

What Does Procurement Really Do?

Communicating Impact & Value through Storytelling

**Please share your name, role, and your government
or organization in the chat.**

Your PEN Facilitators



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Project Leader



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Special thanks to the following organizations for sharing insights and best practices:

- City of Palm Bay, FL
- City of Seattle, WA
- Miami-Dade Innovation Authority (MDIA)



In the chat, please share your name and government!

How can you engage in this session?



Please use the
“Raise Hand”
function on Zoom



Look out for
**discussions and
resources**
in the Zoom chat



Join in the
**conversation via
chat** and connect with
a peer!



Setting the Stage: Using Storytelling to Advance Public Procurement



Crafting Professional Narratives: Celebrating the “U” in Procurement



Public Value Narratives: Communicating Procurement “Wins”



From the Field: Storytelling Case Studies & Strategies from Peer Governments



Getting Started: Taking Action!

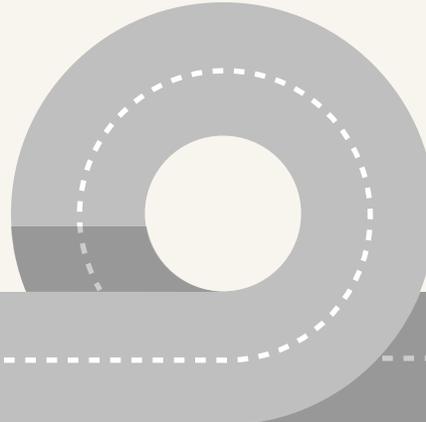


If you had to tell the story of
procurement—*what it is and why it
matters to our local communities—*
how would you begin?

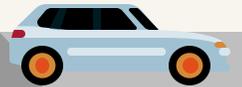
Procurement... is for the people.

As soon as we step out on the street, the impact of public procurement is everywhere

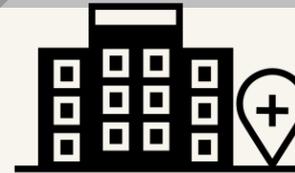
Procurement is the engine that powers communities daily, building the infrastructure...



...and depends on **dedicated public service servants** who believe in its transformative power!



...and **delivering critical services and supports** that help communities thrive...



“So much of procurement happens outside of the collective consciousness. Yet, its impact ripples through communities in tangible ways. Procurement storytelling is the art of making the invisible, visible—it’s the unseen backbone that shapes outcomes and drives meaningful impact.”

(Jordan Valdés, Varnum Street Strategies)

Setting the Stage: Using Storytelling to Advance Public Procurement

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“People don't think in terms of information. They think in terms of narratives.”

But while people focus on the story itself, information comes along for the ride.”

- Jonah Berger, *Author*

The Conundrum: Public procurement transforms communities, but when mentioned in the news, it often carries a negative connotation.

\$5M roadwork contract wasn't a COVID 'emergency,' says report alleging [redacted] county broke law

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

As calls for government reform persist, [redacted] agency fraud costs swell to \$1.7M

[redacted] \$1.3 Million Renovation of Golf Club Violated Procurement Laws

Office of the State Comptroller says [redacted] improperly used the "emergency" exception and hired a vendor without seeking competitive bids.

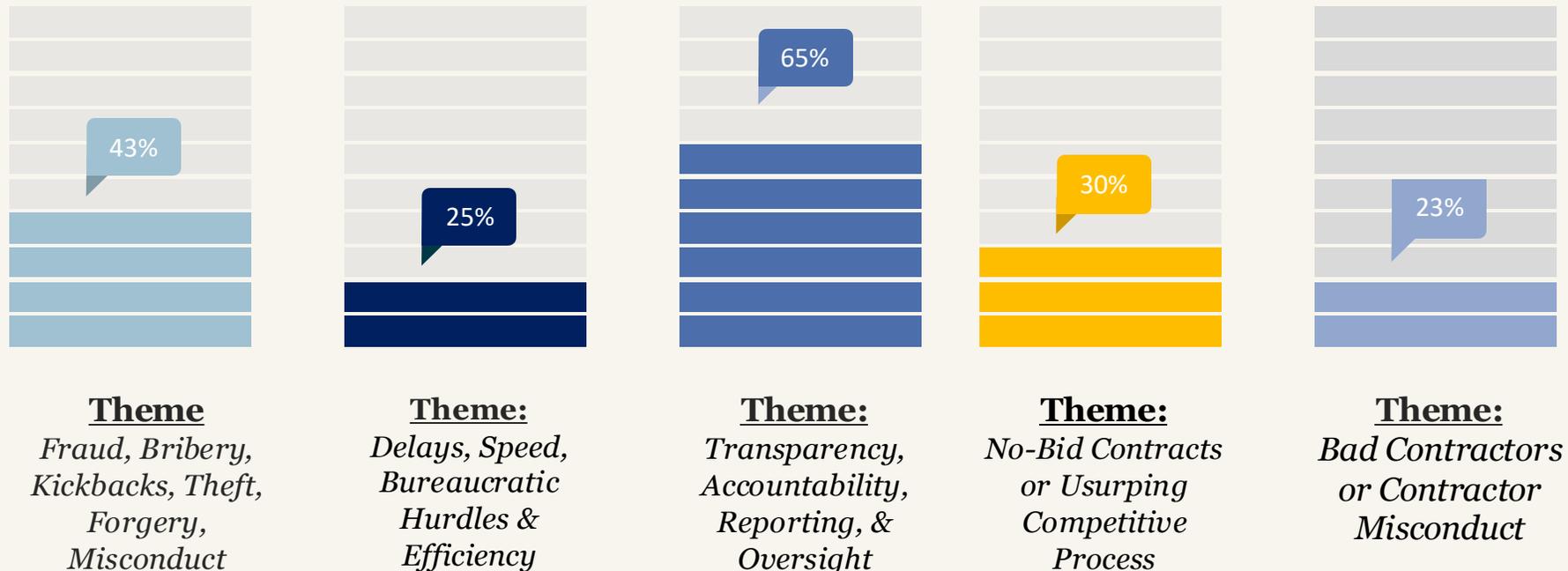
Feeble oversight of [redacted] \$40M vaccine program spurred abuses, watchdog finds

\$17M spent on staffing without verifying employees worked the hours they logged, report says

By the Numbers: PPG's analysis of procurement news articles revealed a trend of focusing on problems rather than celebrating progress

Key Takeaway: 95% of articles reviewed had a negative connotation or highlighted a challenge, issue, or barrier, rather than a procurement win!

Common Procurement Themes in the News



The Power of Storytelling: Why should public procurement professionals care about crafting and sharing stories of impact?

Expectations have never been higher for governments to demonstrate transparency, sound fiscal oversight, innovation, and responsiveness to community needs.



**Partners in
Progress**



**Champions of
Transparency**

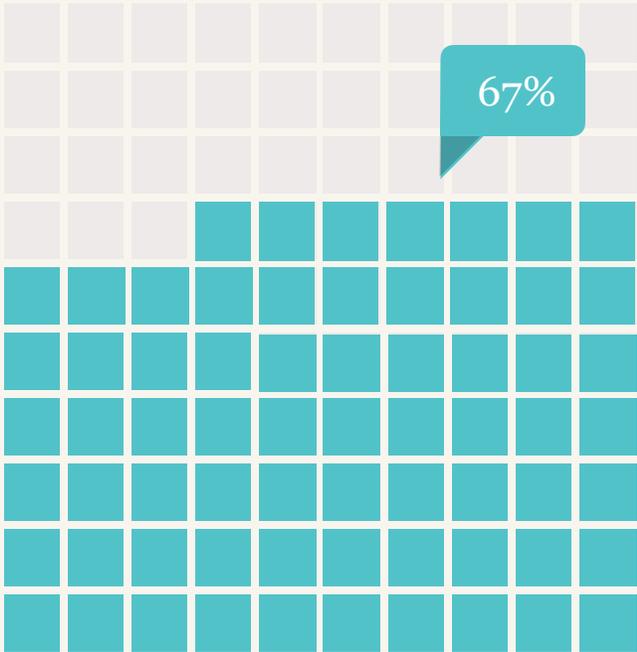


**Stewards of
Public Trust**

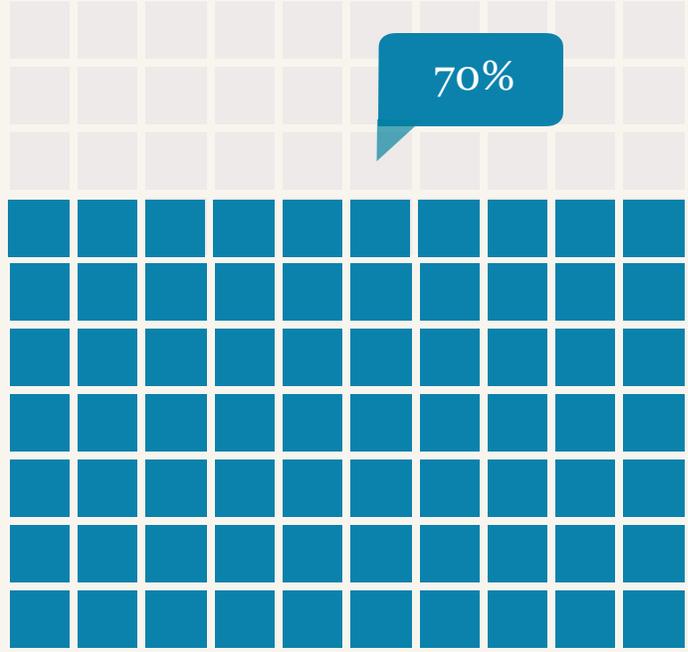
The Trust Factor: Public trust in all institutions is historically low, yet local governments maintain more stable levels of trust with residents

Key Insight: Amid national discussions on government efficiency and transparency, local governments enjoy strong public trust—creating a powerful opportunity for storytelling.

67% of U.S. adults report trusting local institutions (e.g., fire departments, libraries) to serve everyone in their community fairly.



(Source: [AAMC Center for Health Justice](#))



(Source: [State of the Nation Project / Gallup](#))

70% of residents have “fair amount” of trust (and confidence) in local government to handle local problems.

*Presentation template from HiSlide.io

Reflection

What are some challenges or barriers that prevent procurement teams from creating proactive and positive narratives about their work?



Please come off mute or post feedback in the chat!

Crafting Professional Narratives: Celebrating the “U” in Public Procurement

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“I think the best stories always end up being about the people rather than the event, which is to say character-driven.”

- Stephen King, *Author*

Your Role Matters: If procurement is the engine that powers communities, procurement staff are the fuel!

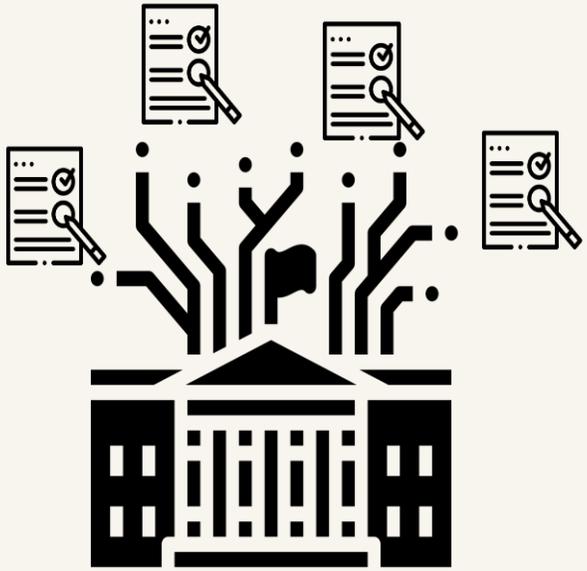
P-Card Administrator

Sustainability Coordinator

Budget and Purchasing Manager

Buyer

Chief Procurement Officer



Procurement Data Officer

Vendor Program Administrator

Senior Contract Administrator

Pro-tip: Craft your pitch to better communicate how your role in procurement contributes to community impact!

PEN Pulse Poll



How many years have you been working as a public service superhero?



True or False:
I started working in public procurement because that had always been a career goal for me.

Activity: Take a moment to celebrate your contributions in public service



**BRAG on
YOURSELF!**

Take a moment and reflect on your years of service in government.

Think about the projects or initiatives you have been a part of.

Using the link in the chat, share one accomplishment you are proud of!

We asked, you answered: Explaining what YOU do in procurement in one sentence or less

Guess the name of the role based on the job description!

Chief Procurement Officer

I ensure the city has competitively sourced contracts to provide essential services and supplies.

Contract Administration Specialist

I guide, counsel, educate County staff, end-users, and the business community to support successful contract outcomes.

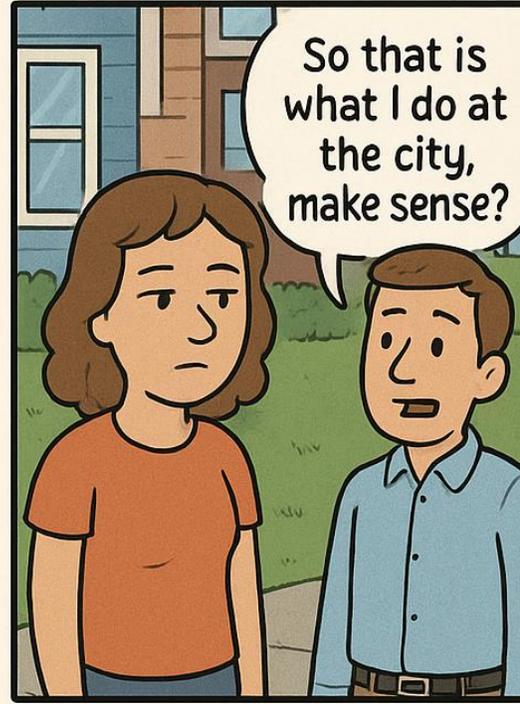
Buyer

I help the City procure everything it needs to do the things it needs to do.

Budget & Purchasing Manager

I make sure careful thought is given to how the City is spending money.

Reflect: Have you ever had a conversation like this?



Put a “thumbs” up in the chat if you had this conversation!

Explaining Your Role: "Contract Administrator"

Technical

I serve as a liaison between the government and vendors to enforce compliance with spending rules and local regulations.

My responsibilities include monitoring performance, managing risk, and promoting accountability through audits, reporting, and corrective actions.

Additionally, I support drafting and negotiating contract terms in accordance with local regulations.

Accessible

As a contract manager, I make sure the city gets what it pays for—and that it's done timely and responsibly.

I make sure to support vendors we hire and hold them accountable to what they are supposed to do (trash pickup, road repair, upgrading IT systems).

Funny

I am like the government's "Personal Trainer" for vendors!

No excuses, do the reps, meet the goals, and don't skip leg day (deliverables).

That's my role as a Contract Administrator!

Explaining Your Role: “Chief Procurement Officer (CPO)”

Technical

As the Chief Procurement Officer (CPO), I oversee the governance, strategy, and execution of all procurement and strategic sourcing functions for the government.

My responsibilities include developing, implementing, and enforcing procurement policies; ensuring regulatory compliance; and managing category purchasing and forecasting at an enterprise-wide scale.

Accessible

As the CPO, I lead the strategy on how the government purchases goods and services so communities thrive.

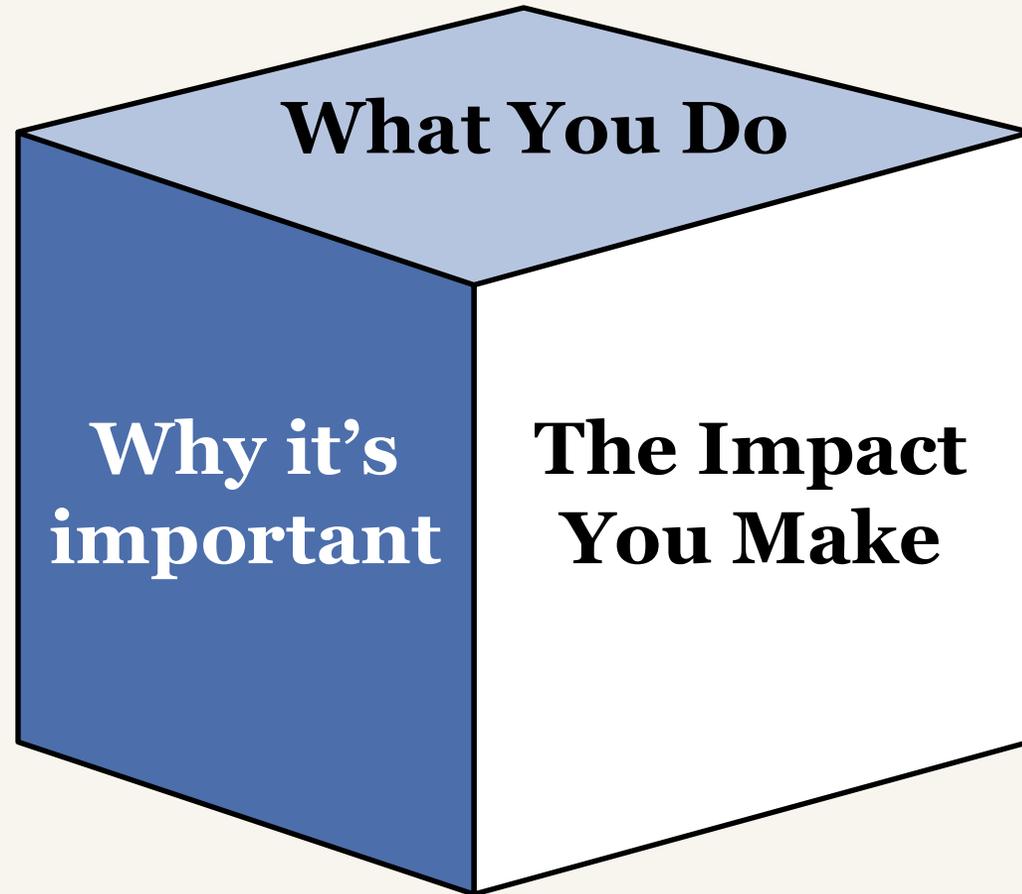
I make sure we have policies in place and ensure we follow regulations, so we stay out of the newspaper (*for the wrong reasons*) and support a team of experts who strive to get the best value on every contract for the city!

Funny

I manage a team of experienced professional shoppers trained to look for the best value for the city and set policies to ensure we buy at the right price, at the right time, for the right reasons, and from the right people (*usually*).

That’s my role as the CPO!

Tips for Communicating Your Work More Accessibly



Bonus: Add why you love your work!

- **Ditch the technical aspects** of your role
- Make the connection between your **role, purpose & impact**
- **Celebrate yourself in your description** and why you love what you do!
- **End with your title as an asterisk**, don't start with it!

Activity: Explain Your Role using the **(TAF) Framework**

Technical

Write out your job description/daily duties – don't worry about making it accessible (yet).

Accessible

Use plain language to simplify the technical aspects of your role!

Funny

If you can, think about an engaging and super funny, yet tactical way to explain your role!



Raise your hand if you would like to share your framework!

**“Public Value” Narratives:
Getting People to “Get” Procurement
by Showcasing Successes**

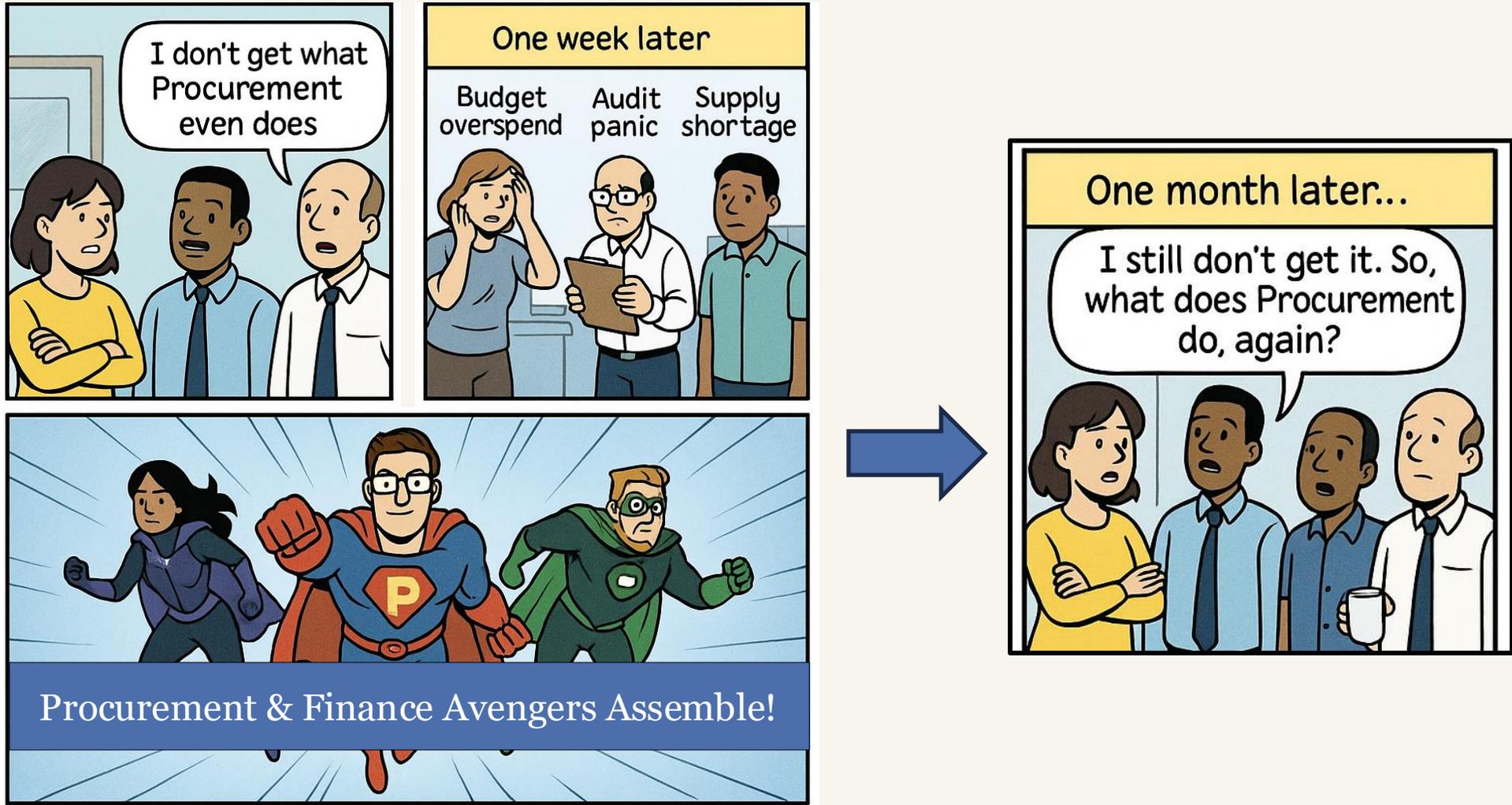
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**“Stories are how we
remember; we tend to forget
lists and bullet points.”**

- Robert McKee, Author

Fact Check: What does Procurement in Local Government Really Do?



Yes, Government exists for the public good – but it's okay to BRAG about your accomplishments!

- **Storytelling should be a continuous conversation** communicating values, priorities, barriers, and outcomes.
- There is no singular right time to tell a “good” story – **communicate frequently and often.**
- **Be the example to your residents and user departments**, modeling what transparency and accessible conversation should look like.
- **Identify an angle of your procurement story that creates value for everyday people.** Making the impact feel personal!

Reflection

How does your government currently communicate the activities and impact of the work done by the procurement office to the public?



Please come off mute or post feedback in the chat!

Choose the right method: Select the type of storytelling method that aligns with your goals!

Behind the Scenes:

Shares details about **processes, people, and the purpose of projects in the community or government.**

Hear from Experts:

Elevates the **voices, perspectives, and expertise of stakeholders** in government or the community.

Aspirational Story

Outlines a vision for the future by sharing goals and anchoring on values or desired outcomes.

Challenge Story:

Reveals **barriers or complex problems faced by the government** and how it is working to address them.

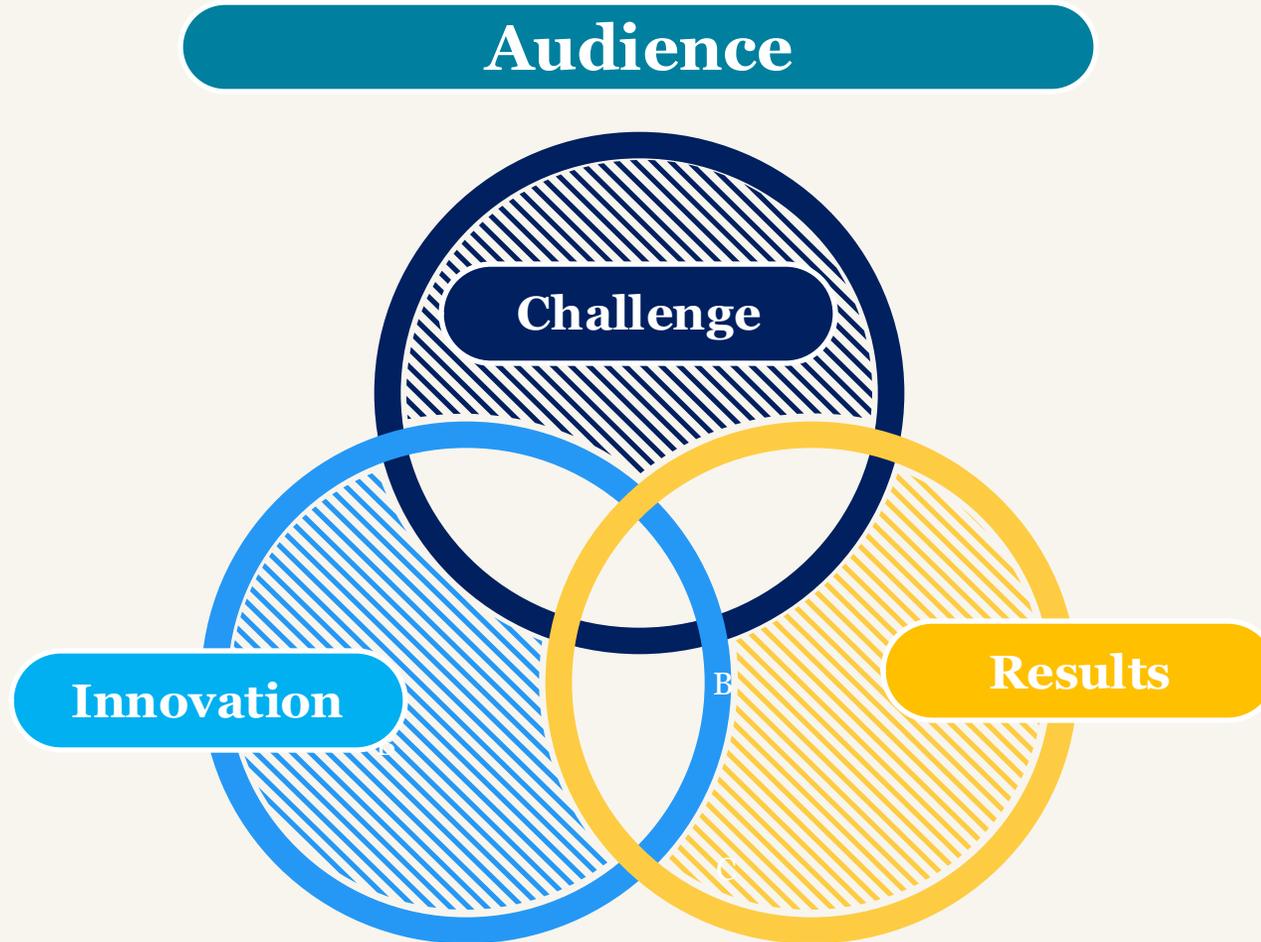
Impact Story:

Showcases **benefits, outcomes, and results of initiatives using data and/or personal stories** to illustrate impact.

**“Stop telling and show!
Understand your audience – go
beyond sharing the facts –
connect with the thoughts,
feelings, and hardships of the
audience so they can feel the story,
not just hear it!”**

*--Leigh-Ann A. Buchanan
Miami-Dade Innovation Authority*

Recommendation: Tell the story of a procurement department innovation or success through the **A-C-I-R Framework**



Storytelling Framework: Audience-Challenge-Innovation-Results

Audience: Who do you want to motivate or inform with this story?

Frame the challenge

- ✓ Center human beings
- ✓ Demonstrate magnitude
- ✓ Brevity + clarity

Describe the innovation

- ✓ Address the challenge
- ✓ Explain the vision
- ✓ Center human beings

Share results

- ✓ Highlight outcomes
- ✓ Emphasize progress

Step 1: Understand your **Audience**

- ✓ **Identify target segmentation.** Who do you want to motivate or inform?
- ✓ **Recognize priorities and values.** What do they care about? Which values do we share?
- ✓ **Use accessible language.** What language will make your pitch welcoming or accessible?
- ✓ **Find a trusted messenger:** Consider who should communicate the message to this audience for it to be well received.
- ✓ **Concrete call-to-action.** What specific action do you want your audience to take next?

Step 2: Framing the **Challenge**

- ✓ **Center people.** Who are we talking about? What are they experiencing?
- ✓ **Demonstrate scale.** What data can you use to illustrate the intensity and urgency of the challenge?
- ✓ **Get to the point.** What is *essential* for someone to know? What is the *simplest* way to explain it?

Step 3: Describing the **Innovation**

- ✓ **Link the innovation to the challenge.** How does the solution or innovation address the challenge?
- ✓ **Describe the vision.** What does success look like inside of government?
- ✓ **Center humans.** How does the vision translate to people's or vendors' experiences?

Step 4: Sharing **Results**

- ✓ **Highlight outcomes.** What's your strongest evidence that your work is making a positive impact?
 - ✓ Are there anecdotes or human-centered stories to share?
- ✓ **Emphasize progress.** Beyond outcome data, what other progress has been made? What practices are governments moving toward adopting?

Summary: Take the time to identify your procurement wins and make your impact known

Develop your Story

- ✓ Align on your goals
Confirm your preferred **story type**
- ✓ Leverage the **ACIR framework** to create your content

Recruit Key Stakeholders

- ✓ Procurement Staff
- ✓ Communications & Marketing
- ✓ Digital Media Teams
- ✓ Performance / Data Analytics / IT
- ✓ User Department Staff

Promote Your Story

- ✓ **Use creative tools** to make your story come to life (e.g., *Canva, Venngage, Storymaps, Visme*)
- ✓ **Use social media or plan a campaign** to share your story!

5-minute Break

Take a moment to grab some water, stretch, send an email...

But, please stay around! 😊

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From the Field:
Examples of Governments Crafting
Compelling Narratives

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Zoom Poll: How does your procurement team typically celebrate a significant win or successful initiative within your government or agency?



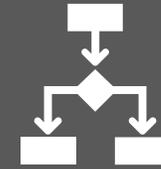
Option 1

Press Release or Social Media –
We share our “wins” with the community!



Option 2

Internal Email –
We share exciting updates with other user departments!



Option 3

Give Kudos within the Procurement Team—we celebrate by learning from successes!

Storytelling in Action: Local governments are innovating how they communicate the value and impact of procurement

City of Palm Bay, FL



Behind Every Purchase:
Understanding People, Process,
and Purpose of Procurement

Story Type: “Behind the Scenes”
Method: Video

City of Seattle, WA



The Procurement Cookbook:
Sharing Recipes for
Procurement Excellence

Story Type: “Impact”
Method: Playbook

Storytelling in Action

Behind Every Purchase: Understanding People, Process, and Purpose of Procurement



City of Palm Bay, FL



OPPORTUNITY

- CPO is focused on **raising the procurement department's visibility** across the city.
- Partnered with Communications to produce a creative video highlighting the **“Who's Who” on the procurement team**
- The goal of the video was to **build understanding of procurement key functions** and how procurement is making an impact!

IMPACT

- **Team Pride:** Increased confidence within the procurement team!
- **Community Awareness:** Resonance and appreciation from community members who viewed the video.
- **Strategic Collaboration:** Increased momentum for more storytelling and procurement impact across user departments. *The next video will promote the outcomes of a new tech procurement!*

Watch: Meet the City of Palm Bay Procurement Department

Targeted Audience:

Residents

User Departments

Vendors

Story Type:
“Behind the Scenes”

Method:
Video



Recommendations & Lessons Learned



Just tell your story— *tiny first steps* are better than nothing!



Engage your team in planning, crafting and sharing the narrative!



Don't lose momentum – keep building your storytelling muscle!

"Remember, Procurement has the power to tell its own story! When we created our video, we utilized videographers through an existing contract to help showcase their work.

I understand that not all governments have this type of arrangement in place. **However, even if you don't have a communications team, don't let that discourage you—pitch the idea and share your vision. With the right support, you can make it happen.**

And remember, we work in procurement—we can always develop a solicitation to get what we need!"

--George Barber
Chief Procurement Officer
City of Palm Bay, FL

Storytelling in Action

The Procurement Cookbook:

Sharing Recipes, Successes & Outcomes of Procurement Reform



City of Seattle, WA



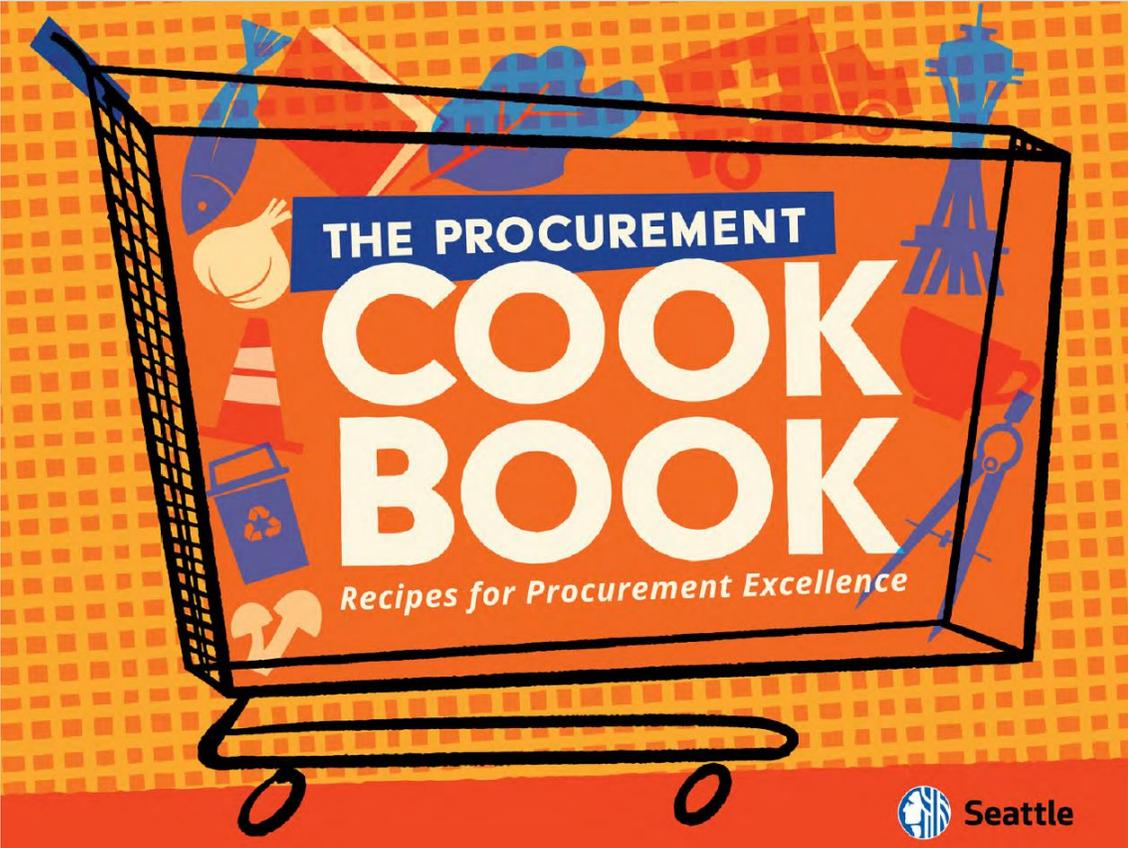
OPPORTUNITY

- The City led a successful **two-year initiative to reform procurement practices** and remove bottlenecks and inefficiencies!
- **Explored dynamic ways to share the “story of impact”** with stakeholders to ensure insights are actively used rather than sitting on the shelf.
- **Developed a “Procurement Cookbook” detailing challenges, best practices, and policy and process changes**, sharing publicly with internal and external stakeholders.

IMPACT

- **Raised awareness:** Increased knowledge, visibility, and appreciation of the impact and scale of the procurement reform.
- **Culture Shift:** Established a model for how to communicate future successes in an engaging and effective way.

Read: The Procurement Cookbook – Recipes for Procurement Excellence



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.

Audience:

Executive Leaders

User Departments

Story Type: "Impact"

Method: Playbook

Read: The Procurement Cookbook – Recipes for Procurement Excellence

THE CHALLENGE

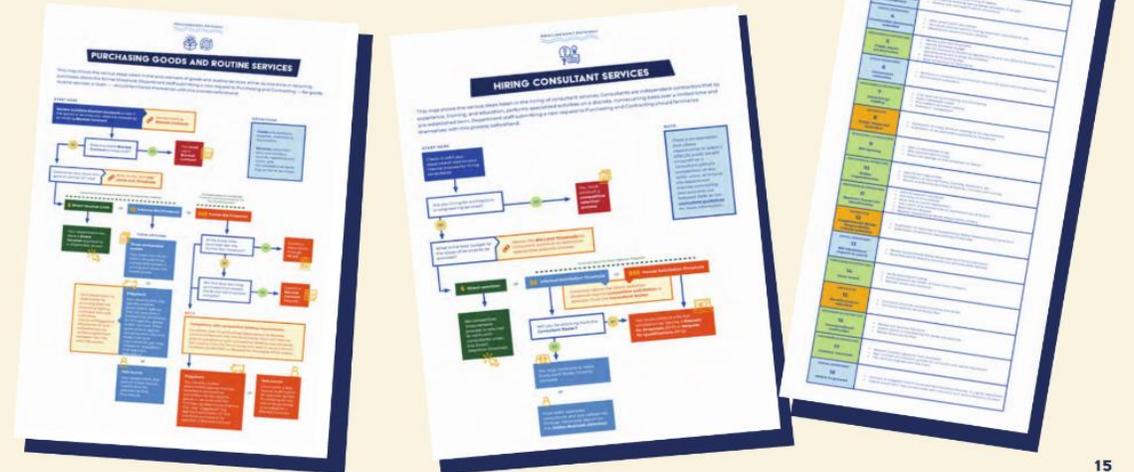
Over time, Seattle has built up laws, policies, and procedures to purchase the goods and services that are needed to conduct City business. This complex system – which relied on e-mail, Excel lists, and over 140 different forms – can be confusing for both vendors and City staff to navigate. This also 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.

THE THREE MAPPED PATHWAYS WERE:

- Purchasing of goods and routine services, including blanket contracts (contracts for the purchase of routine goods or services that all City departments can use)
- Consultant services
- Public works (construction)



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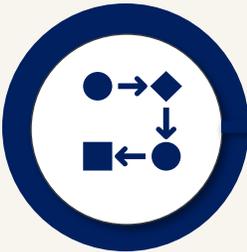
Audience:

Executive Leaders

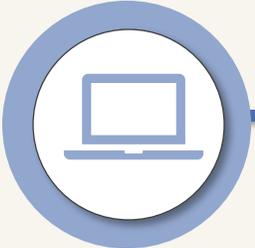
User Departments

Story Type: “Impact”
Method: Playbook

Recommendations & Lessons Learned



Don't let perfect be the enemy of progress!



Use accessible tools to create your vision (e.g., Canva, AI tools)!



Identify clear milestones in your procurement project to celebrate wins!

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

Getting Started: Tools, Techniques & Templates to Power your Storytelling Journey

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Reflection:

What is one key takeaway that you gleaned from this session?

✔ “Storytelling Opportunity” Checklist: Use these questions to uncover the next theme of your team’s procurement impact story!



Is there a **change to a process or policy** that will improve how other government department’s function?



Is there **opportunity to introduce, clarify or build understanding** of the procurement process?



Did the procurement team have a **successful contract** that resulted in a significant impact for the public or another department?



Are there any **updates or progress checks for existing projects** to share?



Was there a **resolution to the long-standing procurement** challenge?



Has the procurement team set **goals or initiatives** and sharing them could improve transparency and awareness with stakeholders?



Is there a **meaningful or fun human-centered story** on the procurement team to share (e.g., retirement, new hires, etc.)?



What **metrics or data trends can help residents** understand which services were procured in their neighborhoods?

✓ **Take Action:** Make a plan of commitment to better communicate your procurement “wins”

Develop your Story

- ✓ Align on your goals
Confirm your preferred **story type**
- ✓ Leverage the **ACIR framework** to create your content

Recruit Key Stakeholders

- ✓ Procurement Staff
- ✓ Communications & Marketing
- ✓ Digital Media Teams
- ✓ Performance / Data Analytics / IT
- ✓ User Department Staff

Promote Your Story

- ✓ **Use creative tools** to make your story come to life (e.g., *Canva, Venngage, Storymaps, Visme, ChatGPT*)
- ✓ **Use social media or plan a campaign** to share your story!

Resources Template: “ACIR” Framework

Audience – Challenge – Innovation – Result (ACIR) Framework

In this template, you will:

- ✓ Have an opportunity to map out your team’s procurement “win” or compelling story in a structured way for your targeted audience!
- ✓ **Pro-tip:** Use this template as a team-building exercise with your department to build morale!

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“ACIR” FRAMEWORK TEMPLATE: MAPPING OUT YOUR PROCUREMENT STORY

Audience – Challenge – Action – Results

Recommendation: Tell the story of a procurement innovation or success through the A-C-I-R Framework.



Step 1: Define Your Audience
Pick a specific setting and audience. In what setting might you want to tell the story of a problem you have solved? Who might want to know about an innovative approach you have pursued? Make it specific and realistic.

Call-to-action (Optional):
Is there something you want your audience to do with the information that is being shared? Or do you have a tangible request?

Step 2: Frame the Challenge
In 2-3 bullets, outline the challenge you, your team, or your division are facing. Describe what people are experiencing and the scale of the problem.

- My team is trying to solve a challenge with...
- One of the ways this challenge impacts our mission is...

Step 3: Describe the Action
In 3-4 bullets, outline how your work addresses the challenge, explain what success looks like inside government, and how that translates to people’s experience.

- To address the challenge, we are / we plan to ...
- Inside of government, the changes we expect to see / have seen are...
- For people in the community / for our vendors, this innovation means...

Step 4: Share Results
Conclude with 1-2 bullets on the most compelling outcomes or progress you can share from your work. If you have a chart, quote, or other supporting material that comes to mind, feel free to draw / cite a rough version of it.

- To date, our initial results indicate...
- We have also seen progress as demonstrated by ...

Audience-Challenge-Innovation-Results 1

Audience: Who do you want to motivate or inform?

Frame the challenge

- ✓ Center human beings
- ✓ Demonstrate magnitude
- ✓ Brevity + clarity

Describe the innovation

- ✓ Address the challenge
- ✓ Explain the vision
- ✓ Center human beings

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Resources Template: “TAF” Framework

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“TAF” FRAMEWORK TEMPLATE:

CRAFTING NARRATIVES TO SHARE YOUR ROLE IN PROCUREMENT

Technical	Accessible	Funny
Write out your job description/core responsibilities– don't worry about making it accessible (yet).	Use plain language to simplify the technical aspects of your role!	If you can, think about an engaging and super funny, yet tactical way to explain your role!

Craft Your Professional Narrative (*Technical – Accessible – Funny*)

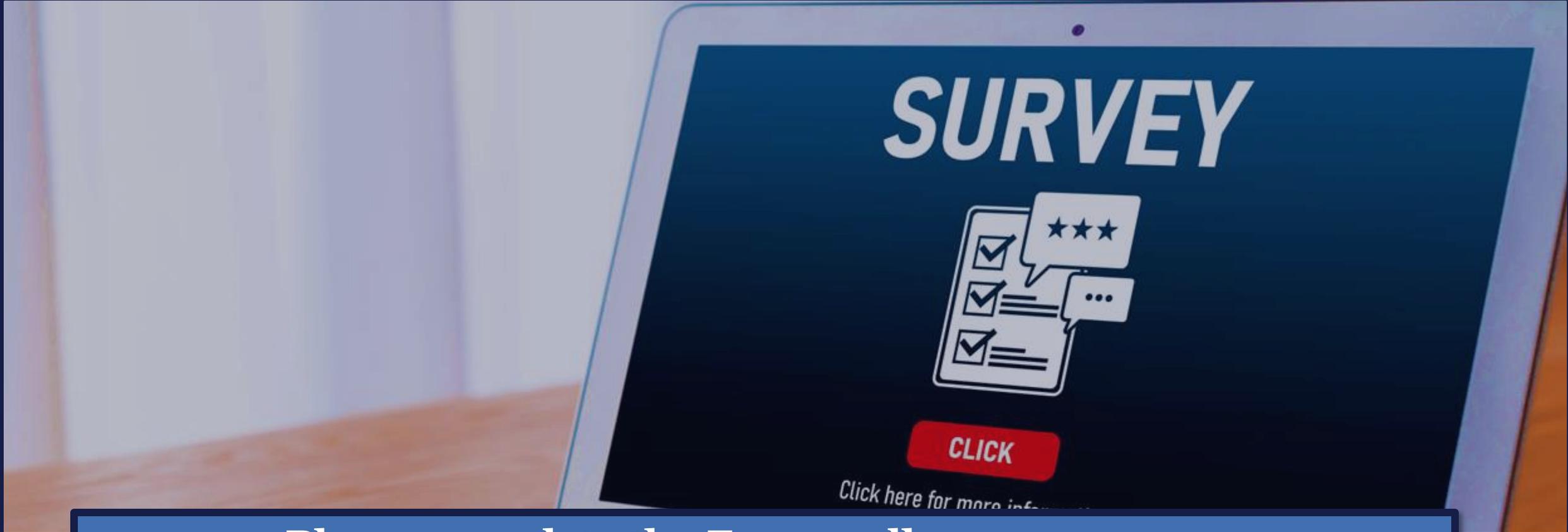
In this template, you will:

- ✓ Be able to craft your own narrative about your professional role in government that celebrates your role as a public service superhero in an accessible way, including:
 - What you do
 - The impact your work has on the community
 - Why you love your work

An aerial view of a city skyline, likely New York City, with numerous skyscrapers and buildings. The image is overlaid with several text boxes. The background is a light, faded version of the city scene.

When you
had to tell the story of
procurement—*what it is and why it
matters to our local communities*—
how *will* you begin?

Your Feedback Matters: Event Experience Survey



**Please complete the Zoom poll on your screen.
Your feedback is anonymous!**

Procurement Excellence Network: Become a Member!

The screenshot shows the Procurement Excellence Network website. At the top left is the logo 'PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE NETWORK'. To the right is a navigation menu with links for 'About', 'Resources', 'Events', 'FAQ', 'Contact', and 'Search'. A circular button with the text 'SIGN IN MEMBER SIGN IN MEMBER' is also visible. The main headline reads 'When procurement works, communities thrive' with a 'Become a Member' button below it. Below this is a row of three circular images showing different cityscapes. The section below is titled 'Embark on a Procurement Excellence Journey with PEN' and features three icons: a circle, a starburst, and a double-line icon. Each icon has a corresponding title and description: 'Community of Peers' (Connect with 2,400+ innovators...), 'Model Templates & Tools' (Access exclusive resources...), and 'Free Coaching' (Receive support from experienced advisors...). At the bottom of each section is a link: 'Member Directory ->', 'Resource Library ->', and 'Request Coaching ->'.

The Procurement Excellence Network has connected **2500+ government staff from 800 unique jurisdictions** to procurement resources, best practices, and community support.

- ✓ Attend monthly **virtual webinars**
- ✓ Access over **80+ resources**
- ✓ Connect with peers in our **Member Directory!**
- ✓ **Community Conversations** Dashboard



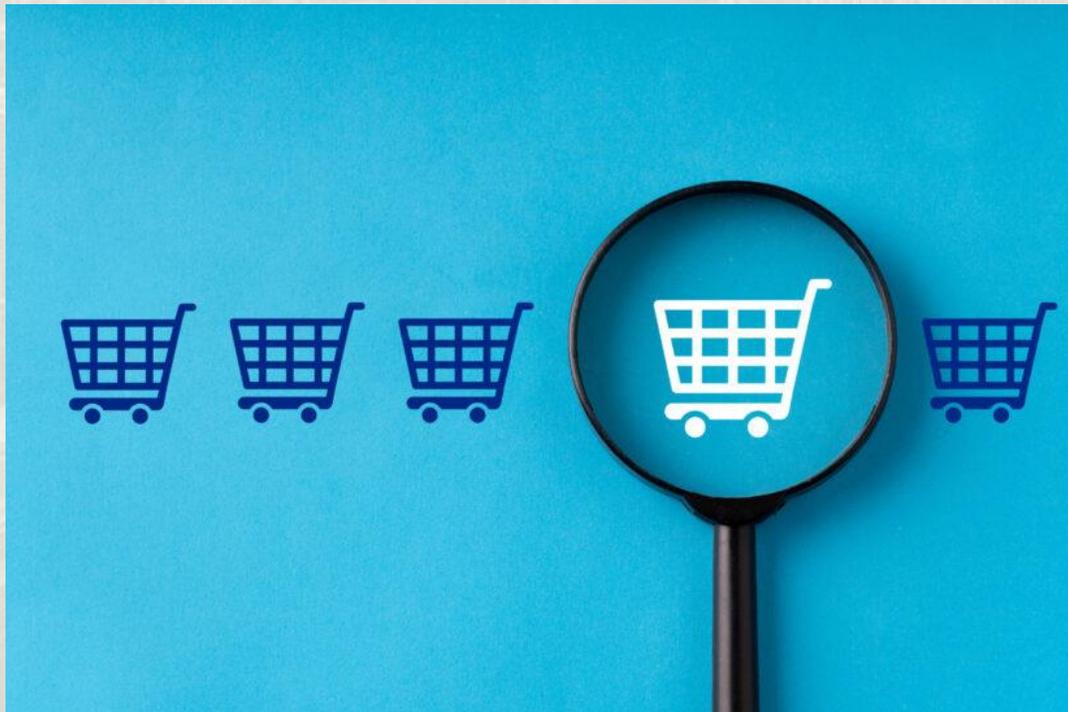
Stay Engaged: Get involved in PEN Offerings!

Participate in our next **PEN Events** **Focus Group!**

- ✓ PEN is planning for 2026 events and cohort-based learning opportunities. Share your insights to inform future event topics!
- ✓ Express interest in participating by sharing a “👍” in the Zoom chat!

New PEN offering: **Join us for our next event!**

Procurement Thresholds Reimagined: Implementing the Ideal Approach for Your Government



Join PEN for a roundtable discussion focused on strategies to help you evaluate whether your current purchasing thresholds are due for a reset.

You'll also hear case studies and lessons learned from peer governments that have successfully modernized their thresholds as inspiration!

November 18, 2025 | 3-4pm ET

Register