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Top three efficiency tips. The MJ February 2009

1) Examine every step in your supply chain from inception to delivery to see where wasteful aspects can be eliminated. South Lanarkshire boosted customer satisfaction and made best use of resources by removing an unnecessarily bureaucratic purchaser/provider split and cutting down stages in housing maintenance procedures from thirteen to just six.

2) Listen to your front-line staff. Council employees engage with residents on a day-to-day basis, so harness their knowledge as much as possible in order to innovate and communicate with service users more efficiently. South Ayrshire delivered a £600k surplus as a result of consulting its workforce in small groups and taking their ideas on board.

3) Take a sustainable approach to procurement in order to maximise your 'local economic footprint' rather than making knee-jerk cost savings that can undermine efficiency in the longer term. Strong local employment and supply chains in Swindon have meant £1.64 is circulated in the local economy for every £1 spent by the councils commercial services department.