



Country case: Digital challenge for innovative procurement training (United States)



Public Procurement Principle: **Capacity**



Procurement Stage: **All stages**



Audience: **Procuring entity, Policy maker**

Description

In an effort to become a smarter buyer of technology, the US government decided to train procurement specialists to understand the digital and IT marketplace, agile software development methodology, cloud hosting and user-centred design, among others, having determined that potentially all of the government's 6 500 acquisitions employees needed training on these subjects.

To achieve this objective, in 2015, the White House Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) and the US Digital Service (USDS) hosted a USD 360 000 challenge on Challenge.gov, a platform run by the federal government where government agencies can post challenges and offer prizes for solutions. Challenge.gov provides a Toolkit that includes information and resources to guide government employees working on challenges. It includes guidance on each challenge phase from preparation to execution, information on different types of challenges, case studies and a list of resources for more detailed guidance and support.

In this case, the challenge was for a vendor to develop a comprehensive training and development programme for procurement and acquisitions officials, to enable them to understand and apply strategic thinking, industry best practices, market place conditions and acquisition strategies to the procurement of digital services. Small amounts of money were provided to multiple vendors to design detailed concept programme proposals. One proposal was selected and the vendor was awarded a larger sum of USD 250 000 in milestone payments to fully develop and pilot their proposed programme with actual procurement officials.

As part of the pilot, 54 acquisitions and procurement employees have now been trained on new techniques. Graduates from the initial cohort, armed with new skills and capacities,

are also helping to spread knowledge about best practices they learned from the course to other parts of their agencies.

While the training programme began as a pilot, it is now being scaled up and rolled out. Findings from the initial training cohorts also fed into the development of a new specialisation and certification programme for federal procurement officials. The White House has issued a deadline of 2022, by which date all digital service purchases over USD 7 million will require the expertise of a procurement officer trained through the programme.

Source: OECD (2020), [System Change in Slovenia: Making Public Procurement More Effective](#), OECD Publishing, Paris

