Supplier feedback over the procurement process

This guide outlines the benefits of incorporating supplier feedback into the procurement process and how to undertake the process effectively.

Embedding supplier engagement into an organization’s procurement framework helps establish a mutually beneficial relationship. Commitment from both parties is needed for the partnership to be successful.

# Using this guide

This guide accompanies the Cayman Island Government (CIG)’s new procurement framework. Refer to the Central Procurement Policies for mandatory requirements. Visit the CIG’s Central Procurement Office website at www.procure.gov.ky.

Associated guidance material – Award and Regret Letter templates

This guideline is used with the permission of the Victorian Government and has been modified to meet the requirements of the CIG.

# What is supplier feedback?

Supplier feedback is about communicating with a supplier regarding a given procurement process. Embedding supplier feedback into government procurement processes informs government’s commitment to continuous improvement in its relationship with suppliers. Supplier feedback can include:

* government providing suppliers with feedback on their bids post contract award;
* suppliers providing feedback to government on a procurement process; and
* government and the successful supplier having a two-way debrief at the conclusion of the procurement contract.

This guide assists practitioners in providing feedback to suppliers at various stages of a procurement process, and details how the process can inform an organization’s broader supplier engagement strategy.

# Benefits

Undertaking supplier feedback can be beneficial to both parties.

For the supplier, feedback may:

* help improve their competitive performance by gaining a clearer understanding of government requirements;
* provide surety to them that an open, fair and transparent process has been undertaken; and
* help them plan and compete for their next procurement opportunity.

For government, feedback may:

* improve its procurement process and practices;
* improve the market’s understanding of government’s needs;
* improve supplier competitiveness and, in the long term, increase the potential for improved value-for-money outcomes;
* contribute to intelligence gathering about the market and its segments; and
* demonstrate commitment to good practices, openness and transparency.

# Supplier feedback in the procurement process

Effective debriefing will demonstrate to suppliers that the procurement process has been undertaken in accordance with the rules and adheres to high standards of probity.

Every procurement process should clearly outline the communication protocols for participating in a procurement process. Solicitation documents released should outline at minimum the:

* organization’s contact and contact details;
* communication protocols;
* timelines; and
* a debriefing opportunity.

# Debriefing

A debriefing process should be incorporated into all procurement processes undertaken.

The level of resources to commit to the process will depend on the value and complexity of the procurement and the possible benefits the process might provide to the supplier and/or the organization.

All suppliers that participate in a procurement process should be given the opportunity for a debriefing.

## When to undertake a debriefing

As part of the selection process, suppliers should be advised in writing of the outcome of the procurement process. Suppliers should be thanked for participating in the process and a debriefing should be made available to them.

Debriefing for unsuccessful suppliers takes place after the contract is awarded. Debriefing should be undertaken within 30 days of the supplier’s request, with meeting contents documented and placed on file.

Where a multi-stage procurement process is undertaken, non-shortlisted suppliers from the preliminary stage of the procurement must also be given the opportunity for a debriefing. This should be undertaken after the contract is awarded.

Debriefing is not typically offered to the successful supplier, however, their feedback remains critically important to inform improvements in the procurement process, and can form part of the contract management strategy.

Collecting feedback from suppliers can be used strategically to drive innovation, better understand the supply market and improve processes.

## Structure of a debriefing session

Depending on the complexity of the procurement, debriefing can be conducted in person, via teleconference, via email or electronic notification. Suppliers should be made aware that the intent of the debriefing is to provide feedback on their bid and for suppliers to provide feedback on the procurement process. The purpose of the debrief is to assist suppliers to bid more competitive proposals in the future, not to appeal the outcome of the procurement process.

It is important to plan and structure the debriefing session and to be clear and articulate.

A debriefing session may take the following structure:

1. welcome and introductory points
2. bid governance process
3. overview of the evaluation process
4. highlight strengths and weaknesses of supplier’s submission against the selection criteria
5. information about escalation process
6. supplier feedback on the procurement process
7. closing statements from supplier and the organization

The person providing the debriefing should ensure they use tact when referring to any perceived weaknesses and provide a balance by referencing any strengths. The focus should always be on how the supplier was evaluated against the evaluation criteria. Disclosure on the number of bids received, number of successful bids and unsuccessful bids is appropriate. **However information relating to other bids must not be provided.**

Item 6 (feedback) provides an opportune time for the procurement team to seek value adding information. Open discussion can be undertaken to gather further market information that may assist the organization with improving service delivery or organizational processes.

## Value adding to the debriefing session

A debriefing session can also be an opportunity for gathering further intelligence and assist the supplier in improving their competitiveness for future procurement opportunities. The level of engagement will depend on:

* the supply market in question;
* the organization’s procurement profile; and
* the information an organization may wish to gather from suppliers about their procurement processes.

Possible questions to gain a better understanding of the supply market:

* How can government improve its procurement process?
* How does a supplier determine whether to provide a bid?
* Was the timeline appropriate for the level of information required?
* Does the supplier have any comment on the level of detail in the specification?
* How could the specifications be improved?
* Does the supplier think there is a better solution to meeting the organization’s need?

Possible advice the organization can provide to the supplier about their bid during the debrief, and which can inform the supplier’s future bids:

* Ensure they detail how they will meet the requirements but also demonstrate how they can offer a better value-for-money proposition than their competitors.
* If the supplier does not comply with a requirement, they should address the matter with full disclosure.
* Ask questions and seek clarification if applicable.
* Provide feedback to the organization regarding its procurement process to help inform continuous improvement.

# After the debrief

Notes from the debrief should be recorded and placed on file. Any issues or information that may help improve the performance of the team undertaking the procurement or the broader organization’s procurement processes, market information and/or other lessons learned should be discussed with management with recommended actions. Implementation of these actions ought to be monitored and, if applicable, benefits measured.

# Supplier feedback during the contract term

Supplier feedback should also be incorporated into contract management. For further information refer to the guide to contract management.

Supplier engagement is an important element in contract management. Working collaboratively with a supplier will give the organization a better understanding of the supply chain and any issues or risks impacting the supply chain. For the supplier, open communication will give them a better understand of the organization’s business needs and may contribute to improvements in business efficiency, drive innovation and/or identify service delivery opportunities. In some procurement arrangements, strategies can be built into the contractual arrangement to incentivise the supplier to provide innovative ideas towards service delivery or strategies that value add to the arrangement.

Contract managers should implement strategies to capture information from suppliers to feed into future procurement arrangements. This will ensure that procurement is being considered as a cycle, rather than a one-off end-to-end process.

## Supplier feedback at the end of the contract

Supplier engagement at the end of the contract adds value to the outcome of the contractual relationship. Both positives and negatives should be highlighted and reported on. Recommendations for improvements should be made by both the organization and supplier. Management may wish to gather this information to assess the effectiveness of the procurement.

# Summary of supplier engagement during the procurement process

The table below provides a summary of activities that could be undertaken as part of the procurement process. The strategies undertaken will be dependent on the complexity of the procurement.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Stage of the procurement process | Strategy |
| Governance – organizational level | * Published procurement activity plan – informs suppliers of procurement activity for the next 12–18 months
* Procurement officers may wish to establish systems to capture information that has been provided by suppliers throughout the procurement process
 |
| Market analysis | * Policy requires engagement with the supply market at certain thresholds. Engagement with industry groups and suppliers will provide a better understanding of the market and will also inform the market of upcoming procurement opportunities. For more information refer to the Reference guide to Procurement Law
* Request for Information, expressions of interest or other types of preliminary engagement strategies can be undertaken to gather information on market capability (probity principles should be adhered to)
 |
| Market approach  | * Communication protocols for the procurement process should be established and adhered to ensuring all suppliers are treated fairly and equitably
* A briefing session allows suppliers to find out more about the organization’s objectives and an opportunity to seek clarification
* Offering debriefs to all suppliers, successful and unsuccessful, can help suppliers improve their competitive performance
* Gaining feedback from suppliers about the procurement process can help drive continuous improvement for government
* Feedback to management helps drive organizational continuous improvement
 |
| Contract management | * A contract management plan establishes a strategy for communicating with the supplier throughout the life of the contract including the transition in and transition out periods. The plan should detail roles and responsibilities, schedule and meeting objectives:
	+ management to management relationships should be established to mitigate issues that may arise during the contract
	+ operational relationships should be established to coordinate day to day operational components of the contract
* Continued market analysis and benchmarking through industry groups
* Contract close out meeting with supplier
* Feedback to management to drive organizational continuous improvement
 |

# Template 1: Sample Supplier debriefing

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Content | What should be included |
| Procurement File # | * Supplier name
* Location
* Date
* Department details
 |
| Agenda | * Introduction: attendees
* Overview: debriefing purpose and objectives
* Bid governance process
* Overview: evaluation criteria, weightings and score guide
* Evaluation committee findings – overview and evaluation results
* Questions
* Information about escalation process
* Supplier feedback on procurement process
* Closing statements
 |
| Introduction: attendees | * Departmental representatives: names and job titles
* Legal advisor details (if in attendance)
* Supplier representatives: names and job titles
 |
| Debriefing purpose | * Purpose: To provide suppliers with specific feedback on their submission, which may assist them in the development of competitive submissions in the future, and opportunity for suppliers to provide feedback on their experience in participation in the procurement process
* The debrief will be limited to the supplier’s submission and will not include discussion of other submissions
* All discussions in today’s briefing will be minuted and will be used to inform improvements in the department’s future procurement processes
* Details of the escalation process will be provided
 |
| Evaluation criteria and weightings | * Provide the evaluation criteria and weightings of each
 |
| Evaluation scoring guide | * Provide high level evaluation scoring
 |
| Evaluation team findings | * Provide a broad overview of the evaluation team’s findings.
* [Insert company name]: bid submission was/was not compliant with the terms and conditions of the bid
* [Insert company name]: scored highly in the following criteria (provide details)
* [Insert company name]: did not score highly in the following criteria (provide details)
 |
| Evaluation team: sample results | * Provide comments on the areas of strength/areas for improvement
 |
| Questions | * Opportunity for suppliers to ask further questions about the evaluation team’s findings
 |
| Escalation process | * Provide a copy of the department’s complaints management process (which should also be made available on the department’s website)
 |
| Supplier feedback regarding procurement process | * Invite supplier to provide general feedback on their experience with the procurement process, including suggestions/opportunities to improve supplier engagement in the future
 |
| Closing statements | * Opportunity for both parties to provide closing statement
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