

THE PROCUREMENT

COOK BOOK

Recipes for Procurement Excellence



Seattle

DEAR INNOVATORS,

The City of Seattle spends a significant portion of its budget — about \$900 million annually, as of 2023 — on procurement. Winning a City contract can be a game-changer for local small businesses, but navigating the bureaucracy is often a barrier for smaller firms. While Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) account for nearly 38 percent of the city's residential population, BIPOC-owned businesses earn only 14 percent of the City's purchasing and contracting spend.

Confusing and inefficient processes keep new firms, as well as small and BIPOC-owned firms, from being successful as City contractors. These inefficiencies also take up valuable staff time and resources. To take on this challenge, Seattle participated in the Bloomberg Philanthropies I-teams Procurement Cohort, a \$1 million, two-year grant by Bloomberg Philanthropies to help transform our approach to buying. The Procurement Transformation project is a partnership between the **Seattle Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS)** and the **Mayor's Innovation and Performance Team**, with technical assistance from the **Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab (GPL)** and coaching calls from the **Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University (BCPI)**.

Through this project, we have made many important changes to make procurement more efficient, equitable, strategic, and results-driven. Along the way we've built the momentum for a culture of procurement excellence here in Seattle, encouraging staff at all levels to embrace innovation and creative thinking to achieve great results. We've also learned many lessons.

In this "cookbook" of recipes for procurement excellence, we want to share with you some of our accomplishments and learnings. Throughout this project, we have been impressed by the vast community of staff working to make procurement more efficient and equitable to get better results from their contracts. We hope this book spreads good ideas, sparks inspiration, and encourages all of you in your efforts to continue transforming procurement.

Let's get cooking!

Sincerely,
Bloomberg Procurement Transformation Core Team Members,
September 2024



Staff at a retreat in September 2023



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ADDITIONAL THANKS TO:

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Jenn Brandon, Project Lead, IP Team (2022-2023; Liz Alzeer, FAS (2022); and Allison Calvert, FAS (2022-2023)

City Staff who partnered with the team:

Stephen Barham, Laura Bet, Long Dinh, Melissa Mixon, Paige St. George, Albert Seafeldt, and Carmalinda Vargas

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PROJECT VISION

A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

The Procurement Transformation project's vision is to break down silos between departments to revamp the City contracting process from start to finish. This includes:

- Identifying changes to ensure there is no “wrong door” for vendors to come through if they want to do business with the City of Seattle, especially for Women- and Minority-Owned Businesses Enterprises (WMBE)
- Digitizing and revamping contracting forms and processes
- Creating spaces for staff across the City to communicate about procurement and share knowledge and best practices

THE FOUR PILLARS OF SEATTLE'S PROCUREMENT

TRANSFORMATION APPROACH:

EFFICIENT

"Make the procurement process efficient, inviting, and transparent"

By identifying bottlenecks and duplicative work, we can make contracting faster and easier for both City workers and businesses. This saves time and money and makes working with the City more enticing for businesses.

RESULTS-DRIVEN

"Buy results, not activities"

We can work with vendors to achieve our goals by measuring the right results and actively managing contracts using real-time performance data. Instead of focusing on overly-prescriptive vendor activities, we can collaborate with vendors to focus on the outcomes we want to see.

EQUITABLE

"Make the procurement systems more equitable"

BIPOC-owned and to a certain degree women and veteran-owned vendors continue to face significant barriers to winning City contracts. By reducing these barriers and putting resources into outreach and small business coaching, we can create a more equitable and diverse pool of vendors for City procurement.

STRATEGIC

"Elevate procurement as a strategic function"

Procurement transformation requires a cultural transformation within the City. We can upskill City staff and offer strong support from City leadership to lead the way as change agents for the organization.



These are organized around the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab's [four pillars of procurement excellence](#). Scan the QR code to learn more.



Vendors and government employees mingling at the Reverse Vendor Trade show in October 2023.



THE IMPACT OF INNOVATION

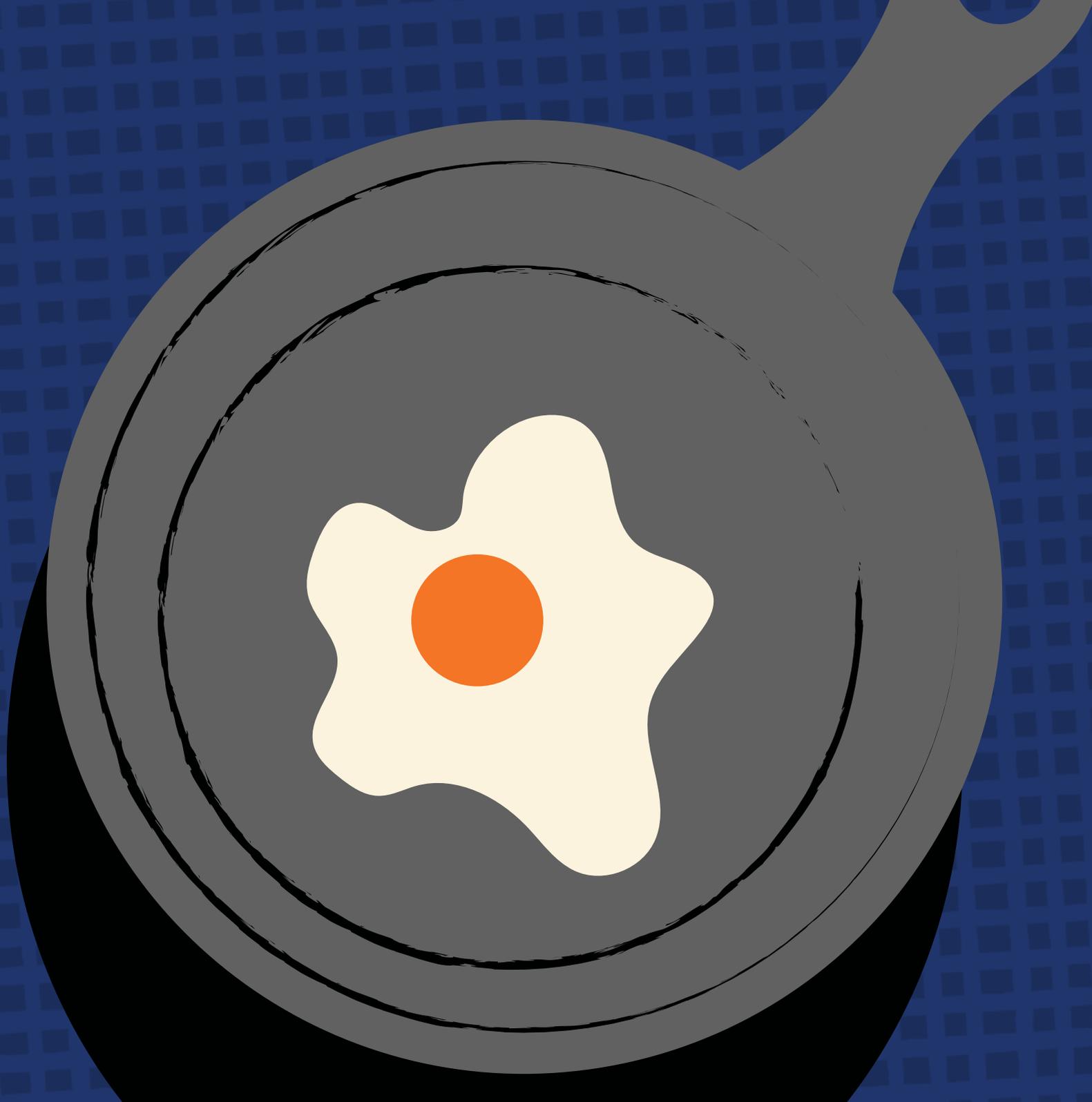
THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING

- Streamlined forms and templates
- Pared down the process to request a new contract
- Trained 50+ staff on writing improved requests for proposals (RFPs)
- Reduced response times for ambulance services through intensive coaching with the Seattle Fire Department
- Engaged hundreds of vendors through outreach events, with a focus on BIPOC- and women-owned businesses
- Created a network of 125 staff who are procurement change agents across the City

LET'S GET COOKING!

PROMISING PRACTICES IN PROCUREMENT





EFFICIENT

PREPARING YOUR KITCHEN

*“Make the procurement process
efficient, inviting, and transparent”*



The team during a process mapping workshop.

THE CHALLENGE

Over time, Seattle has built up laws, policies, and procedures to purchase the goods and services that are needed to conduct City business. This complex system – which relied on e-mail, Excel lists, and over 140 different forms – can be confusing for both vendors and City staff to navigate. This also presents barriers for firms that are new to doing business with the City, particularly smaller firms, including those that are BIPOC- and women-owned. The result is that prospective vendors cannot compete for contracting opportunities, and the City faces delays in getting essential goods and services.

SOLUTIONS

- Map procurement processes to identify challenges and clarify processes.
- Streamline and digitize processes and resources to save staff and vendors time.

MAP PROCESSES

PROCUREMENT RECIPE CARDS

In 2023, the City of Seattle’s Innovation and Performance (IP) team conducted six internal process mapping workshops with Citywide partners. The expert who facilitated these in-person and remote workshops was Tracy O’Rourke of Catalyst Consulting in San Diego, California. The team brought together the Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS), which oversees Citywide purchasing and contracting, Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle City Light, Seattle Department of Transportation, and Harvard Government Performance Lab staff to write the steps of procurement on sticky notes across different stakeholder “swim lanes.”



CHEF'S TIP

Looking to streamline inefficiencies in your processes? Look out for the 8 Wastes, a framework shared through a six-week training workshop by Brian Elms, a national expert in business process improvement. Learn more at changeagentstraining.com.

To remember the 8 Wastes, you can use the acronym "DOWNTIME."

- D** DEFECTS
Efforts caused by rework, scrap, and incorrect information.
- O** OVERPRODUCTION
Production that is more than needed or before it is needed.
- W** WAITING
Wasted time waiting for the next step in a process.
- N** NON-UTILIZED TALENT
Underutilizing people's talent, skills, and knowledge.
- T** TRANSPORTATION
Unnecessary movements of products and materials.
- I** INVENTORY
Excess products and materials not being processed.
- M** MOTION
Unnecessary movements by people (e.g. walking).
- E** EXTRA-PROCESSING
More work or higher quality than is required by the customer.



STREAMLINE AND DIGITIZE

OPENGOV PROCUREMENT SYSTEM

The City of Seattle is replacing its patchwork processes to procure consultants, public works, and routine goods and services with streamlined eProcurement software called OpenGov. This software will also upgrade and replace Seattle's legacy vendor directory, the Online Business Directory, which was custom built in 2011. OpenGov was selected based on extensive market research that included a Request for Information that received 14 vendor responses and interviews with peer cities including Pittsburgh, PA, Orange County, CA, and Norfolk, Virginia. Seattle went live with OpenGov in August 2024.

OpenGov will be easier to use for vendors, and create a consolidated portal to find out about contracting opportunities. OpenGov will have improved data validation features, reducing errors that can cause delays or even cause applications to be thrown out. As an additional benefit, vendors who are registered and search for contracting opportunities in the portal will see opportunities at other municipalities around the country as well.

STREAMLINE AND DIGITIZE

INTERNAL SHAREPOINT

A common issue reported by staff across the City has been that they don't understand the procurement process and don't have a single source of information for guidance. To address this, FAS contracted with Onit Management Consulting to redesign the internal SharePoint site that warehouses important information and legal forms intended to guide City staff who do recurring and one-time procurements. This project engaged over 55 City staff to inform design from the perspective of different user-persona profiles including admins, super users, and beginners to procurement. The upgraded site is better organized and up-to-date. A site champion within the FAS Purchasing and Contracting team will maintain the site, so it can continue to be a one-stop shop for procurement going forward.

Purchasing and Contracting FAS Hub Home Our Services Resources Bid Limits Thresholds Using Federal Funds WMBE Dept. Resources Sensitive | External Sharing Not following

Where do I begin?

Scroll below and click the relevant boxes to learn more about Purchasing, Consulting, Construction or Women and Minority Business Enterprises (WMBEs).



Purchasing Services (Goods and Non-Professional Services)

A good is a product, supplies, materials or equipment. A non-professional service is ordinary, routine, repetitive and minor. Much of this work occurs through blanket contracts with vendors.

[Start here for Purchasing Services →](#)

In the revamped SharePoint, information is current and clearly organized, with positive visuals that convey FAS's value of customer service.

Purchasing and Contracting FAS Hub Home Our Services Resources Bid Limits Thresholds Using Federal Funds WMBE Dept. Resources Sensitive | External Sharing Not following



Women and Minority Owned Enterprises (WMBE)

[I am new to the WMBE program - Where do I begin? CLICK HERE.](#)

WMBE Resources

- WMBE Policies and Resources
- WMBE Dataset - Updated Daily
- WMBE Utilization Reports
- OBD (Online Business Directory)
- WMBE resources presentation
- WMBE Data Dashboard
- City department WMBE advisors
- About the OBD
- WMBE Inclusion plans
- WMBE Reports and Tools
- B2Gnow
- Directory of Certified Businesses

On this page, Purchasing and Contracting offers tools and resources to support utilization as well as helpful links, materials, instructions, Citywide WMBE reports and contact information to support your department WMBE utilization.

[View all WMBE Documents](#)

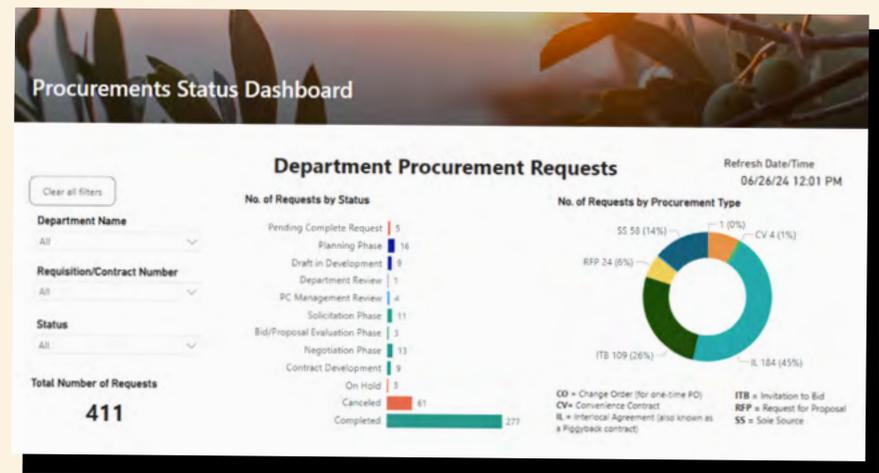


STREAMLINE AND DIGITIZE

PROCUREMENT STATUS DASHBOARD

In August 2023, FAS launched a new Power BI Dashboard, the result of a joint project between Government Performance Lab Fellow Neil Maheshwari and FAS Business Process Analyst Pat Malai on the Masterworks FAS team. The dashboard consists of two displays, one internal to the Purchasing and Contracting’s (PC) team and another available for departments to view. The dashboard allows this team to see at a glance who has the bandwidth to take on new contract requests. The departmental dashboard has cut down on unnecessary correspondence. Instead of having to ping managers on the team for a status update, a City employee can check the dashboard to see how their project is moving along. These kinds of tools eliminate administrative burden on City employees while also fostering a spirit of open government.

City staff can filter the procurement request dashboard by department and status, see a full list of requests in progress, and search by contract number for the status of a specific request.



PLANNING JOURNAL EXERCISE #1

When we think about innovation in procurement, it's all about ensuring we're effectively buying and purchasing goods and services that impact our employees and residents every day. How we go about the procurement process can make or break the experience of our end-users. We all have an opportunity to consider how we might transform the procurement process to be efficient, inviting, and transparent for staff and vendors, so that residents have a world-class experience with City services.

Reflect on your role in the procurement process. What are you doing that may be creating inefficiencies? What might you or your team need to do differently?

What's one challenge related to efficiency that you can commit to tackling in the next 3-6 months? What next steps do you need to take and who do you need to work with?

Come back to this 3-6 months from now:

Now that you've worked on a challenge over the last few months, what have you learned? What changes have you made and how have they positively impacted your procurement processes?



RESULTS-DRIVEN

FINDING THE RIGHT RECIPE

"Buy results, not activities"



Community leaders enjoying lunch during a Citywide training opportunity.

THE CHALLENGE

Like many jurisdictions around the country, a lot of procurement challenges in Seattle are rooted in the way the scope of work is written or managed. Scopes of work are recycled year after year, without revisiting whether they still meet the City's needs. Or, driven by the fear that the vendor may not deliver what they want, staff tend to focus on compliance and can be overly prescriptive in how the vendor delivers the service or good. They might even specify down to the last detail the particular type of widget or what products a janitorial service should use. This compliance-driven mentality causes consternation on part of the vendor to adhere to every little detail, and runs the risk of limiting alternative methods and innovative thinking that may be better suited to achieving the objectives of the City. Rather than just focusing on what vendors need to do, we can focus on what they should accomplish and work with them in collaboration to achieve these goals.

SOLUTIONS

- Train staff to write better procurements
- Dive deep to improve results on priority contracts



TRAINING ON RESULTS-DRIVEN CONTRACTING

The Government Performance Lab held training sessions for the Purchasing and Contracting team, Seattle City Light project managers, and the Procurement Community of Practice members in partnership with IP, to train over 50 staff to write more effective scopes of work. These trainings focused on orienting Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to results, right-sizing compliance requirements, and leaving space for innovation.



CHEF'S TIP

Looking for some help to write an upcoming RFP? Check out the [Government Performance Lab's Guidebook for Crafting a Result-Driven RFP](#), which walks you through the core steps. The guidebook contains best practices, examples from other jurisdictions, and prompts to help you write content to incorporate directly into your RFP.

Guidebook: Crafting a Results-Driven Request for Proposals (RFP)

 HARVARD Kennedy School
Government Performance Lab

This guidebook will help public sector procurement to improve the outcomes of government contracts, including by setting results-driven requests for proposals and managing the RFP development process.

You have probably already noticed opportunities for improvement in your jurisdiction's procurement process. Your government may struggle to plan for upcoming procurements or conduct sufficient market analysis before developing a scope of work. You might wonder if including so many specific requirements in your RFPs is discouraging vendors from being innovative. When managing contracts, you may feel like you spend more time on compliance and processing invoices instead of working with the vendor to improve performance.

We know that for many government staff, writing an RFP can feel daunting. As you face an upcoming need for services, you may be tempted to fall back on a previously issued version of an RFP, unsure if what a past city or state has done, or renew an existing contract – even though you know you could probably find a better performing vendor.

What will you learn from this guidebook?

Through the eight modules outlined below, we will walk you through the RFP process step by step, from early planning through managing a contract. We will also help you manage the process to reduce delays.

- Module 1: Planning for Your RFP
- Module 2: Information Gathering to Inform Your RFP
- Module 3: RFP Writing - Problem

WORKBOOK

INSTRUCTIONS

and discuss the questions below:

Start by taking the goals you drafted earlier and convert each goal measured (by either the jurisdiction or the vendor).

Each of your outcome goals within the context of a logic model, similar to

Activities (verb)	Effects of Planned Activities (your outcome goal and the behavioral metrics)	
	Outputs	Outcome Goals (Short or Long Term)
Activities (verb)	Direct products of program activities (e.g., the number of participants receiving the service)	Changes in program participants as a result of program participation (e.g., an increase in participants' academic achievement, or whether they started a small business)



"The GPL's Guidebook for Crafting a Results-Driven RFP" helps you write your priority RFP through eight step-by-step modules. Scan the QR code to view the guidebook.

BOILING DOWN PRIORITY CONTRACTS

The Seattle Fire Department reached out to the Government Performance Lab (GPL) for help with delays in ambulances taking residents with non-life threatening emergencies to the hospital. The GPL's analysis found that a shortage of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) was a key root cause for the delays. Subsequently, Seattle worked with its vendor to staff up. In 2023, for the first time in over a year, more than 90% of ambulances arrived on the scene in less than 12 minutes. This was improved from 2022, when an average of 77% of ambulances arrived on the scene within the response time target. As the Seattle Fire Department has shown, using data to unpack performance challenges and working with vendors to solve them can help to improve outcomes. Through the remainder of the project, the GPL facilitated a series of workshops to help Seattle Fire plan to sustain these improvements when the current contract expires. These workshops resulted in development of a new RFP that will be issued in 2024.



Scan the QR code to read the How-to Guide on Results-Driven Approaches to Contract Management.



CHEF'S TIP

Looking to improve your vendor's performance through contract management? Check out the GPL's How-to Guide on Results-Driven Approaches to Contract Management.

PLANNING JOURNAL EXERCISE #2

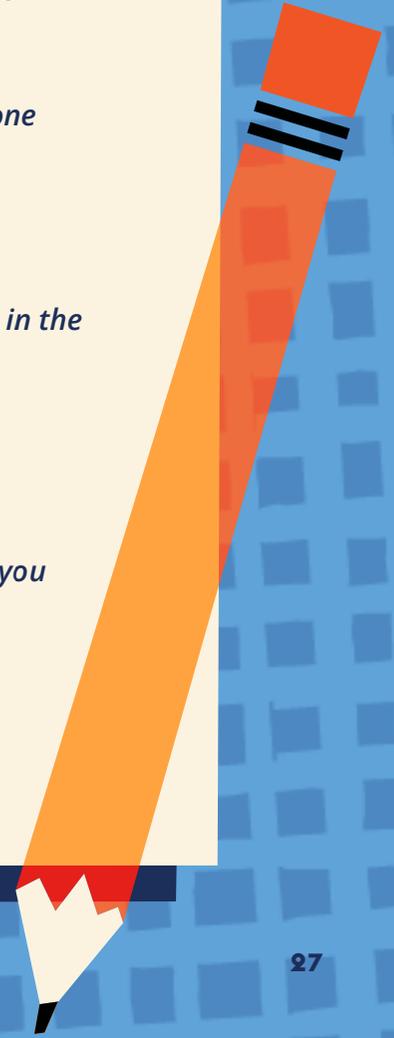
Procurement typically results in a service that either City employees or the people of Seattle interact with. The way that we design our RFPs and contracts is critical to providing excellent customer service to those who use our services. This requires us to focus more on outcome based contracting with clear expectations and accountability metrics for our vendors as well as regular review of data to ensure our contract needs are being met.

Think of a contract you executed that resulted in poor service outcomes. What could have been done differently in the RFP and contract design to ensure vendor accountability?

What are 1-2 tweaks you can make to your approach to RFPs and contract scope of work design in the next few months to ensure your contracts are results-driven?

Come back to this 3-6 months from now:

Reflecting back on the different approaches you tried in a recent RFP or contract execution, did you see a difference in the outcomes of who bid on your RFP or the results of a contract?



EQUITABLE

GETTING COOKS IN THE KITCHEN

“Make procurement systems more equitable”



Liz and Marcia at the ARTS Boot Camp at Seattle Center. Photo by Ottis Bolisay.

THE CHALLENGE

BIPOC- and women-owned businesses continue to face significant barriers to winning City contracts. By reducing these barriers and putting resources into outreach and small business coaching, we can create a more equitable and diverse pool of vendors for City procurement.

Barriers to access include knowing where to look for opportunities, not having social connections or professional relationships with project managers who are putting out large bids, facing cultural and language barriers, and having limited access to bonding and finance capital, marketing, and business management. These barriers are both in addition to and because of implicit bias and historical legacies of racism and discrimination in the procurement process.

SOLUTIONS

- Use data to increase vendor diversity
- Increase representation in vendor selection
- Remove bias from bid evaluations

USE DATA TO DEVELOP TARGETED STRATEGIES TO INCREASE VENDOR DIVERSITY

WMBE DASHBOARD

Seattle tracks and reports on WMBE utilization through a quarterly report, which is published as a PDF. While this is an important resource that has helped the City track WMBE utilization, the PDF format doesn't allow departments to drill down into the data to make decisions to increase WMBE utilization. To address this problem, Chief Analytics Officer Steve Barham on the Innovation and Performance Team created a Prototype Dashboard in Power BI.

The dashboard combines data from three primary systems: (1) our contracting system (Mastersworks/CCMS/Aurigo), (2) our financial system (PeopleSoft), and (3) pending FAS updates, our sub-prime contracting system (B2GNow) to show spending in real time by departments over the past five or so years. In our June 2024 Community of Practice meeting, we shared a preview of the draft dashboard. While the dashboard is still under development, staff were excited that they would finally have this information at their fingertips, saying that the data contained in this dashboard would allow them to strategize and forecast around their vendor outreach and engagement for upcoming bids.

WMBE Dashboard

Summary

WMBE Adjustments

Vendor Contracts

Vouchers

- Year
- 2021
 - 2022
 - 2023
 - 2024

City Department Name

All

Low Org

All

Project

All

WMBE Category

All

WMBE Registration

All

Consultant WMBE Spend

24%
Percentage

590
Vendors

\$66,690,169
WMBE Spend

City Department Name	WMBE Consultant	Consultant Total	Con Pct	WMBE Purchasing	Purchasing Total	Pur Pct
Seattle Public Utilities	\$16,899,729	\$39,459,603	43%	\$15,796,977	\$70,856,249	22%
Dept Of Transportation	\$12,620,770	\$58,786,558	21%	\$6,733,531	\$34,393,857	20%
Seattle IT Dept	\$11,558,690	\$27,395,888	17%	\$46,535,304	\$88,864,367	52%
Seattle City Light	\$10,298,812	\$59,603,566	17%	\$30,412,599	\$140,363,923	22%
Finance & Admin Services Dept	\$4,549,858	\$16,531,168	28%	\$22,214,445	\$87,982,262	25%
Parks Department	\$2,098,326	\$5,996,105	35%	\$6,909,717	\$26,791,530	26%
Dept Of Construction & Inspect	\$2,007,581	\$2,963,818	68%	\$682,513	\$1,290,752	53%
Office Of Planning & Comm Dev	\$932,503	\$17,942,641	5%	\$6,100	\$40,925	15%
Sustainability & Environ Dept	\$907,699	\$4,428,925	20%	\$115,266	\$5,054,305	2%
Office Of Economic Development	\$744,708	\$12,767,019	6%	\$310,905	\$1,057,088	29%
Seattle Center	\$627,043	\$1,564,926	40%	\$958,199	\$5,101,930	19%
Police Department	\$546,598	\$2,132,460	26%	\$1,946,858	\$19,215,881	10%
Dept Of Neighborhoods	\$402,887	\$574,215	70%	\$279,835	\$476,397	59%
Total	\$66,690,169	\$275,841,527	24%	\$141,524,255	\$517,596,656	27%

Purchasing WMBE Spend

27%
Percentage

331
Vendors

\$141,524,255
WMBE Spend

WMBE Categories % of Spending

Category	Contracting	Purchasing
White Female	46%	26%
Asian	36%	36%
Hispanic	8%	6%
African American	5%	22%
Native American	3%	11%
Other	1%	0%
No Data	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%

Registration % of Spending

Category	Contracting	Purchasing
WBE	44%	28%
MWBE	21%	16%
MBE	33%	49%
DBE	1%	5%
CBE	1%	2%
-	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%

INCREASE REPRESENTATION IN VENDOR SELECTION

Seattle Public Utilities uses a panel to evaluate all RFPs, which has a minimum representation requirement to ensure the voices of staff with marginalized identities have a say in the process. This requires that at least 25% of representatives on the panel must be people of color. These staff will review each bid based on pre-selected criteria, and then they will meet to discuss how they evaluated each bid. Other departments have also considered including community members with user experience to participate in RFP design and vendor selection.

REDUCE THE FLUFF IN PROCUREMENT DOCUMENTS

Seattle City Light takes another innovative approach to the RFP process and bid evaluation, using the Expertise-Based Project Delivery (XPD) program to evaluate bids. Bids submitted under the XPD process are shorter and reduce the “fluff” of bid submissions, which helps eliminate bias. For example, bidders are required to complete a concise 3-page form, which eliminates the reliance on flashy portfolios. Moreover, bidders are restricted from naming specific projects or employers, ensuring a focus on relevant qualifications. SCL has reported a positive correlation between the implementation of XPD and increased utilization of WMBE prime contracting opportunities.



CHEF'S TIP

Getting the word out about an upcoming contracting opportunity is key to getting proposals from new vendors and can be as simple as word-of-mouth information from a trusted source. The City has relationships with organizations that can help. In the words of Tiffany Scroggs, Program Director for the Washington APEX Accelerator, "Any time you change where the door is located, people can't find it. Use us [the nonprofit technical assistance providers] and use your networks to get the word out about these changes."

Tiffany shared this reminder in March 2024 at a panel for WMBE technical assistance nonprofits to share their learnings to better support BIPOC-owned businesses. Included on the panel were representatives from:

Tabor 100

Business Impact Northwest

Washington APEX Accelerator

Darling Nava Consulting



FAS Inclusion Advisor Edwina Martin-Arnold (left) conducts vendor outreach in partnership with Tabor 100 and other local organizations to build relationships with new vendors.



City of Seattle's Reverse Vendor Tradeshow (November 2023)



Extreme Procurement Makeover Summit in Long Beach, CA (October 2023)

PLANNING JOURNAL EXERCISE #3

The City of Seattle is committed to ensuring that opportunities to work with the City are fair and equitable. In order to do so, we collectively need to work towards removing barriers to vendor participation as well as support small businesses and WMBE vendors in having a fair chance to bid for contracts through active engagement.

How are you actively engaging small businesses and WMBE vendors in opportunities that you are proud of? How might we scale these good practices across the City?

What are 1-2 new ways of engaging diverse vendors that you've learned this year that you want to test out over the next 3-6 months?

Come back to this 3-6 months from now:

If you tried a new engagement strategy, how did it go? What difference did it make with who bid on your recent opportunities? If you decided not to try any new engagement strategies, why not and what will help you follow through on trying something different?

STRATEGIC

SETTING THE TABLE

“Elevate procurement as a strategic function”



Vendors and government employees mingling at the Reverse Vendor Trade show in October 2023.

THE CHALLENGE

Seattle is a large city brimming with innovation. Best practices developed and tested in individual departments should not remain siloed. Procurement transformation requires staff to be empowered and upskilled as change agents for the City.

SOLUTIONS

Identify, elevate, and spread best practices across the City.

IDENTIFY BEST PRACTICES

RESEARCH FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON EVANS SCHOOL

IP partnered with the UW Evans School of Policy and Governance on a report asking about what equitable procurement practices at the City level could look like. MPA grad students Krista Osmundsen, Wei-Hsuan Chang, and Natalie Ottoboni conducted a field scan, semi-structured interviews, and drafted a report to identify strategies the City should continue to rely upon for equitable procurement in order to increase WMBE spending goals by departments. Professor Joaquin Herranz, Jr. was UW faculty supervisor on this Capstone project.

ELEVATE BEST PRACTICES

PROCUREMENT BRIGHT SPOTS

IP hired a contract writer to write 10 short stories to elevate promising practices to better support WMBE vendors through City procurement. These stories appear on the IP Blog (innovation-hub.seattle.gov). These promising procurement practices range from Seattle IT using data to drive up WMBE spending to SDOT using WMBE communications firms for better public engagement with immigrant communities.

SPREAD BEST PRACTICES

PROCUREMENT CITYWIDE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

In fall 2023, the IP and GPL partnered in a Pilot Procurement Community of Practice, which brought together all Citywide department procurement team leads. This pilot lasted for 9 months, with monthly meetings bringing together between 35-55 remote staff and 100 in-person Citywide staff at the first-ever in-person meeting hosted in March 2024. The organizers to date have gathered over 120 staff in one virtual space in a Teams Channel. The group brings together City staff who buy tremendously different procurements, ranging from language translation consultant services to the procurement of architectural and engineering services for environmental projects. This gathering has led to collaborations in capital consultant open house events, multiple user testing workshops on digital tools, the co-creation of WMBE technical assistance best practices, and other ways of collective problem-solving across department siloes.



One hundred City staff attended the first in-person Procurement Community of Practice in March 2024.



CHEF'S TIP

Have you tried to make a change – or even a small tweak – that you are certain will improve efficiency or results, yet colleagues seem to resist your every move? Or have you tried to make a change in your own leadership style, perhaps to micromanage less or advocate more for controversial ideas, but you find yourself quickly reverting to old, familiar habits? Check out the GPL's quick read on [How to Overcome Immunity to Change](#).



Scan the QR code to read the full document.

PLANNING JOURNAL EXERCISE #4

Procurement is often overlooked as a strategic function in government to improve the lives of residents. However, how the government procures goods and services has a long lasting impact on how we operate and how people experience living, playing, working, and visiting our community. From where we buy office supplies, to who we contract for services like towing, maintenance, and landscaping, and who we hire to be a consultant on important decisions – all these choices start with procurement. There is an opportunity to elevate the status of procurement by buying and contracting goods and services that help us deliver world-class services.

What are ways you could position procurement as a strategic function in your department or work unit?

What are 1-2 ways you could make procurement more accessible and easy for people to understand over the next few months?

Come back to this 3-6 months from now:

What did you do to boost the accessibility of procurement? Did it result in others understanding why procurement can be transformative for service delivery?





Members of the Procurement Transformation Team at a celebration in June 2024.

BON APPÉTIT!

Thank you to all of the partners who have been instrumental in leading this work. Procurement transformation requires continuous improvement. We encourage procurement change agents across the City of Seattle to continue to look for opportunities to make procurement more efficient, equitable, strategic, and results-driven for the residents of Seattle.

If you have ideas, questions, or insights to share after reading this book, please keep the conversation going!

Reach out to us at
performance@seattle.gov



Scan this QR code to access the digital report.



ACRONYMS

BCPI	Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation, Johns Hopkins University
FAS	Finance and Administration Services, City of Seattle
GPL	Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab
IP	Mayor's Innovation and Performance, City of Seattle
MBE	Minority-Owned Business Enterprise
PC	Purchasing and Contracting Division, FAS, City of Seattle
RSJI	The City of Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative
SOW	Scope of work
WMBE	Women- or Minority-Owned Business Enterprise

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Equity: Equity is defined as “the state, quality or ideal of being just, impartial and fair.” The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept.

Equitable Procurement: Efforts to achieve equitable community outcomes in the way a public or for-profit entity spends resources, including the purchasing of routine goods and services, professional consultants, construction, and contracting.

Evidence-Based: Practices, policies, and decisions that are informed and guided by systematically collected and analyzed data. This includes information derived from a literature review and primary data gathered through interviews, document reviews, and other relevant research methods.

Disparity: A difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage.

Practices to Advance Procurement Equity:

Actions, strategies, or processes implemented to enhance the participation, success, and sustainability of WMBEs in public procurement.

Racial Equity: When social, economic, and political opportunities are not predicted by or negatively correlated with a person’s race.

Results Driven Contracting: Orienting a contract to the objectives and goals of the City, and marking clear success metrics. This is an alternative approach to compliance centered contracting, which is mostly the case.

Women- and Minority-Owned Business Enterprise (WMBE): State-certified or self-identified firms that are at least 51% owned by women and/or minorities.

“One of the most direct and powerful ways the city can support our small businesses is through contracting opportunities for the goods and services we use. The goal of this work is to advance our vision for One Seattle as an inclusive and equitable city where entrepreneurs and small businesses of all backgrounds can succeed.”

- Seattle Mayor, Bruce Harrell



Seattle Mayor, Bruce Harrell, signing the Executive Order.