



Office of the Procurement
Ombudsman

Bureau de l'ombudsman
de l'approvisionnement

A blurred city skyline background with a color gradient from purple on the left to orange on the right. The buildings are silhouetted against the sky.

Study: Usefulness of Available Procurement Information

September 2016

The word "Canada" in a serif font, with a small red maple leaf logo above the letter 'a'.

Canada

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BACKGROUND

1. Since March 2004, the Government of Canada has implemented a series of measures to strengthen public sector management by enhancing transparency and oversight of public spending by federal organizations, including the launch of the Open Government initiative focussing on Open Data, Open Information and Open Dialogue.
2. The Office of the Procurement Ombudsman (OPO) relies on publicly available procurement information, as well as information provided by suppliers and federal organizations, when conducting reviews of complaints and procurement practice reviews. OPO has experienced frustrations in terms of the accessibility, completeness and timeliness of publicly available procurement information.
3. Additionally, OPO has received feedback from suppliers, doing or looking to do business with federal organizations, that procurement information is not always available or is difficult to access.
4. As such, through this study, OPO examined publicly available procurement information.

OBJECTIVE

5. The objective of the study was to examine publicly available procurement information¹ to determine:
 - If gaps exist between the information that is available and the information that is required by government policies, guidelines and initiatives;
 - If the information is useful², from both an OPO and supplier perspective; and
 - If any additional information may be useful to suppliers and other interested stakeholders.

DEFINITIONS

6. The usefulness of procurement information was assessed against three criteria:
 - (i) **Accessible:** “The Government of Canada considers machine-readable open formats and the free dissemination of data as inherent principles of open data. Datasets published on our Open Data Portal, data.gc.ca, are available at no charge and are accessible in multiple formats, including open and machine-readable formats”.³
 - (ii) **Complete:** “Datasets should be as complete as possible, reflecting the entirety of what is recorded about a particular subject. All raw information from a dataset should be released to the public, unless there are Access to Information or Privacy issues.

¹ For the purposes of this study, publicly available procurement information is defined as: Purchasing Activity Reports (PARs), Proactive Disclosure Reports (PDRs) and select data available on the Buyandsell.gc.ca website.

² For the purpose of this study, useful information is defined as: accessible, complete and timely. These terms are defined in the “Definitions” section.

³ <http://open.canada.ca/en/g8-open-data-charter-canadas-action-plan>

Metadata that defines and explains the raw data should be included, along with explanations for how the data was calculated”.⁴

- (iii) **Timely:** “Datasets released by the Government of Canada should be made available to the public in a timely fashion. Whenever feasible, information collected by the Government of Canada should be released as quickly as it is gathered and collected. Priority should be given to data whose utility is time sensitive”.⁵

APPROACH

7. The study focussed on publicly available procurement information from the 2013 and 2014 calendar year, as well as supplier feedback and comments received from outreach activities in fiscal year 2013-14 and 2014-15. The study explored the usefulness of available procurement information from OPO’s perspective, as well as from the perspective of suppliers doing and looking to do business with the federal organizations. The results of this study were provided to Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) and Public Service and Procurement Canada (PSPC) for their comments prior to publication.

8. The analysis was based on four central questions:
 - (i) What information is available?
 - (ii) Are there inconsistencies with how the information is presented (data fields)?
 - (iii) Is the information presented consistent with the Treasury Board Contracting Policy and/or government initiatives?
 - (iv) Is the information useful?

PUBLICLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION

9. Federal government procurement information is available through a number of public reports and websites. In undertaking this study, OPO primarily relied on the following:

- Proactive Disclosure Reports (PDRs);
- Purchasing Activity Reports (PARs); and
- the Buy and Sell website (Buyandsell.gc.ca).

The Open Government portal and the Federal Contracting in Comprehensive Land Claims Reports also contain datasets that relate to procurement.

10. These reports and websites provide Canadians with information on the dollar value of contracts entered into by federal organizations. The provision of the information also promotes transparency in federal government contracting⁶ and supports Canada’s Action Plan on Open Government.⁷

⁴<http://open.canada.ca/en/open-data-principles>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) Contracting Policy Notice 2012-1

⁷ Canada’s Action Plan on Open Government - Activity Stream 2 – Open Data

Proactive Disclosure Reports (PDR)

11. Federal organizations are required by section 5.1.6 of the Treasury Board Contracting Policy (TBCP) to publicly disclose, on a quarterly basis, contracts entered into or amendments valued at more than \$10,000. This information is publicly reported on each federal organization's website, by quarter, with some organizations providing reports that can be downloaded in Excel format.

12. The TBS Guidelines on the Proactive Disclosure of Contracts recommends the following data elements for the PDR: contract value, reference number, contract period, start and end dates, description of work, vendor name, and comments. The Guidelines state "As a best practice, departments are encouraged to follow the recommended approach for each data element if possible. If use of the recommended approach is not possible, a department may use a standard practice in the department for disclosure".⁸

13. OPO examined the headings and information presented in selected federal organizations' PDRs and found that while information was disclosed under the same headings and information, several inconsistencies were noted between federal organizations, specifically:

- Contract description: instances where vague descriptions were provided within and across federal organizations (e.g. "other Business Services not elsewhere specified"). The Proactive Disclosure Guidelines were amended in 2013 to require federal organizations to provide additional information on the goods or services being procured.⁹ However, OPO's examination found additional information under the "comments" heading does not always provide supplementary information on the good or service being procured, but rather on the tool and/or amendments associated with the contract.
- Vendor names: instances where vendor names were incorrectly entered, which made it difficult to determine how many contracts were awarded per vendor for a specific good or service.
- Amendments: Section 4.1.3 of the Guidelines on the Proactive Disclosure of Contracts states that "when a series of amendments to a contract clearly exceeds \$10,000, the series of amendments may be disclosed as one amendment".¹⁰ OPO noted some federal organizations publish an "(a)" before the contract value to indicate the contract has been amended; other federal organizations publish amendments as a separate report. OPO found that the inclusion of the "(a)" or the word "amended" in the contract value field makes it more difficult to have software (such as Excel) undertake calculations. After downloading the data into the software, users must remove the text from each cell.

⁸ TBS Guidelines on Proactive Disclosure

⁹ <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/hgw-cgf/business-affaire/gcp-agc/notices-avis/2013/09-09-eng.asp>

¹⁰ <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=14676§ion=HTML>

Purchasing Activity Report (PAR)

14. “The objective of the annual Purchasing Activity Report is to provide a basic snapshot of purchasing activities of the Government of Canada”.¹¹ TBS informed OPO that “the PAR gathers information for policy evaluation and for Canada to meet its reporting obligations under the government procurement chapters of trade agreements”.

15. TBS publishes an annual PAR that provides the total number and value of contracts awarded, including net amendments, by the entire Government of Canada and by each individual federal organization. The PAR reports on contracts valued at more than and less than \$25,000 in three categories: goods, services and construction. For contracts valued at \$25,000 or more, the following breakdown of contracting information is provided:

- electronic bidding;
- traditional competitive;
- total competitive awards;
- net competitive amendments;
- subtotal of competitive awards including amendments;
- Advance Contract Award Notice (ACANs);
- net ACAN amendments;
- subtotal competitive and ACANs including amendments;
- net amendments and non-competitive including amendments.

16. To assess the completeness of the two reporting methods outlined, OPO examined the PAR and Proactive Disclosure information from a selected federal organization for 2013. The purpose of this exercise was to determine if the procurement information disclosed in both reports aligned and provided a complete picture of the federal organization’s procurement activity.

17. While OPO found both reports meet their individual reporting standards, and therefore could be considered complete, they do not provide a detailed picture of procurement spending by a federal organization. As the TBCP mandates the publication of contracts valued at \$10,000 or more, no total number or value is publicly available, for the entire Government of Canada or by individual organization, for contracts less than \$10,000. As part of this study, OPO examined a selected organization’s PAR and Proactive Disclosure information and found that while it appears that the organization was compliant with TBS Guidelines, only 8.5% of the total number of contracts issued, representing 36% of the total procurement spend, were disclosed as individual contracts, as the majority of contracts issued were valued at less than \$10,000.

Buyandsell

18. Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) publishes contracting information on the Buyandsell.gc.ca website under the following headings: Tenders, Goods and Services

¹¹ http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/dcgpubs/con_data/par-12-rpa-eng.asp

Identification Numbers (GSIN),¹² Contract History, and Standing Offers and Supply Arrangements. There is no statutory requirement for PSPC to publish contract history information on Buyandsell.

19. For the purpose of this study, OPO only examined information provided under Contract History, which pertains to contracts awarded by PSPC, including those awarded by PSPC on behalf of other federal organizations. Buyandsell states the data can be used to:

- find contracts, including contract values that have been awarded;
- identify the federal organization or agency for which the contracts were put in place; and
- conduct market research and identify potential business opportunities/partners based on previously awarded contracts.¹³

20. For example, Buyandsell allows the public to search all contracts awarded during the last five years, by pre-defined fields such as:

- goods/services, GSIN being procured;
- federal organization for which the goods/services were procured; and
- supplier name.

21. Users can further add a search term to narrow their search results. While there is no way to find a range of contracts (e.g. between certain dollar amounts or between specific dates), users can find all contracts awarded on a particular date or for a particular value.

22. OPO noted that Buyandsell uses GSIN codes, which are not used for PARs and PDRs. GSIN codes are used by PSPC to identify generic product descriptions for its procurement activities.¹⁴

Open Data Portal

23. In April 2012, Canada joined the Open Government Partnership (OGP) which is a “multilateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from federal organizations to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance”.¹⁵

24. As a part of the OGP, the Government of Canada has created the Open Government Directive and two action plans that identify initiatives to improve access to open data, open information and open dialogue, and monitor the progress towards the achievement of these initiatives.

25. One initiative launched under the first action plan was the Open Data Portal (data.gc.ca) in June 2013. Within this portal, procurement-related datasets are made available, such as

¹² The federal government uses Goods and Services Identification Number (GSIN) codes to identify generic product descriptions for its procurement activities. <https://buyandsell.gc.ca/procurement-data/goods-and-services-identification-number>

¹³ <https://buyandsell.gc.ca/procurement-data/about-procurement-data>

¹⁴ <https://buyandsell.gc.ca/procurement-data/about-procurement-data>

¹⁵ <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/countries>

¹⁶ <http://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/c37d7510-c54c-4652-8e6f-79023e44be62>

Government of Canada spend data, which includes the commodity spend by all commodity categories (e.g. office supplies, professional services) from 55 federal organizations.¹⁶

26. While these datasets provide information related to procurement activities, which is timely and presented in an accessible format, the information is not complete as it does not yet include all federal organizations. Canada's Open Government Action Plan for 2014-16 deliverables include to "release data on all contracts over \$10,000 via a centralized, machine-readable database available to the public" and to "increase the level of detail disclosed on government contracts over \$10,000".¹⁷ TBS informed OPO that "the Government of Canada plans to centralize contracting data into a single, public, machine readable database, by January 1, 2017, as addressed under its commitment to Open Contracting in Canada's Open Government Action Plan for 2014-16".

SUPPLIER PERSPECTIVE – WHAT WE'VE HEARD

27. OPO reviewed supplier feedback from fiscal 2013-14 and 2014-15. Feedback was categorised according to three topics: currently available procurement information, additional procurement information and possible improvements.

Currently available procurement information

- Buyandsell is easy to navigate and contains helpful information for small and medium businesses on developing relations with large companies in order to offer them goods and or services.
- PDRs are difficult to navigate: the information is there but is hard to filter and sort.
- PARs are not really used as the information provided is historical instead of informing suppliers of future contracting opportunities.

Additional procurement information

- More information on opportunities (e.g. upcoming Requests For Proposals) is needed to allow companies to prepare and plan accordingly.
- The Ontario Federal organizations website provides an overview of upcoming opportunities for Vendors of Record (equivalent to federal Standing Offers/Supply Arrangements).

Possible improvements

- Contracting information could be consolidated in one place and contain the most current information.
- The federal organizations should have something similar to Google alerts where businesses can request information which relates to their specific line of work. For example, the alert could work through a keyword search for all goods and services being solicited by federal organizations.

¹⁷ <http://open.canada.ca/en/content/canadas-action-plan-open-government-2014-16>

28. While procurement information is made publicly available, its usefulness differs depending on the end user. While noting the concerns identified in this study, historical procurement information is useful to OPO in conducting reviews of complaints and procurement practices. However, suppliers are seeking up-to-date procurement information to plan for current or upcoming business opportunities. As a result, the same information is not as useful for suppliers as it is for OPO.

29. OPO undertook an exercise to determine if potential and existing suppliers would be able to use these reporting methods outlined above to find relevant procurement information related to their line of work. For this exercise, OPO assumed the role of a Canadian pharmaceutical company trying to sell medical supplies, more specifically needles, to federal organizations. OPO developed four procurement information questions for the purpose of this exercise:

- (i) Is there a market for my good, in this case needles?
- (ii) What was the value of all federal contracts awarded for this particular good in any given calendar year (i.e. 2015)?
- (iii) Who are the main purchasing federal organizations and current vendors for this good?
- (iv) What are the upcoming business opportunities for this particular good?

Example 1: Canadian supplier selling to Canadian federal organizations

Question 1: *Is there a market for my good, in this case needles?*

30. The first step for a supplier would be to determine which reporting method (i.e. Open Data Portal, PDRs, PARs and/or Buyandsell) contains information to determine if there is a market within federal organizations for needles. Based on the descriptions of the public reports and websites provided previously, a supplier could conclude that Buyandsell has market research capabilities and therefore would be the most promising method. Through Buyandsell, OPO was able to search for contracts relating to the medical field by doing a GSIN search as presented here:

GSIN Code	Title
55	Lumber, Millwork, Plywood and Veneer (Goods)
56	Construction and Building Materials (Goods)
58	Communication, Detection, and Coherent Radiation Equipment (Goods)
59	Electrical and Electronic Equipment Components (Goods)
60	Fibre Optics Materials, Components, Assemblies and Accessories (Goods)
61	Electric Wire and Power and Distribution Equipment (Goods)
62	Lighting Fixtures and Lamps (Goods)
63	Alarm, Signal and Security Detection Systems (Goods)
65	Medical, Dental, and Veterinary Equipment and Supplies (Goods)
66	Instruments and Laboratory Equipment (Goods)
67	Photographic Equipment (Goods)

31. Assuming needles would be captured under GSIN 65 (Medical, Dental and Veterinary Equipment and Supplies) and GSIN 66 (Instrument and Laboratory Equipment), the following five categories can be accessed:

- related tender notice
- related award notice
- GSIN direct descendants
- related standing offers and supply arrangements; and
- related contract history.

32. A search using GSINs allows suppliers to try to determine under which GSIN number and category their product would fall. Once the GSIN number and category is determined, suppliers could search all contracting activities using the GSIN to determine if a match exists. In the example of needles, OPO assumed under which GSIN number and category needles would fall. A search of related contracts did permit OPO to determine how many contracts and/or what values had been awarded for selected GSINs. However, the first step of conducting market research was not achieved as OPO was unable to determine with certainty how many contracts were awarded that specifically included needles.

33. OPO notes the federal government will be moving away from the use of GSINs. The Buyandsell website specifies “the international classification system for procurement items called the United Nations Standard Products and Services Code (UNSPSC) will replace the [GSIN] codes in 2017. The adoption of the UNSPSC as the new data standard on classification for procurement items will result in an improved classification system of products and services, increase the ease of data sharing, and centralize the governance of the classification system”.¹⁸

Question 2: How much did federal organizations spend on this particular good in any given year (i.e. 2015)?

34. The PAR provides a snapshot of all federal organizations contract awards. Due to the delay in the PAR being made publicly available, there was no PAR available for 2015 when this study was undertaken. However, even if the PAR had been available, it does not provide the level of detail needed as contract awards are reported in broad categories (i.e. goods, services and construction). As a result, the second step of conducting research on yearly expenditures was not achieved.

Question 3: Who are the main purchasing federal organizations and current vendors?

35. To answer this question, PDRs were identified as the most appropriate source given they contain detailed information on contracts awarded by each federal organization. However, because there is no possibility in PDRs to search for contracts across federal organizations, the only option is to consolidate quarterly information manually into a spreadsheet to determine top

¹⁸ <https://buyandsell.gc.ca/united-nations-standard-products-and-services-code-unspsc-coming-to-buyandsellgcca>

vendors per federal organization. For the purpose of this exercise, OPO looked at the PDRs of one selected federal organization.

36. OPO was able to manually import all data fields into one spreadsheet for further filtering. OPO determined that out of the 706 contracts awarded by the selected federal organization in a fiscal year, 147 were related to the medical field. Transferring the data from the website into one spreadsheet took several hours. To identify the main purchasing federal organizations, the exercise would need to be repeated for each federal organization.

37. In addition, the contract descriptions did not specify the goods purchased. As such, OPO was unable to determine current vendors of needles to the federal organization. As a result, step three was not achieved as OPO was unwilling to invest the time it would take to potentially determine purchasing federal organizations and top vendors of needles.

Question 4: What are the upcoming business opportunities for this particular good or service?

38. OPO was unable to answer this question since none of the reporting methods permit a search of all federal organizations. It is noted some tender notices are posted on Buyandsell, however this website does not contain all opportunities. In addition, federal organizations are not required to produce annual procurement plans, and those that do contain high level information pertaining to large procurement projects and investments.

Example 2: Canadian supplier selling to American federal organizations

39. OPO undertook the same exercise with the American reporting method (usaspending.gov) for comparison.

40. There is one consolidated reporting method in the United States: usaspending.gov. Transactions valued at \$3,000 or more are disclosed and micro-purchases valued at less than \$3,000 made with a federal credit card are collected by the General Services Administration and displayed monthly in a SmartPay spreadsheet¹⁹. Using usaspending.gov, OPO was able to determine that 385 contracts were awarded in 2015 for needles for a total amount of \$485,020.²⁰ OPO was also able to identify top vendors and US federal organizations purchasing needles by selecting the appropriate filters. For each contract the following headings were also available for further breakdown:

¹⁹ <https://www.usaspending.gov/about/Pages/TheData.aspx#anchor1>

²⁰ <https://www.usaspending.gov/Pages/AdvancedSearch.aspx?sub=y&ST=C&FY=2015&A=0&SS=USA&k=needles>

TRANSACTION DETAILS

<< Go to Award Summary

3T FEDERAL SOLUTIONS LLC GSMPSAKE1380

+ AMOUNTS

+ PURCHASER

+ CONTRACT INFORMATION

+ CONTRACTOR INFORMATION

+ PLACE OF PERFORMANCE

+ PRODUCT OR SERVICE

+ RECORD INFORMATION

+ COMPETITION INFORMATION

+ CONTRACTOR CHARACTERISTICS

41. OPO identified the number of contracts awarded for this specific good (i.e. needles) and determined a market existed. It should be noted this information was found in a few minutes. Through filters, OPO was also able to search tenders for needles using different fields such as contract type, North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code, recipient state and zip-code.

42. Overall, there are a number of differences when comparing the Canadian and American systems in terms of obtaining government-wide procurement-related information:

Canadian reporting methods	American reporting method
Time consuming	Quick and easy to navigate
Isolated information	Amalgamated information
Limited data fields	Variety of data fields
Disclosure at \$10,000 (CAN)	Disclosure at \$3,000 (US)

Example 3: Market research and analysis

43. Other individuals may require access to procurement information, such as academics, research associations, economists, and politicians. For example, a Member of Parliament’s office may wish to research the amount spent in their riding by the Canadian federal organizations. Based on the current reporting methods, this information is not readily or publicly available. In the US, regional procurement data can be easily retrieved on usaspending.gov as each state includes a breakdown of contracts per county and district.

INTERNATIONAL OPEN DATA INITIATIVES – USA AND AUSTRALIA

44. Since 2009, the United States has put in place proactive disclosure initiatives, such as the Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government,²¹ which directed federal departments and agencies on how to appropriately report their spending activity.

45. In 2013, the US President signed an executive order that made open and machine-readable data the new default for federal government information.²² Through the development of a new tool, data.gov, users can readily find data, tools and resources to be used to conduct research, develop web and mobile applications and design data visualizations.²³

46. Similar to the Americans, the Australian Government introduced the Government 2.0 Taskforce²⁴ in 2009. This independent advisory body, which operated from June to December 2009, was comprised of technical experts and entrepreneurs from government, business, academia, and cultural institutions. The Government 2.0 Taskforce's final report, "Engage: Getting on with Government 2.0", was delivered to the Australian Government in December 2009 and included 13 recommendations²⁵ on how to achieve more open, accountable, responsive and efficient federal organizations.

Reporting information

47. As previously stated, the American website (usaspending.gov) allows users to search all federal contracts valued at \$3,000 or more by federal department or agency, by state, by fiscal year, by congressional district and by commodity. Contract information is updated on a daily basis.

48. Similarly, the Australian Government has the tender.gov.au website (also known as AusTender) which provides a centralized publication of Australian Government business opportunities, annual procurement plans, multi-use lists and contracts awarded. Advanced searches can be performed by category as follows: contract notices, contract status (current or closed), date type (published date, start date and, end date, date range), supplier name, value range and commodity. In accordance with Australian policy,²⁶ and similarly to the Government of Canada's TBCP, all contracts valued at more than \$10,000 are disclosed on AusTender. Similar to the American system, the information is updated on a daily basis on AusTender.

49. OPO found that while the American reporting method is more advanced than the Canadian methods, Australia should be the benchmark. Recent changes made to the American

²¹ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2013/m-13-13.pdf>

²² <http://www.data.gov/>

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ <http://gov2.net.au/about/>

²⁵ <http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/gov20taskforcereport/summary.htm>

²⁶ <http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/fmg-series/08-listing-of-contract-details.html>

reporting system has “stripped the site of some critical functionality, particularly for advanced searches”²⁷. The Australian reporting system allows for a deeper breakdown of datasets by allowing users to automatically organize queried information.

50. A major difference between the American and Australian reporting methods and the three Canadian methods presented in this study is the centralization of information. Centralized information allows suppliers and the public to easily search hundreds of contracting datasets from all federal organizations within the US and Australian federal governments.

51. While some procurement information has been made available on Canada’s Open Data Portal, the capacity to search all federal organizations via one reporting method is not yet available. The Government of Canada has plans to centralize contracting data into a single, public, machine readable database, under its commitment to Open Contracting in the Draft Action Plan Open Government 2.0.²⁸

FINDINGS

52. This study aimed at providing insight on two levels: by assessing the usefulness of the federal publicly available procurement information from both an OPO and supplier perspective; and by identifying if any gaps existed between the information that is available, the information that is required to be made publicly available by government policies and guidelines, and additional information that may be useful to suppliers.

53. Overall, the current reporting methods meet policy requirements and initiatives by providing historical information about federal procurement activities. While the disclosure of procurement information may be consistent with current policies and guidelines, publicly available information has limited utility for suppliers to plan business opportunities.

54. While there are efforts to create a single reporting system for federal organizations, each current reporting method (i.e. PDR, PAR and Buyandsell) captured and reported on a specific and different set of data. This does not indicate that a particular method was inaccurate, only that each method captured and reported on a specific and different set of data.

55. The gaps in procurement information identified in this study, in addition to suppliers’ opinion that information on upcoming opportunities could be increased and centralized, illustrates there is room for improvement with regard to the promotion of transparency and access to open data and information as it relates to Government of Canada procurement activities.

²⁷<http://cdn.govexec.com/interstitial.html?v=2.1.1&rf=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.govexec.com%2Fcontracting%2F2015%2F04%2Frefreshed-usaspending-website-irks-some-transparency-advocates%2F109258%2F>

²⁸ <http://open.canada.ca/en/canadas-draft-action-plan-open-federal-organizations-20>

56. The Government's Action Plan 2.0 commitments include streamlining and centralizing contracting data. In addition, commitments include piloting a project to significantly increase the level of detail disclosed on government contracts valued at more than \$10,000 by making the following new data elements publicly available²⁹:

- Agreement Type;
- Commodity Code (4-digit GSIN code);
- Country of Origin of Goods and Services;
- Limited Tendering Reason;
- Derogation (Exemptions);
- Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business Incidental Indicator;
- Intellectual Property (IP) Indicator;
- Potential for Commercial Exploitation;
- Standing Offer Number; and
- Document Type (for example, Standing Offer Call-Up, Contract, Amendment).

57. The implementation of the commitments under Canada's Action Plan 2.0 may address OPO and supplier concerns regarding accessibility of procurement information. However, it is not clear if these actions will enhance the timeliness or completeness of the procurement information publicly available, nor whether it will include additional information regarding upcoming opportunities.

CONCLUSION

58. Overall, OPO found all reporting methods are compliant with applicable policies and guidelines, and federal organizations appear to be following the reporting standards as set in the TBCP. However, each reporting method presents fragmented information that cannot be readily consolidated for greater analysis or to provide a detailed complete account of Canadian federal procurement activity.

59. TBS informed OPO that "by January 1, 2017, the Government of Canada plans to centralize existing PDR and PAR contracting data into a single database to be readily available for greater analysis". Complete, timely and accessible information as set out in the Open Data principles would increase access to federal government procurement data and information and should provide the public with greater insight into government activities and use of tax dollars³⁰. While this centralization is a step in the right direction, it does not address the lack of transparency regarding contracts valued at less than \$10,000, which account for a significant portion of federal procurement activity.

60. The Open Data³¹ website's introductory paragraph states: "do you know how much of your tax money is spent on federal organizations contracts?" This question, and many more "can

²⁹ <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/hgw-cgf/business-affaire/gcp-agc/notices-avis/2016/16-01-eng.asp>

³⁰ <http://open.canada.ca/en/open-data-principles>

³¹ Ibid

be answered by looking at Open Data made available on this site”³². OPO’s analysis confirms the Open Data website provides limited information and does not include all federal organizations. In addition, none of the reporting methods require the disclosure of all individual contract awards, specifically those valued at less than \$10,000, which is what would be required to let Canadians know how their tax dollars are truly being spent on federal contracts.

³² Ibid