Beyond Compliance:
Collaborating with Procurement to Deliver for Residents

Presented by the **Procurement Excellence Network** for
National League of Cities

PROCUREMENT
EXCELLENCE
NETWORK
Partners for **Public Good**

October 28, 2026

Meet your *Moderators*



Damonique Sonnier

Project Leader | PEN



Emily Royall

Assistant Director | PEN

We are glad you are here!

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

How can you engage in this session?



Session Objectives



Understand the foundational principles and values of public procurement and how they can advance organizational priorities.



Examine common procurement barriers in public procurement and how they impact delivering value for residents.



Explore case studies of how governments used innovation to overcome challenges to make procurement more efficient.



Identify practical strategies on how cross-governmental teams can collaborate to drive procurement reform and create value.

Reflection



What's the **first word** that comes to mind when you think about procurement's reputation in your organization?

Type your response in the chat!

Setting the Stage:
How Public Procurement Delivers Value

PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE NETWORK

Partners for **Public Good**

Procurement… is for the public good.

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…



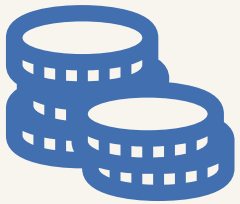


Procurement can be a strategic lever for delivering better services, advancing policy goals, supporting local businesses and building public trust.

The Importance of Public Procurement



On average, cities spend **25-50% of their annual budgets** on the goods and services required to deliver on commitments to residents.



Procurement processes are designed to help governments **meet the fiduciary responsibility to taxpayers** in accordance with statutes, ordinances and laws.



Procurement processes should function as guardrails not roadblocks to **obtain the best quality goods and services, at the best possible price for the community**.

The Many Layers of Procurement

Purchasing

Transactional process of acquiring identified goods and services.

Procurement

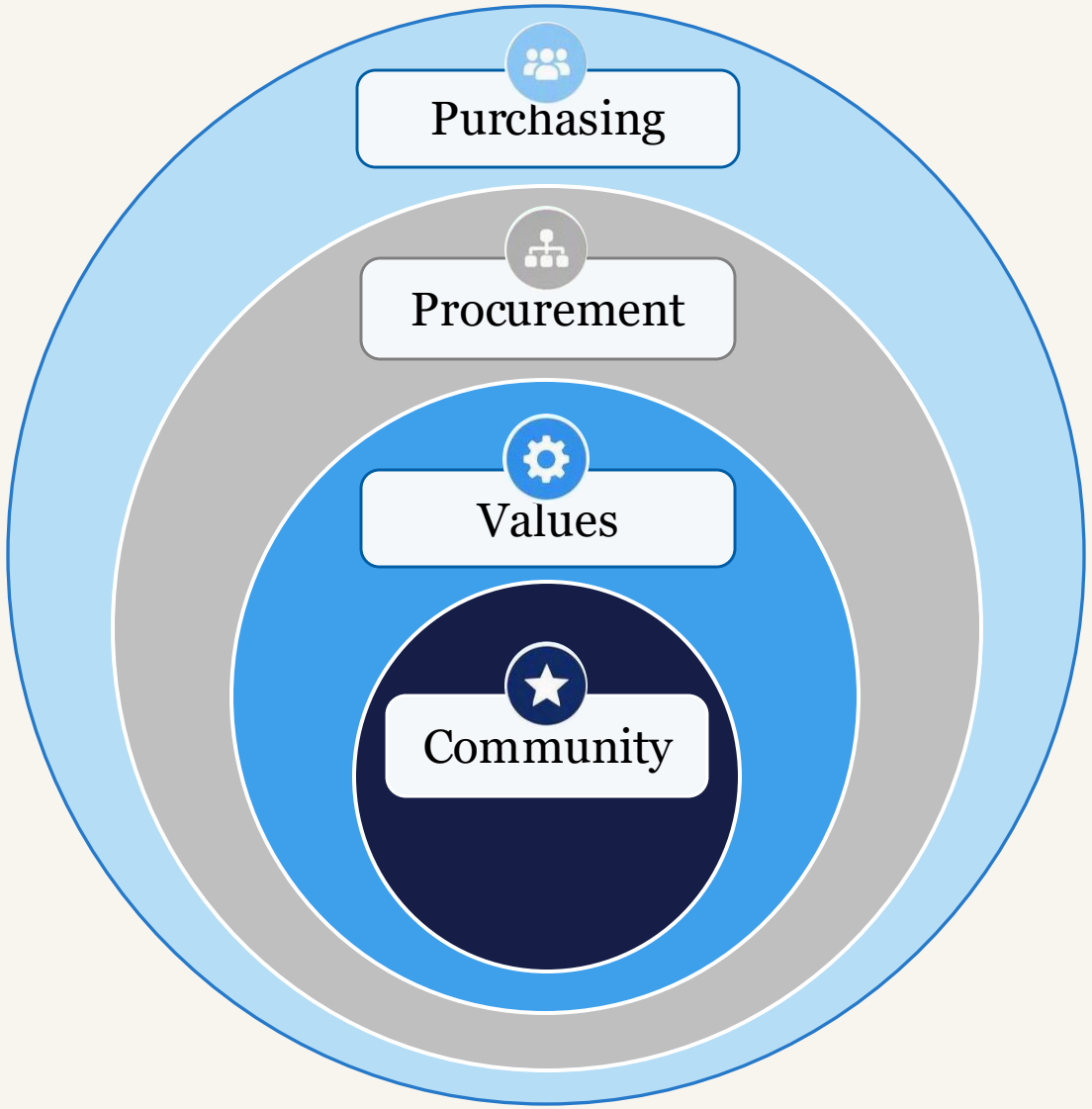
A strategic framework of policies, processes, and procedures to identify needs, source, award and manage contracts to maximize value.

Values

Core guiding principles that shape how governments operate & make decisions.

Community

The ultimate beneficiaries of the goods and services that governments purchase.



What other principles should drive public procurement?

Best Value

Protect the public from the misuse of public funds and maximize the purchasing value of public funds

Openness

Invite diverse vendor participation and provide all bidders with a fair and equal opportunity to engage in formal and informal processes

Fairness

Maintain the public's trust and eliminate favoritism, fraud and corruption. Conduct an independent, fair evaluation for all processes.

Transparency

Make procurement information public (internally and externally) when applicable to promote trust and accountability

Innovation

Regularly assess whether existing rules and processes are effective—and identify new "ways of working" to reform procurement

Resident-Centered

Shift from process-driven procurement to decisions that prioritize residents, community needs, and lasting impact

Activity: Would you rather procure...?

Based on your understanding of current processes and organizational values, which option would your government most likely procure and why?

A

Option A

Timeline: 2 years

Playground delivered through local small businesses with climate-friendly construction.



B

Option B

Timeline: 6 months

Playground delivered through a cooperative agreement with a big construction company.

Barriers to Progress:
What Makes Public Procurement Challenging

PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE NETWORK

Partners for Public Good

337 PEN Members common procurement barriers

Select a barrier to explore

Highest percentage first

Back-office perception	45%
Contract management gaps	42%
Chronic understaffing	37%
Resistance to change	36%
Complex or outdated processes	35%
Outdated laws and policies	30%
Siloed responsibilities	30%
Technology modernization barriers	19%
Hiring qualified candidates	14%
Cost-saving pressure	12%



Select any bar for the full finding. Percentages shown as reported.

▲ Respondents also flagged increasing vendor competition as an area of opportunity as well!

Vision for Procurement Reform

In a moment where government budgets are tight, and public problems are acute, **procurement is a key leverage point to do more with less!**

Current State		Future State
Primary focus on risk mitigation and enforcement of rules	→	Procurement teams an enabler of achieving city priorities, personal incentives for individuals not just to avoid scandal
Procurement viewed as an afterthought or not core to innovation	→	Procurement a strategic partner to leveraging vendor expertise to improve resident outcomes
Innovation overly fixated on new technologies or process efficiency	→	Procurement innovation centers reimagining what is possible to solve core challenges
Outdated laws, rules, and policies layered on as a Frankenstein mess	→	A modern legal authorizing environment that empowers 21st century procurement

Check out the MPC Revision Project!

What tends to slow the procurement process down across formal solicitation processes?

Communication

- User department staff may not **understand** how to initiate a process
- Departments and procurement staff **may not collaborate efficiently** on drafting scopes leading to extensive back-and-forth or missed requirements
- Poorly written RFPs **don't clearly explain** needs, which has downstream impacts

Planning

- Procurement offices are **understaffed**, leading to some procurements being deprioritized
- Governments **don't invest early in market research** and vendor outreach, and RFPs deadlines have to be extended
- Procurement **needs aren't forecasted in advance**, even when they're recurring, leading to a last-minute scramble

Regulation

- Legal teams can take **a long time to review** RFP and contract documents
- Approval processes contain many **redundant, unnecessary steps** (further exacerbated by paper processes)
- Staff don't write detailed, compliant procurement requests, leading to **rejections and resubmissions**

❓ What other common barriers slow your government's procurement process?

Opportunities to Unlock Value in Procurement Processes

Tech/AI

AI in procurement operations

Procuring AI

Budget

Focus on cost savings while improving value

Hiring More Staff

Policies

Revamping policies, adopting revised model procurement code

Sourcing

Moving beyond RFPs and Bids

Challenge-based procurements

Coops

Leverage cooperative contracting/

piggybacking

Trust

Demystifying procurement

Importance of storytelling

Reflection



What changes has your government made to build more efficiency in your procurement processes?

Come off mute and share your opinion!

Reform in Action:
How Governments are Solving Procurement Challenges

PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE NETWORK

Partners for **Public Good**

Case Studies Overcoming Common Procurement Barriers

Back-office perception — 45%

Procurement is viewed as a back-office function, limiting strategic influence



Case Study: City of Columbia positions Procurement as "Partner in Progress"

Chronic understaffing — 37%

Chronic understaffing leads to procurement staff operating in constant triage mode, impacting proactive planning



Case Study: City of Phoenix Creatively Boosts Procurement Staff Morale

Vendor competition — Opportunity

Respondents also flagged increasing vendor competition as an area of opportunity



Case Study: Overcoming Bonding Barriers at Los Angeles Metro

Procurement Reform in Action

Challenge:
Back-office Perception



Case Study: City of Columbia positions Procurement as "Partner in Progress"

Challenge

Code of Ordinances allows departments to bypass Purchasing and go directly to Council for contract approvals.

In FY25, Council approved 19 contracts, totaling $6.1M, without consulting purchasing.

Action

Conducted research on the root cause of user department challenges and needs

Surveyed staff on procurement processes, shifting perspectives that **purchasing is not a barrier, but a partner in progress**

Result

Gained buy-in from Mayor & City Manager

Revising ordinances to standardize processes to collaborate with purchasing for all procurements

Procurement Reform in Action

Challenge:
Chronic Understaffing



Case Study: City of Phoenix Creatively Boosts Procurement Staff Morale

Challenge

Persistent vacancy challenges lead to increased workloads and burnout for staff.

The procurement team wanted to improve retention, morale, cohesion, and opportunities for internal mobility.

Action

In 2021, the city implemented a $5,000 retention payment for central procurement staff.

Titles were reclassified to "Finance Procurement Officer," which increased compensation without changing responsibilities

Result

These steps, alongside process reviews and attention to inflation-related COLA adjustments, helped build a stronger sense of purpose and belonging for staff across levels.

Procurement Reform in Action

Challenge:
Vendor Competition



Case Study: Overcoming Bonding Barriers at Los Angeles Metro

Challenge

Small and local businesses struggled to increase their bonding capacity to support larger project sizes or multiple contracts inhibiting their ability to build capacity and compete in competitive processes.

Action

Through the Contractor Development and Bonding Assistance Program (CDBAP), qualifying small businesses can obtain bond guarantees of up to $250,000 + training at no cost!

Result

LA Metro benefits by having more viable bidders and better contract pricing.

Awarded contract to a participant who secured bonding through CDBAP – which was the lowest bid by $4.4 million!

Vendor Competition Strategies

Improve overall procurement processes	Invest into building vendor capacity	Diversify outreach and communication efforts
Publish procurement forecasts for vendors	**Share knowledge/tools** via resource centers, vendor fairs, workshops, and networking events	**Use storytelling to proactively communicate commitment** to working with small/ local vendors
Adopt prompt payment practices to reduce lag	**Unbundle large contracts** or develop lists of pre-qualified vendors to expand opportunities	**Launch vendor surveys**, focus groups or interviews as a regular practice to capture feedback
Reduce barriers to bonding, insurance, or other requirements	**Offer coaching** and mentor-protege programs	**Use pre-bid or pre-proposal meetings strategically** to demystify the procurement process
Write clearer RFPs that are easier for vendors to understand and respond to	**Standardize offering feedback to bidders** to provide feedback (e.g., debriefs)	**Invest in a role dedicated to conducting outreach** for new programs and services

💭 Which of these strategies has your government NOT YET implemented?

Taking Action:
Practical Strategies to Support Procurement Reform

PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE NETWORK

Partners for **Public Good**

How can different roles contribute to unlocking greater value in procurement?

Procurement

- ✓ **Demystify the procurement process** and invite conversation about pain points and innovations
- ✓ **Make partnership routine** identifying innovative ways to get solicitations drafted (e.g., RFP Fun Runs)
- ✓ **Measure what matters** and share it with internal departments for visibility

Departments

- ✓ **Align on identified problems and desired outcomes,** avoid solutioning
- ✓ **Share anticipated purchasing needs** well in advance and ask for support
- ✓ **Proactively share feedback with procurement** on bottlenecks or unclear points in process

C-Suite / Legislative

- ✓ **Strengthen understanding** of the complexities in procurement by connecting with frontline and departments
- ✓ **Standardize proactive** reviews of laws, policies, workflows and guidance
- ✓ **Focus priorities and reinforce messaging** that procurement is a “partner in progress”

What's Next:
Wrap-up & Announcements

PROCUREMENT
EXCELLENCE
NETWORK

Partners for **Public Good**

Procurement Excellence Network: Become a Member!



The Procurement Excellence Network has connected **3100+ government staff from 1000+ 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



🎤 *Join us for PEN's final event of 2026!*

From Policy to Execution:
Responsible AI Usage in Public Procurement Workflows

Procurement teams are being asked to deliver greater public value-often with limited resources. How can AI reimagine how procurement work gets done in government?



Register Today!

🗓️ **Nov 17, 2026 | 🕑 1:00-2:00pm ET**

Join us to explore real-world case studies of how 3 peer governments are adopting AI in procurement operations from the **City of Chattanooga, City of San Francisco & State of Tennessee!**

🕑 **Speaker Panel Q&A: 2:00-2:30pm ET**

Thank you!

