



# PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE NETWORK

Partners for **Public Good**

→ HOW-TO GUIDE



# How Public Procurement Can Create Good Jobs

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## IN THIS HOW-TO GUIDE YOU WILL:

1. Learn best practices for creating streamlined, results-driven procurement systems that leverage public contracting dollars to deliver results and create high-quality jobs.
2. Explore ways to collaborate with the vendor community and assist small and local bidders in enhancing job quality for their workers.
3. Gain practical insights from three case studies that highlight a range of strategies adaptable to diverse contexts and capable of delivering quick wins.

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## Introduction

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Procurement can be a powerful tool for state and local governments to create good jobs in their communities. Every year, governments spend billions on labor-intensive construction, operations, maintenance, and services contracts. A streamlined and results-driven contracting process is essential for dollars spent through the procurement process to translate into high-quality goods and services that residents rely on. In many instances, strategically integrating living wage requirements, apprenticeship targets, or other workforce goals into those contracts can help drive economic mobility for residents. This mobility multiplies the impact of these public dollars on local economies.

Every context is different, and there is no single pathway to creating good jobs through procurement. However, labor standards can be weaved into the planning, evaluation, and implementation of public contracts. To truly drive public value, integration of job-quality goals must go hand-in-hand with strengthening foundational procurement and contract management processes at their core.

In this how-to guide, you will learn to write clear solicitations, increase vendor engagement, proactively monitor contract deliverables, and support vendors to hire local workers for quality jobs. Whether you want to introduce new workforce standards and goals in your jurisdiction or strengthen existing ones, the best practices and real-world case studies here will help you develop your strategy, find the right starting point for your jurisdiction, and take actionable steps to integrate job-quality goals with effective procurement.

These strategies draw from our decade of experience helping governments improve operations and are informed by our “Procurement for Good Jobs” pilot program with the cities of Cleveland, OH, Pittsburgh, PA, and San Antonio, TX, where our team worked shoulder-to-shoulder with city staff for 15 months. This guide is also informed by collaboration with a group of national labor experts who advised our pilot project.

As you continue your journey to procurement excellence, if you aren't already a member, we invite you to join the [Procurement Excellence Network \(PEN\)](#), an initiative of Partners for Public Good, where we offer tools and templates like this How-to-Guide, virtual trainings, and coaching for government leaders launching efforts to make procurement more strategic, fair, and innovative.

### What are “good jobs?”

Job-quality and workforce priorities vary by community, and what counts as a good job is subjective – this means local jurisdictions should consider both national standards and local context as they define a “good job” for their community. Experts from the Aspen Institute, Urban Institute, and Jobs for the Future have identified helpful criteria for assessing and defining a “good job.” These criteria include:

- 1. Compensation and Benefits:** Pays workers a living wage sufficient to cover basic expenses and provides access to essential benefits like healthcare and paid leave.
- 2. Growth Potential:** Offers training and career advancement.
- 3. Culture and Safety:** Fosters an inclusive workplace culture and provides a safe and healthy work environment in compliance with all state and federal standards.
- 4. Worker Autonomy and Voice:** Offers employees stable and predictable schedules, manageable workloads, and the ability to speak up about concerns.

Labor standards are policy objectives aimed at creating good jobs in particular ways. A few common examples of labor standards are listed in the table below. Clarity on your jurisdiction’s priorities when it comes to creating good jobs will help you clarify and define which labor standard or standards to prioritize and integrate into your procurement process. In the three case studies at the end of this guide, we explore how different jurisdictions integrated specific labor standards into their procurement processes, based on the goals for their communities.

## → Common Examples of Labor Standards and Workforce Goals

<b>Local Hire Policies</b>	Requirements or incentives that a certain percentage of jobs or work hours on a contract be performed by workers who live within a defined geographic area (e.g. city, county, or region).
<b>Living Wage Policies</b>	Mandates that employers pay at or above a minimum wage that enables workers to afford basic needs, adjusted for the area’s cost of living. The living wage is typically higher than the state or federal minimum wage.
<b>Apprentice Utilization Goals</b>	Requirements or targets that contractors employ a minimum percentage of registered apprentices on a project.
<b>Local Job Training Program Hiring Goals</b>	Requirements or targets that contractors hire workers who are participants of approved job training programs.

### Why prioritize good jobs in procurement?

Public dollars can go further when state and local governments consider how their procurement spending impacts job quality and how it can be used to advance workforce goals. State and local governments spend over \$4 trillion annually. Between 30 to 50% of that amount is used to purchase goods and services that can create and sustain millions of jobs.<sup>1</sup> Research shows that every \$1 billion in government spending can generate over 10,000 jobs in the local economy.<sup>2</sup> The approximately \$1.3 trillion state and local governments spent through public procurement each year could create over 10 million jobs in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

Integrating job-quality considerations into procurement not only maximizes value for economic mobility, it is also good business. Data suggests that when companies provide good jobs, their workers are more productive and deliver better goods and services.<sup>4</sup> For your government, this translates into being able to meet contract deliverables on-time and on-budget, while also stimulating the local economy as workers spend their wages at businesses throughout your community.

1. [Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2025](#) estimates over \$4 trillion in state and local government annual expenditures. [OECD, Government at a Glance, 2025](#) estimates that 30% of expenditures across all levels of government is spent on public procurement. Studies of U.S. cities typically find that approximately half of their annual spending occurs through contracts. See Hanna Azemati and Jeffrey Liebman, “[How Cities Can Improve Their Procurement of Goods and Services](#)” in *Retooling Metropolis*, Manhattan Institute, 2016 and Larry Eichel and Jason Hachodorian, “[What Philadelphia Spends on Outside Contracts](#),” Pew, March 14, 2019.

2. [U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration](#) estimates that every \$1 billion would support 13,000 jobs.

3. [Urban Institute](#), [Removing Barriers to Participation in Local and State Government Procurement and Contracting for Entrepreneurs of Color](#). May 2024.

4. [Gates Foundation US Program, 2025](#). <https://usprogram.gatesfoundation.org/news-and-insights/articles/learning-from-the-ground-up-providing-good-jobs-is-good-business>

## Getting Started

Good jobs goals often originate via a new policy, ordinance, or leadership commitment. The procurement process is where these goals can translate into real, enforceable actions that improve job quality for residents. How you approach this will depend on your city’s appetite and capacity for change. Your approach should be grounded in political, regulatory, and operational realities, including vendor relationships, legal authority, executive support, and buy-in from the department responsible for contract oversight.

The three cities in our Procurement for Good Jobs cohort each entered this work from a different starting point, but all took the time to assess readiness for change and identify the levers available to support an early pilot.

- **Cleveland, OH** looked to revitalize a dormant living wage policy.
- **Pittsburgh, PA** aimed to see construction jobs in disadvantaged neighborhoods go to neighborhood residents.
- **San Antonio, TX** wanted to enhance the impact of a taxpayer-funded job training program.

### → How Three Cities Got Started

(See the [appendix](#) for full case studies.)

<p><b>Cleveland: Enforcing a long-standing ordinance</b></p>	<p>Cleveland adopted the Fair Employment Wage Ordinance in 2000, which requires service contractors to pay employees a living wage. For years, the ordinance was largely unenforced without a formal monitoring process or clear ownership. Mayor Justin Bibb’s administration made enforcement a top priority. The city used this opportunity to build operational processes that integrated fair wage requirements into its contracting process.</p>
<p><b>Pittsburgh: Implementing a new workforce agreement</b></p>	<p>In 2024, Pittsburgh adopted the Regional Workforce Equity Agreement (RWEA), a citywide commitment to make sure public investments both deliver services and create pathways to good, stable jobs for residents in underinvested neighborhoods. While the agreement set clear goals, it lacked an implementation framework. The city turned to procurement to translate the RWEA into day-to-day practice.</p>
<p><b>San Antonio: Connecting workforce investment to jobs</b></p>	<p>In 2022, San Antonio launched Ready to Work, a voter-approved, \$200 million workforce initiative designed to remove barriers and help residents train for high-quality, higher-wage jobs. In the first few years, the program focused primarily on training. Later, the city required contractors to hire workers trained through the program.</p>

## Identifying a lighthouse procurement to pilot

A strong way to start is to identify a single strategic solicitation to pilot a labor standard before scaling. We refer to this as a *lighthouse solicitation* because it's a focal point to guide broader implementation, like a lighthouse guides ships. This approach allows you to draft new solicitation language, pressure-test workflows, refine cross-department roles, and build momentum without attempting to overhaul the entire procurement system at once.

Identifying the right lighthouse solicitation can be challenging, particularly in [decentralized environments](#) where purchasing staff may not have full visibility into upcoming contract opportunities. We recommend purchasing staff engage directly with departments to identify a contract that is:

1. Closely aligned with leadership priorities to increase buy-in and follow-through
2. Supported by departmental staff who are ready to try new things
3. High in dollar value to impact a larger number of workers and allow contractors more capacity to meet job-quality requirements
4. Scheduled for release within your pilot's designated timeframe

For example, the City of Cleveland decided to start with a \$500,000 window washing contract for a few reasons. Window washing is a commonly contracted city service, and the city issues window washing contracts every year. So, lessons learned could be duplicated. In addition, the agency in charge of window washing was open to partnering on new approaches.

Lighthouse solicitations create momentum around a real deadline and help align key stakeholders around shared goals.



### PRO TIP

Set clear expectations that you are starting with one pilot, refining the approach based on what you learn, and then repeat the process with additional solicitations once the systems are in place.

## Before the Solicitation: Plan

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Before the lighthouse solicitation, it is important to do some planning and preparation. Integrating good jobs policies into procurement can be challenging; anticipating obstacles and being ready to learn and adapt are critical.

### Specify clear goals

Work with the appropriate stakeholders to get clear about the goals for the solicitation. Oftentimes, good jobs policies are broadly worded and aspirational in nature, but successful implementation requires getting into specifics. Ask, “What’s the primary goal?” Here are some common ones:

- Increase hiring
- Support fair wages
- Improve employer-provided healthcare benefits
- Expand apprentice or entry-level opportunities

Your team also should consider and define:

- Who the policy aims to benefit, e.g. workers from particular neighborhoods, backgrounds, or industries
- What will success look like? What are key milestones to track early on?
- What is your target? How will you know when you’ve reached it?

Examining these considerations and building early alignment with internal partners about what you aim to achieve will help the project succeed and help you design a results-driven contract.

### Establish a local baseline

Next, get a baseline understanding of your jurisdiction’s starting point. For example, in the City of Cleveland, we analyzed citywide data to understand how many contracts are covered by the Fair Employment Wage policy as written. Then we interviewed staff across departments to learn what guidance and support they would need to implement it in practice. Similarly, in the City of San Antonio, we analyzed data to determine how many city vendors already committed to support the Ready to Work initiative.

Here is some key information to capture early in the process:

- **Current Policy:** Carefully read through existing policies and practices in your jurisdiction related to relevant workforce and labor standards. Distill key points into a short policy brief for easy reference. Consult and collaborate with the stakeholders responsible for interpreting those policies and practices to get context and buy-in.
- **Process Map:** Review previous solicitation and contract language to understand existing terms, conditions, and administrative processes, if any, related to your labor standard or workforce goal. Then, create a process map that visually lays out key steps in the current procurement process, clearly indicating steps most relevant to your workforce goal. Mapping your current process will help identify potential innovations and process improvements during implementation. See the PEN resource, [Using Process Mapping to Save Time & Money](#), for best practices on process mapping.

- **Engage Key Stakeholders:** Conduct interviews with government staff, community partners, workforce training providers, and labor experts about what currently works well, what could work better, and potential solutions. In addition, keep your leadership informed as you plan, so your strategy incorporates their insight and consensus along the way.
- **Baseline Data:** Compile a dataset of all contracts that are impacted by your labor standard or workforce goal and any information about vendor compliance and progress to date. Analyzing baseline contract data will help quantify the impact of your initiative later. Useful baseline metrics include:
  - # of contracts impacted
  - total dollar value of those contracts
  - # of contracts with vendors that have made progress to achieve your workforce goal

In some cases, baseline data isn't available, which is an important observation to note and make the case for strengthening data collection processes. In some cases, baseline data isn't available, which is an important observation to note and make the case for strengthening data collection processes. In these situations, start by documenting qualitative data from staff interviews and stakeholder engagement. Use this information to identify what data should be collected moving forward to build the systems such as vendor reporting templates or forecasts necessary to collect this information moving forward. Noting baseline data gaps can be an important communication tool when building buy-in for the new process or system.

As you gather background information, save notes, briefs, memos, and staff contacts in a place that's easy for your team to find and refer to regularly. Clearly documenting key findings and data collection processes will help you communicate early wins from your project, continue tracking progress, build internal buy-in, and identify the most effective strategies to integrate good jobs goals into procurement.

### Find influential stakeholders and supporters

Lastly, engage senior leaders and legal staff to get early buy-in on key decisions and chart a smooth path for the pilot. Identify cross-departmental staff who have separate responsibilities and missions that you will bring together to successfully implement your workforce standard. Invite stakeholders who have the capacity, interest, and willingness to support a lighthouse solicitation. You want a group that will stay engaged in an iterative process and offer continual feedback.

#### Key questions before the solicitation:

- What aspect of your workforce goal or labor standard is highest priority or most important to successfully achieve and implement first?
- Who should you involve in refining your goal, setting your strategy, and defining success?
- What data or information do you have about the current state of vendor compliance with your labor standard or progress towards your workforce?

## Integrating Labor Standards into a Results-Driven Solicitation

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Writing an effective solicitation is a critical step in achieving good jobs goals. The key is to use clear language that stresses the results your government wants to see from the contract. A results-driven solicitation focuses on vendor outcomes to be achieved rather than activities to be done. The aim is to leverage the vendor's expertise, in partnership with the government, to achieve a desired impact. For more details on this approach, see PEN's resource [Crafting a Results-Driven Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#). Here are a few dos and don'ts:

**Do offer clarity:** While drafting, clearly articulate your desired outcomes and indicate what vendors must do to meet the requirements or earn incentives. When establishing job-quality goals and requirements, start by selecting goals that reflect both the city's priorities and the realities of the local vendor market. A manageable, phased approach allows vendors the time to adapt and helps to make sure the new requirements strengthen job quality without unintentionally reducing competition.

**Do use data strategically:** Be explicit about what data and reports vendors must provide and why. Metrics should be feasible for vendors to produce and useful for state or local leaders to understand the impact of the good jobs goal. Don't collect data without a clear plan for how the data will be used. For example, Pittsburgh tied vendor data to successful adoption of their Regional Workforce Equity Agreement and framed the targets as a responsible use of taxpayer dollars to expand access to construction jobs.

**Do collaborate with other departments.** Open collaboration is important when drafting a solicitation and can prevent misalignment challenges later during contract implementation. Approach drafting as a city-wide opportunity to advance shared goals. The department that will eventually manage the contract is a key partner who brings both subject-matter expertise and insights into the vendor landscape. Involving them in the drafting process familiarizes them with good jobs goals from the onset and creates a space for them to provide feedback. Also involve purchasing staff, workforce or compliance offices, equity and small business teams, legal, and executive leadership. The drafting process can build a shared understanding across departments not only about jobs goals but about the power of procurement to achieve strategic outcomes.

**Don't bury vendor expectations:** When advancing workforce goals, a results-driven solicitation should clearly and plainly explain what the government is asking vendors to do, both in terms of service delivery and in job-related outcomes. We recommend scaffolding job-related expectations strategically throughout the solicitation, rather than burying them in an appendix. When expectations are clear and visible, vendors are better able to submit proposals that align with your government's needs. This approach can expand the pool of bidders, strengthen proposal quality, and attract employers offering high-quality jobs. Paired with broader efforts to streamline procurement and increase competition, clear solicitation design can advance job-quality goals without discouraging vendors from bidding.

See our template, [Writing Good Jobs Goals into a Results-Driven Solicitation](#), for step-by-step guidance on crafting a results-driven solicitation that includes workforce goals and labor standards. The [appendix](#) links to example solicitations from our pilot cities.

**Key questions to integrate labor standards into a results-driven solicitation:**

- What outcomes are you trying to achieve – both in terms of delivering public goods or services, and enhancing access to good jobs?
- Would a vendor clearly understand what success looks like from your solicitation?
- How might these requirements/incentives affect vendor participation?
- How can you draft language that attracts the right pool of vendors while prioritizing workforce goals?

**Vendor Engagement**

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Once a solicitation is live, proactive vendor engagement becomes critical to meeting good jobs goals. Clear and responsive contact with vendors up front increases your chances of receiving quality proposals. This contact creates conditions for effective communication and successful contract implementation down the line. Here are a few strategies to proactively engage your vendor community:

- 1. Consider a pre-submittal conference.** They are extremely useful because vendors are likely to have questions about new labor standards or workforce goals. These meetings are a good opportunity to lay out expectations in plain language, address confusion before non-responsive proposals become an issue, and set a collaborative tone for partnering with vendors. Be sure to discuss how good jobs goals benefit the community and vendors, and share examples of support your team can provide.
- 2. Establish a vendor contact point person.** Vendors will likely have questions during the advertising period, and that's a good thing. Questions mean vendors are considering bidding, engaging with the requirements, and trying to submit a strong response. The key is managing the question flow. You should establish clear points of contact to answer workforce-specific questions from vendors in a transparent and public way. It is most helpful to identify these points of contact to vendors during the pre-submittal conference. This approach creates a level playing field, reduces repeated one-off conversations, and improves the quality of proposals overall because all vendors have the same information.
- 3. Align your government's needs with vendor success.** As you advertise the solicitation, aim for a posture that's both firm and supportive: the requirements and outcomes matter, and your government is both serious about them and committed to helping vendors succeed. That combination of clear expectations and real support will widen the pool of contractors who can deliver both quality services and good jobs.

**Key questions to integrate labor standards into a results-driven solicitation:**

- What information and support do vendors need early on to clearly understand your workforce goal and submit a strong proposal aligned with it?
- What do you anticipate as common questions from vendors, and how can you clarify them prior to proposal submission?



Anytime you bring in new requirements, **it's hard to get buy-in** — procurement feels it, departments feel it, and vendors definitely feel it. The worry is always that it'll slow project timelines down. And this project brought a lot of questions. But I'm confident that we **did everything we could to make it make sense for vendors** — walking through the detailed requirements in the pre-bid meeting, answering questions in OpenGov, connecting vendors with partner organizations, maintaining responsive correspondence during the cure period, whatever folks needed. **It's been a heavy lift, but it's worth it.** Many vendors engaged with our team to understand how they could be compliant. We received a competitive number of bids, comparable to previous solicitations of a similar size. **This is the kind of step that actually builds equity** into long-term city procurement and contracting methods. ”

— JACOB GOLDMANN, SOURCING SPECIALIST, CITY OF PITTSBURGH

## Evaluating Proposals & Awarding Contracts

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To make good jobs' goals stick, the critical next step is to integrate them into the vendor evaluation and selection process. The mechanics may work differently depending on whether your solicitation is structured as a competitive Request for Proposal or an Invitation to Bid focused primarily on getting the lowest price. Either way, there are a few keys to successful evaluation.

1. **First, include jobs goals in any existing checklists so that vendor proposals are responsive to the solicitation.** Pittsburgh used this method to identify vendors who had not initially responded to the jobs requirement and extended them a cure period to correct the omission and avoid disqualification.
2. **Second, include someone with workforce expertise in your evaluation committee or process.** This can be done by involving workforce staff to develop clear outcomes-based criteria ahead of time, describing what a top score would look like for each criteria to support fair decision-making, or by including a workforce expert directly on the evaluation panel. This can help evaluators assess nuances in how vendors propose to meet jobs goals and the feasibility of their plans. See PEN's resource, [Proposal Evaluation Tips & Tricks: How to Select the Best Vendor for the Job](#), for additional tips and tricks on selecting the best vendor for the job.
3. **Third, remember to collect data from the evaluation phase.** It's a key moment to assess how jobs goals affect vendor participation. Track the number of responses received and compare that to similar past solicitations. This data helps to assess whether the requirements were communicated clearly and if the process supports healthy competition. Because you have taken the time upfront to set realistic goals and a manageable implementation strategy, adding job-quality standards should not dissuade vendors from applying or lead to a shortage of bids, especially when paired with a streamlined procurement process and proactive vendor engagement.
4. **Fourth, reflect workforce commitments in the final contract after you've selected your vendor.** This puts your government in a strong place to monitor, support, and enforce the commitments over time.

## Key questions to evaluate proposals and award contracts:

- What information do you need from bidders to determine which vendor is best positioned to deliver both services outcomes and workforce goals?
- Who has the right expertise, perspective, affiliations, and availability to evaluate job-related components of proposals?

See our template, [Writing Good Jobs Goals into a Results-Driven Solicitation](#), for step-by-step guidance to build selection criteria.

## Managing the Contract

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During the contract term, vendor commitments can either turn into good jobs or quietly fade into the background. Effective contract management supports vendors in achieving the intended outcomes by closely tracking progress, identifying underperformance early, and intervening before problems escalate.

Effective contract management includes three key elements:

- Clear roles and responsibilities throughout the life of a contract
- Ongoing reporting and check-ins with vendors
- Regularly updated data to measure success

### Clarify roles and responsibilities

Early in the contract term, it helps to clarify roles and responsibilities for procurement staff, user departments, and other key stakeholders in an easy-to-follow way. This is especially important when your contract includes a new labor standard or workforce goal that involves coordination across multiple departments. Here's how:

- **Develop a contract management plan**, also known as a contract fact sheet, to stay aligned. This is a user-friendly tool that summarizes contract deliverables, meeting schedule, reporting requirements, and risk mitigation strategies in a clear, concise, and accessible format that staff can regularly refer back to. A contract management plan keeps your team focused on working with the vendor to deliver contract outcomes, including good jobs goals. See [here](#) to download a contract management template to adapt.
- **Map out your ideal contract management process** to further clarify roles and responsibilities. This is a great approach to communicate the new process for monitoring workforce standards that differs from current practice. The process map should clearly indicate who does what at key steps in the contract management process, as well as key decision points. A process map can also help distinguish between what the vendor is responsible for and what the government is responsible for. For example, while vendors are responsible for submitting reports, procurement staff may need to offer guidance and training, provide templates or online forms for filing, or send reminders.
- **Establish two-way communication channels** to support a strong partnership with vendors. Contract management works best when the government maintains open lines of communication allowing vendors to feel comfortable flagging any challenges so that both sides can work together to diagnose the issue and find solutions.

See our workbook, [Measuring Performance of Workforce Goals in Public Contracts](#), for step-by-step guidance to clarify roles and responsibilities.

## Ongoing vendor engagement and reporting

Nearly every contract will start with a kickoff meeting. That is a great opportunity to reinforce the importance of not only the contract's overall goal, but also your jurisdiction's good jobs goal. From there, vendor engagement can be tailored to each contract's risk and complexity. Some contracts may only need basic status updates and annual check-ins; others may use biannual meetings and reporting, while the most intensive contracts may require monthly touchpoints and reporting. Align your team on a preferred cadence to focus resources and staff time where they're needed most. Contracts that are implementing a brand-new workforce goal or labor standard may require a more hands-on approach to supporting vendors on these commitments.

Regular reporting and check-ins are useful tools to keep the work on track and surface issues early. The goal is to establish a feedback loop where vendors know your team is paying attention to performance, course corrections can be made, and workforce goals remain front-of-mind in contract delivery.

## → Key Elements in a Reporting Process

Have you ever run into an issue with a vendor that made you say "Whoa, what happened?" Carefully designing your reporting process upfront will help you avoid surprises from vendors later on. WHOA is also a helpful acronym that outlines key elements of the reporting process.

- **When?** Define how frequently you will collect each metric. Balance the desire to reduce administrative burden with making sure your government gets the data it needs, and vendors get used to collecting it.
- **How?** Outline how you will collect the data and clarify the various steps, systems, and processes in your reporting method. Consider whether a written report, online form, spreadsheet, meeting, phone call, or another method works best for your government and vendors. Consider ways to streamline and offer vendors support. Templates, checklists, and step-by-step guides can make a big difference.
- **Ownership.** Make sure staff know who is responsible for each step of the process. Someone has to be clearly responsible for receiving reports, reviewing them, and following up with vendors.
- **Accountability.** Hold vendors accountable to the reporting requirements you've set out. Reporting requirements work best when vendors understand what happens if reports are late or incomplete or if a key outcomes is not achieved.

A reporting process doesn't have to be perfect. Flexibility is especially important when piloting new workforce standards. Make adjustments as you learn what works. For example, Pittsburgh and Cleveland currently ask vendors to submit reports using a spreadsheet adapted from our [Vendor Reporting Template](#). They are also working to build a system that integrates the spreadsheet's reporting fields into more advanced relationship-management software.

Good jobs goals in procurement sometimes face a challenge: Hiring and retention for certain roles in tight labor markets can be difficult and not fully within a vendor's control. What do you do when vendors fail to achieve the agreed-upon goal but are clearly trying? This is where the concept of good faith efforts comes into play. A helpful tip for procurement leaders to remember is that the best good faith efforts are in 3-D: That is, they are defined, deliberate, and documented.

- **Defined** means the good faith effort is described in clear language to avoid subjectivity and different interpretations
- **Deliberate** means the vendor took intentional and consistent actions, not one-off activities
- **Documented** means that the vendor submits proper records that verify efforts made

To support vendors in understanding good faith efforts, state and local governments can develop guides, documentation templates, and checklists, and share real-life examples of good faith efforts in action. It also helps to create a frequently asked questions document and ask vendors for feedback on what's working and what's confusing. The goal is to make good faith effort reporting clear, structured, and tied directly to the workforce outcomes your government is trying to achieve.

“ The best good faith efforts are in 3-D: defined, deliberate, and documented. ”

### Use data to measure success

Robust data collection and analysis are key components of effective contract management. Beyond defining your metrics, it also means designing streamlined processes for data collection, monitoring, and oversight.

Data grounds conversations in real numbers and shows whether a vendor is meeting contract goals, rather than relying on assumptions or speculation. When numbers show progress, it allows you to celebrate success, recognize vendors who deliver quality results, and document good practices that can be applied to other contracts. When numbers show that efforts are falling short, it allows you to troubleshoot, address challenges, and get back on track.

If possible, disaggregate data to look beneath the surface. Breaking down metrics by demographics, location, or other relevant categories can reveal gaps in resident outcomes. Disaggregating data can be especially powerful when good jobs goals are tied to target populations. It's also useful to benchmark trends against baseline data or historical information to see changes over time.

**Key questions to manage the contract:**

- How will you stay informed about vendor progress on your workforce goal or labor standard over the life of a contract?
- How will you hold vendors accountable to good jobs goals, while also offering support and flexibility as needed?

**Assessing Results & Telling the Story**

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Once your lighthouse project is complete, there is a critical opportunity to evaluate the results—reflect on what worked, what didn't, and how to improve good jobs goals over time. This evaluation provides a rich opportunity to refine your approach before expanding it to additional contracts. In the appendix, you'll find highlighted lessons learned from the three cities in our Procurement for Good Jobs program. We recommend completing a similar exercise with your project team to assess impact and inform the next steps.

As you evaluate your pilot, consider the following actions:

**1. Meet with your project team to surface lessons learned.**

- a. What part of the process ran smoothly?
- b. Where were there challenges such as communication gaps, tasks lacking ownership, or capacity constraints?

**2. Prepare a small set of summary statistics about the procurement process.**

- a. How many vendors responded?
- b. How does that compare to similar past solicitations?
- c. How many vendors addressed the new job-related requirement?
- d. What was the total dollar value of contracts impacted?

These key statistics may reassure leadership that the new requirement did not disrupt the competitiveness of the process.

**3. Calculate the impact on workers.**

- a. How many new good jobs were created or improved?
- b. What is the estimated increase in worker earnings resulting from the pilot?

Once you have evaluated the results, share them with key stakeholders. Thoughtful storytelling supports accountability, builds momentum, and helps institutionalize the progress your jurisdiction has made.

## Sharing impact with leadership

Equip administrative leaders and elected officials with talking points to champion procurement and workforce goals in the public narrative. Leaders can share the results of the pilot with the broader community through press conferences, convenings, press releases, and city-wide newsletters. The results help build political support for procurement systems that are fair, effective, and promote the economic mobility of residents.

## PRO TIP

Design your reporting template with leadership needs in mind. Busy executives want to see top-line indicators such as jobs created, wages earned, and other ways of understanding how a good jobs policy is impacting residents' lives. We recommend including a dashboard in your reporting documents so you can easily aggregate this information across pilots. See [here](#) for a plug-and-play vendor reporting template.



### [Mayor's State of the City Address to Council](#)

November 10, 2025



“ Every dollar we spend is a chance to build a fairer and more competitive economy, to support good jobs, to strengthen local business ownership, and to reflect our shared values. [...] But success in our economy goes beyond which businesses get contracts. **It's also about who has access to good jobs on the construction sites that public dollars fund.** [...] Since then, we have been hard at work implementing this framework and leading by example for our public partners across the region. Our first pilot project under this framework, the new Schenley Heights Pavilion at Robert E Williams Memorial Park is now underway in partnership with our city departments, Partner4Work and **Partners for Public Good.** ”

– MAYOR ED GAINAY, CITY OF PITTSBURGH

## Sharing results with vendors

Vendors are key partners in making this work a reality. It is very important to proactively recognize the impact of vendors' work: celebrate early successes, acknowledge the significant effort involved in implementing new approaches, and invite their feedback along the way. Effective channels for this communication can include: one-on-one conversations, vendor surveys, or focus groups with prime contractors and subcontractors. This feedback loop can build trust and strengthen relationships with vendors, increasing the likelihood that future projects are delivered on budget and on time.

## Sharing lessons with the workforce community

Equally important is sharing results with the workforce community, including public agencies, workforce development agencies, community-based organizations, philanthropy, and labor unions. These stakeholders are invested in improving job quality in communities and play key roles in building and sustaining hiring pipelines for state and local contractors. Keeping the workforce community informed empowers them to be a resource to vendors.

Consider hosting a regional convening to share pilot results and lessons learned with your workforce, labor, and community partners. Engaging these stakeholders and empowering them with the resources to support the program's success helps to build a broader coalition of support. Because this stakeholder group often sits outside of government, they can play a key role in amplifying and championing these new practices and supporting their institutionalization beyond a single administration.

## The Lighthouse as a Blueprint

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The ultimate goal after the pilot is to use the lighthouse solicitation as a blueprint for embedding good jobs goals into future contracts. These are two strategies to promote the adoption of your pilot solicitation learnings to your government colleagues:

- **Use a phased approach that considers your government's capacity to implement**, rather than an immediate citywide roll out. Implementing new workforce standards across the board all at once can strain capacity and undermine momentum. Expanding through a more gradual approach with a steady build of wins allows you to continue refining processes and bring leadership, vendors, and other stakeholders along with you. A phased approach might mean expanding first to a specific contract type (i.e., just Invitation to Bid contracts), a defined dollar threshold (i.e., contracts between \$250,000 and \$1 million) or a set of specific services (i.e., construction or professional services contracts).
- **Invest in cross-functional collaboration and standardization.** Developing replicable tools such reporting templates, solicitation language, evaluation guidance, and data-collection systems makes it easier for other departments to adopt the same approach without having to start from scratch. While this requires effort up front, standardization supports consistent implementation, retains lessons learned, and lowers barriers as additional departments and contracts come online. Over time, this increases the likelihood of sustained adoption and expands the impact your jurisdiction can have.

With the guidance in this how-to-guide, you have the core building blocks to leverage public spending to support fair pay, quality jobs, and long-term economic opportunity for workers in your own context.

## Appendix

### City Case Studies

#### PITTSBURGH EXPANDS OPPORTUNITY FOR DISADVANTAGED WORKERS AND APPRENTICES

Like many cities, Pittsburgh has long-standing disparities between revitalized neighborhoods and historically underinvested communities. To address this, the city adopted the Regional Workforce Equity Agreement (RWEA) in 2024. The agreement aims to support public investments in serving the dual purpose of delivering high-quality projects as well as creating pathways into good, stable jobs for disadvantaged workers and apprentices. The city defines disadvantaged workers to include residents living in neighborhoods designated as high or extreme need and/or those who face systemic barriers to employment due to a robust array of potential factors that are race- and gender-neutral, such as a lack of a high school diploma, single parenthood, or homelessness.

**Lighthouse solicitation:** Partners for Public Good (PPG) [partnered](#) with then-Mayor Ed Gainey's office on a high-priority [\\$6 million park renovation project](#) already in the contracting pipeline. The project included rebuilding a pavilion, adding a playground and basketball court, among other improvements. It was an ideal starting point for integrating good jobs goals into procurement because of the opportunity it presented to create dozens of jobs across numerous trades, and broad support both within and outside government for a successful park renovation. In addition, the park is located in a neighborhood where many disadvantaged workers live, creating a chance to improve the local environment while also contributing to the community's economic mobility.

Applying the RWEA posed a few challenges. First, the agreement contains almost 25 pages of commitments. These needed to be distilled into clear solicitation language, a task that required coordination with stakeholders who had not been involved in drafting the original agreement. Second, the RWEA set ambitious hiring targets, with contractors expected to assemble teams that include at least 15% disadvantaged workers and 25% apprentices. However, there was not a preexisting pool of these workers for contractors to hire from.

**Action steps:** For the park renovation contract, PPG and Pittsburgh's team took several actions, including:

- Conducting an in-depth review of the RWEA with key stakeholders to understand the most critical workforce goals to prioritize in the procurement process
- Writing new language to incorporate the disadvantaged worker and apprenticeship utilization goals in the park renovation solicitation
- Creating a process map that clarifies how the various city departments coordinate vendor outreach, proposal review, data reporting, and performance monitoring across the life of a contract
- Developing clear and accessible reporting methods for vendors and strengthening the city's capacity to monitor vendor performance

As the pilot progressed, it became clear that it would be very challenging for vendors to have 15% disadvantaged workers and 25% apprentices at time of bid – it takes time to build new recruitment pathways. Rather than penalizing vendors for not immediately meeting targets, the city took an

intentional approach to set vendors up for success. First, the city defined “good faith efforts” activities vendors could do, such as recruiting at job fairs or outreach events, to demonstrate they are trying to hire disadvantaged workers and apprentices. Second, the city set a more ambitious apprenticeship target, allowing apprentices to gain paid experience and credentials over time so they can move into journey-level positions, increasing the pool of qualified disadvantaged workers available for future projects.

**Results and lessons learned:** As of April 2026, the city had put the [park renovation out to bid](#), making it Pittsburgh’s first-ever solicitation to include enforceable workforce equity requirements.

The bid received four responses, which is comparable to previous solicitations of a similar size, a strong sign that it is possible to both get the work done and prioritize creating good jobs. The evaluation process ran smoothly, allowing procurement staff to flag vendors who initially skipped the disadvantaged worker section; they were allowed to amend their response during the cure period to remain responsive and competitive.

Lessons learned in Pittsburgh include:

- **Implementing workforce equity goals requires coordination across departments beyond procurement.** Involving workforce, legal, compliance, equity, data, and user departments creates shared ownership and builds the internal infrastructure needed for long-term adoption.
- **Don’t let perfect be the enemy of the good.** In Pittsburgh, the city set up an excel spreadsheet to collecting key data to measure progress and assess impact from the start—while building a system that integrates the spreadsheet’s reporting fields into more advanced software (e.g. B2Gnow, Salesforce, etc.)
- **Vendors may need support connecting pools of eligible workers.** Support them through partnerships with regional workforce boards and other community-based organizations.
- **Sustaining implementation requires engaging outside organizations.** By convening labor, workforce, and community partners around the pilot, the city built external champions who can support vendors and advocate for the initiative’s success.

Looking ahead, Pittsburgh expects to scale up this work, applying the RWEA to additional construction contracts greater than \$250,000. In year one, this scaling plan will position the city to impact \$24.7 million in city contracts, with over 100 jobs filled by disadvantaged workers and apprentices, advancing good jobs for residents across the region.

## SAN ANTONIO CONNECTS CITY'S JOB-TRAINING PROGRAM GRADUATES TO WELL-PAYING JOBS

In 2020, the City of San Antonio established an ambitious job-training program serving low-income residents. The \$235 million city-funded program, called San Antonio Ready to Work (RTW), is funded by a voter-approved sales tax, and provides workers with tuition assistance and wraparound support to prepare residents for good jobs that are in high demand. To strengthen job placement outcomes, the city invited employers to support RTW by taking an employer pledge outlining actions employers could take to hire or support program participants. However, the employer pledges were largely aspirational, with no formal system or contractual mechanisms in place to track pledged commitment outcomes or hold employers accountable. To build on this effort, San Antonio identified an opportunity to make its substantial investment in RTW go even farther by linking the job-training program with employment opportunities generated and enforced through city contracting.

**Lighthouse project:** To enforce and monitor vendors' RTW commitments, Partners for Public Good (PPG) partnered with the City of San Antonio's Workforce Development Office, Finance Department's Procurement Division, and Public Works Department to establish substantial RTW requirements and incentives on select city contracts. Previously, RTW was included during the city's solicitation process primarily by awarding evaluation preference points for proposals that demonstrated strong support for the program. However, there was no contractual requirement for the awarded firm, nor were they connected to the broader employer pledge process.

For a pilot, the City selected a \$15 million [Animal Veterinary Hospital](#) construction and renovation project that was already in the contracting pipeline. It was a good project to start with because it offered the opportunity to create a relatively large number of jobs across multiple trades. Also, the project was competitively procured through a Request for Proposal, which gave the City the opportunity to fully test the new RTW contracting requirements and strengthened evaluation preference point process.

The pilot uncovered a few underlying challenges. First, because RTW had historically been incorporated into city solicitations in a limited way, there was limited collaboration between the Workforce Development Office, which manages the RTW program, and the Finance Department Procurement Division, which oversees proposal review and contract awards. As a result, the Workforce team lacked visibility into which vendors proposed RTW support and ultimately were awarded city contracts, making it challenging to award evaluation preference points. In addition, there were no contract requirements for the employer to attain or enforce the stated support post-award. Secondly, some of San Antonio Ready to Work's lower job-placement rates are in the construction industry, which are sectors in which the city issues many of its contracts. Thirdly, it became clear that some vendors may face practical constraints like having a small workforce, infrequent hiring, or positions that do not align with the San Antonio Ready to Work participant pipeline, that could hinder goal attainment and compliance.

**Action Steps:** While assembling the solicitation for the Animal Hospital, PPG and San Antonio's team took several actions, including:

- Adding clear and enforceable language into the solicitation and contract that requires vendors to take the RTW Employer Pledge, commit to a minimum of four (4) actions including to hiring program participants, and attend a meeting with the city's Workforce Development Office Employer Engagement Team to learn about various business support programs.

- Defining “good faith efforts” a vendor can document to demonstrate compliance with employer pledge requirements, including submitting hiring needs to the Workforce team and prioritizing RTW participants in the application and interview process.
- Strengthening evaluation of RTW commitments in proposal review by including a related question in the scoring rubric and developing guidance for the evaluation committee.
- Building a bi-annual reporting process and new data tracking systems to monitor vendors’ progress on RTW commitments over the life of the contract.
- Providing vendors clear information about the RTW program and new requirements at the pre-submittal conference through PowerPoint slides and talking points.

**Results and lessons learned:** The [Animal Hospital solicitation](#) received seven (7) responses, which is comparable to previous similar solicitations and evidence that new requirements did not deter vendors from submitting proposals. Of those seven (7) responses, the majority of vendors included San Antonio Ready to Work commitments in their proposals, including the vendor who won the contract. As of April 2026, the awarded vendor has since taken the RTW Employer Pledge, engaged with the Workforce team to operationalize its commitments, and is engaging with their subcontractors on program support, such as sharing program participant industry pipeline reports.

Lessons learned in San Antonio include:

- **Leverage existing pipelines of workers.** Partnering with an established workforce development program and local training providers helps to create a pipeline of job-ready candidates available for vendors to hire, which optimizes the value of existing publicly funded workforce programs. The city also built in flexibility for vendors to hire RTW participants into other roles not specifically tied to city contracts.
- **Design requirements with staff and vendors in mind.** Vendors are required to take the RTW pledge within 30 days after contract award. At the proposal stage, vendors can voluntarily describe their RTW commitments, and while these details are considered in the overall evaluation, San Antonio opted against making them mandatory for solicitation responsiveness. The city took a strategic approach that considered feasibility concerns for staff and vendors, which avoids adding new dedicated evaluation points, while still encouraging vendors to make meaningful commitments, including hiring RTW participants. Ultimately, the goal is for vendors to find value in engaging with the RTW program and hiring program participants, so that participation continues beyond the with or without a city contract.
- **Required vendor touchpoints can drive desired behavior and follow-through.** Mandates can be both realistic and impactful. Requiring structured engagement with your workforce team, such as pre-proposal conferences and required vendor onboarding meetings can raise awareness, increase compliance, and create feedback loops to drive engagement with RTW graduates.
- **Standardize tools for easy adoption and scaling.** Writing plug-and-play solicitation and contract language enables departments to easily integrate workforce requirements into future procurements.

Moving forward, San Antonio expects to add RTW requirements into 5 to 10 additional solicitations. In year one, this scaling plan will position the city to impact up to \$118 million in city contracts, with approximately 87-154 jobs anticipated to be prioritized for Ready to Work graduates (an estimated 10% of approximately total jobs impacted). San Antonio is proving that procurement holds the power to transform pledges from vendors into actual job placements.

## CLEVELAND REINVIGORATES ITS DORMANT LIVING WAGE LAW FOR SERVICE WORKERS

Cleveland has had a living wage ordinance on the books since 2001. It was a cutting-edge policy in its time, with a goal that service workers on city contracts were paid enough to meet basic needs. However, city leaders never adopted formal mechanisms for enforcing the living wage requirement. The requirement became an afterthought in the procurement process, buried as a standalone appendix with no monitoring to see if contractors were following through.

More recent political leadership set their sights on bringing the living wage requirement to life. In 2024, Mayor Justin Bibb and the Cleveland City Council activated the Fair Employment Wage Board to enforce the law. Companies with more than 20 employees that win city contracts to provide food, janitorial, security, and other services are required to pay at least \$16.26 an hour, with the amount adjusted each year for inflation.

**Lighthouse project:** To make the living wage a reality in service-workers' lives, Partners for Public Good (PPG) worked with Cleveland's purchasing team and Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) on a pilot. After looking into the kinds of contracts covered by the Fair Employment Wage Ordinance, the city decided to start with a \$500,000 [window washing contract](#). This was a good place to get going for a few reasons. Window washing is a common service the city contracts for, and the city issues window washing contracts every year, so lessons learned would be scalable. In addition, the agency in charge of window washing was open to partnering on new approaches.

As PPG and the city's team dug in deeper, they found a number of underlying challenges. For example, no one within city government was in charge of implementing the living wage law — a big reason it went dormant for so long. While some departments were aware the law existed, awareness was inconsistent, and there weren't any systems in place to track vendor compliance or receive complaints from underpaid workers. While the Fair Employment Wage Board is tasked with enforcing the ordinance once a violation is brought forward, it does not manage vendor reporting or the worker complaint processes needed to monitor if vendors comply on a regular basis. Critically, the city's paper-based procurement system made it difficult to understand the baseline of vendor compliance with the law.

**Action Steps:** For the pilot landscape contract, PPG and Cleveland's procurement team took several actions, including:

- Conducting an in-depth review of the Fair Employment Wage Ordinance to understand its requirements and reach
- Writing easy-to-read language on what the law requires of city contractors, to include in the citywide window washing solicitation
- Activating Cleveland's [Office of Equal Opportunity \(OEO\)](#) as the "owner" of the law's implementation, due to the office's experience with monitoring other city contracting programs and mission alignment
- Creating a process map that clarifies how procurement, OEO, and city departments coordinate Living Wage requirements throughout the contracting process, from solicitation development to contract award and quarterly reporting
- Developing a quarterly reporting process for contractors to self-certify compliance with the law

As the project team worked through the pilot, it became clear that the city's lack of data systems would be a big hurdle. Just getting the full list of service contracts covered by the ordinance required sifting through hundreds of paper files. Cleveland's plans to digitize its procurement process will eventually resolve that problem. In the meantime, the project team found a workaround in a spreadsheet the deputy purchasing commissioner uses to track contracts. They worked closely with that person to establish a system for tracking which upcoming solicitations carry living wage requirements.

**Results and lessons learned:** As of April 2026, the [citywide window washing](#) contract, covering more than 30 sites across Cleveland, has been posted and awarded. The contract includes the new language outlining the wage requirements for contractors to follow to make sure the workers maintaining these city facilities are paid fairly. Additional solicitations incorporating the language are also live including contracts for landscaping and printing services. [Forms and schedules](#) for contractors to use for compliance were designed with plain language to make compliance clear and doable. In addition, Cleveland's OEO is [hiring a program manager](#) to coordinate with city agencies to make sure the living wage law's goals are being met.

Lessons learned in Cleveland include:

- **Clear ownership and coordination are essential to implementation.** Implementing a law like Cleveland's requires internal coordination across departments and external communication with vendors. Someone needs to "own" implementation to sustain success for the long haul.
- **Reporting requirements must balance accountability with administrative feasibility.** Imposing reporting requirements on contractors requires balancing the need for them to take the law seriously against burdening them and city administrators with paperwork. On the advice of labor experts, the project team landed on having contractors self-certify by submitting a form with key information on employees and wages paid four times a year, and making payroll records available upon request for periodic monitoring.
- **Buy-in and feedback from city departments is critical,** as they are on the front lines of managing contracts and engaging with vendors. It helped in Cleveland that Mayor Bibb made implementing the living wage law a high priority.

Looking ahead, Cleveland leaders expect to continue scaling up implementation of the living wage law across more service contracts and refining their processes based on feedback from departments, vendors, and workers. There's a lot at stake: In the first year, Cleveland expects the law to apply to as many as 63 service contracts valued at almost \$57 million — and more than 730 workers can expect to be paid a living wage.

## Cohort city selection process

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Our team conducted a structured process to select the inaugural cohort cities. With support from colleagues and partner organizations, we identified an initial pool of more than 70 jurisdictions and engaged over 40 by sharing a one-page overview of the program and inviting them to an introductory conversation. More than 20 jurisdictions participated in these conversations and were invited to apply. Applications were evaluated based on considerations like existing workforce or job quality initiatives or policies, regulatory authority, staff capacity, and upcoming procurements to pilot. Five finalists were selected and reviewed in consultation with experts. We considered cohort-level goals, including our aim to include cities representing a diversity of regulatory environments and geographic diversity, before inviting our inaugural cohort cities to participate.

## PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE NETWORK

Partners for Public Good

We are grateful to the Families and Workers Fund for their support in making this pilot project possible and further a shared commitment to advancing good jobs and building an economy that uplifts all. We also thank the many labor experts who generously shared their time and insights to support sector-wide learning, including representatives from Accelerator for America, Berkeley Labor Center, Jobs to Move America, the Midwest Policy Institute, National League of Cities, NYU Wagner Labor Initiative, Opportunity at Work, Results for America, Urban Institute, US Department of Labor, and Work for America. Their expertise helped guide the development of evidence-based, context-specific strategies throughout this work. Special thanks to Branden Butler (San Diego County), Terri Gerstein (NYU Wagner Labor Initiative), and Molly Scott (Urban Institute) for contributing their expertise to our project and in a rich public roundtable discussion for our Procurement Excellence Network at the intersection of procurement and good jobs.

The [Procurement Excellence Network](#) (PEN) is a free, online community for public sector leaders seeking to transform their jurisdiction's procurement practices. It offers virtual trainings, tools, templates, and coaching, while building peer connections for leaders as they launch efforts to make procurement more strategic, fair, and innovative. PEN is an initiative of [Partners for Public Good](#) (PPG), a non-partisan, not-for-profit team of doers, coaches, and advisors focused on making government work for its people. We believe good government is efficient, effective, and built to deliver results. We help state and local governments optimize and streamline the most important work that they do: deliver public goods like clean water, vibrant parks, reliable public transit, and emergency response services. With support from Bloomberg Philanthropies, we are proud to be part of their longstanding work to drive government innovation that improves lives nationwide.

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