joining the team?

I can't emphasise strongly enough the need to develop a professional network if you undertake a role with DFID. It is a broad organisation that consists of programme and delivery managers, commercial experts, advisors, research professionals and so much more; based in the UK's two central offices and in Country Offices around the world. In order to be effective you will want to be able to call on all that available expertise.

I'd also advise never to forget who we are accountable to and who the end beneficiary of our work is. This motivates me to do the best I can every single day to help DFID ensure value for money for the UK taxpayer, but just as importantly it means I get a real sense of purpose and achievement from knowing that the work that we do is improving the lives of the world's most vulnerable people.