

Hello Mr. Cardegna,

Please see below the written responses to MP Bain's questions:

1. Efficient and effective procurement is dependent on the quality and diversity of proposals submitted. In the 2018 report "Procurement practice review: Review of bid solicitation processes" item five indicates that communications with bidders have been a problem. In your experience reviewing procurement processes, how long has this been a problem for prior to the 2018 report? Years, decades?
 - Our office's Top 10 list of issues raised by suppliers goes back to 2018-19, and the issue of "communications with bidders" has been on the list each year. This is an important issue, as clear communications with all potential bidders prior to contract award is integral to the overall fairness and transparency of the procurement process, and clear communications post-contract award (in the form of regret letters and debriefings) enables suppliers to submit improved bids in the future. We have no reason to believe that this is a new problem that did not exist prior to the compilation of the Top 10 lists.
2. One of the issues stated is that some or all potential bidders do not bid or cannot bid effectively because they do not understand the requirement as the solicitation document is unclear. Is this something you have heard frequently from bidders?
 - Yes. The clarity (or lack thereof) and complexity of solicitation documents is something that has consistently been brought to our office's attention by suppliers. To help address this issue, we have included a section in our procurement practice review reports that both identifies good practices in this area so they can be emulated by other departments, and identifies shortcomings in this area by the department under review so that they can be addressed and corrected moving forward.
3. One of the impediments to bidders, according to the report, is the length of time bidders must submit their proposals. (a) What are the benefits of extending the bids? (b) Are there downsides?
 - The benefits of extending bid closing dates include giving suppliers more time to develop and submit competitive proposals, whereas the downsides include increasing the amount of time it takes for the government to obtain the goods or services it requires to deliver a program/ services to Canadians. There is no hard and fast answer to this issue, and the objective is to identify the appropriate amount of time suppliers should have to prepare and submit a bid in relation to the complexity of the requirement. Trade agreements have mandatory minimum bid closing dates for this reason, which are linked to the estimated dollar values of the contracts, and require longer bidding periods for higher dollar value contracts.
4. The report calls the Elections Canada procurement and contracting framework 'robust', including in the recommendations. Are there best practices within Elections Canada's procurement framework that would benefit other government agencies?

- Yes. One of these best practices is a Procurement and Contracting Guide with the purpose of facilitating the procurement process by providing clear stakeholder roles and responsibilities and relevant information for both business owners and contracting authorities regarding the entire procurement process. It is supported by detailed operating instructions, tools and templates to help ensure a consistent approach to the procurement process and appropriate documentation to support all actions taken and decisions made. This is all the more relevant as each federal organization will now be responsible for establishing, implementing and maintaining their departmental procurement management framework as required by the new Treasury Board Directive on the Management of Procurement which will replace the Treasury Board Contracting Policy in May 2022 after a 1-year transition period.

Thank you for these questions, and I would be happy to extrapolate further at Friday's OGGO Committee meeting.

Alexander Jeglic