



Gender Equality in Procurement: WA Public Sector Pilot

Building the case for gender equality in procurement -
information for WA public sector agencies

About this resource

The purpose of this resource is to demonstrate the case for gender equality in procurement by increasing the understanding and awareness of the benefits of leveraging public sector procurement as a strategy to advance gender equality.

This resource outlines the key principles of gender equality in procurement and highlight the benefits for individuals and business. These principles are referred to, and drawn upon, throughout the suite of guidance resources to support the procurement activities. This resource should therefore be used as a reference document to help understand the practical information contained in the guidance resources.

This resource is designed to be used by all WA public sector employees who have responsibility for the management of procurement policies and practices. This resource also supports participation in the WA pilot project which introduces gender equality questions into public sector procurement processes.

Other resources to support the WA public sector pilot are available on the website including a guide for suppliers which outlines the benefits of improving gender equality for businesses and organisations.

Gender Equality in Procurement: WA public sector pilot

Public sector procurement presents an important opportunity for the WA Government to leverage its role as a major capital investor, asset manager and purchaser of goods and services to raise awareness and create behaviour change to progress gender equality.

The Department of Communities (Communities) in partnership with the Department of Finance (Finance) is leading a 1 pilot initiative to embed gender equality into government procurement activities. Nineteen agencies are participating in the pilot, which was initially a one-year Pilot and has now been extended by a further year until June 2024. The pilot incorporates some basic questions relating to gender equality in procurement documents on Tenders WA. Businesses and organisations submitting tenders for contracts with participating agencies will be asked to complete the questions.

- Potential suppliers with 100 or more employees will be asked for confirmation of compliance with reporting requirements under the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth).
- Potential suppliers with fewer than 100 employees will be asked whether they have certain policies or initiatives in place to support gender equality.

The WA Government recognises that organisations and suppliers will have different levels of understanding of gender equality and may be at different points on the continuum towards implementing gender equality measures. The process takes time and involves long-term commitment. Introducing gender equality measures into the procurement process will be undertaken gradually in order to build awareness and understanding of the benefits of gender equality within organisations.

Potential suppliers may have questions about the pilot or about the gender equality questions in the request template on Tenders WA.

Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality

Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality (Stronger Together) is a framework for coordinated action across Government, business, industry and the community to address gender inequality and drive improved outcomes for women over the next 10-years.

Stronger Together includes a key action to use the purchasing power of the WA Government to improve gender equality by supporting suppliers to implement gender equality practices.

Gender equality

Gender equality means that all people, regardless of their gender, have the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. Historically, men in Australia and many other countries have had more legal rights, more access to resources and more opportunities to follow their chosen pathways than women. Although there has been progress towards gender equality, the impact of historical inequalities is still evident in the gender imbalance in many aspects of society, including workplaces.

Women are still responsible for the majority of family care and domestic duties, even when they work full time, which interrupts their careers and contributes to financial vulnerability in retirement. Conversely, gendered expectations can mean that men miss out on having an active role in their children's lives due to long work hours. In the majority of workplaces and industries, women struggle more than men to reach leadership levels even when they are equally well qualified and ambitious. Workplaces can be unsafe for women, especially in male-dominated sectors and industries, with two in five Australian women experiencing workplace sexual harassment.¹

Gender equality in procurement

Gender equality in procurement involves using the procurement of works, goods and services and community services to highlight gender equality issues to businesses and organisations. It can also encourage and support suppliers to improve their performance on gender equality².

¹ Australian Human Rights Commission (2020), [Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report](#)

² UN Women. (2020). Gender-responsive procurement: Guidance note.

The collective decisions made by buyers and suppliers throughout the entirety of the procurement process can have a significant impact on economic security, the improvement of working conditions and gender equality in the workplace³.

Western Australian Social Procurement Framework

The Western Australian Social Procurement Framework (the Framework) was released by Department of Finance (Finance) in 2021 as part of broader procurement reform to improve efficiencies across the public sector.

The Framework has been developed to enable improved social, economic and environmental benefits across the State by leveraging government's procurement activity to achieve community outcomes.

Two of the community outcomes included in the Framework are improved gender equality in the workplace and increased compliance with the relevant legislation.

How does gender equality in procurement work?

Integrating gender equality measures into public procurement contracts and using them to promote equality between women and men form part of the efforts to achieve sustainable and socially responsible procurement activities.

There are a number of ways to integrate gender equality into procurement policies and activities, depending on the barriers and enabling factors of individual organisations and businesses. This can include embedding gender equality measures into the selection criteria, the contract award criteria or the contract performance conditions.

The Gender Equality in Procurement: WA public sector pilot is intended to raise awareness about the benefits of gender equality in organisations and also to collect data that will inform future actions to progress gender equality. Nineteen agencies are participating in the pilot.

Benefits of gender equality in procurement

Gender equality in procurement is a powerful tool to boost women's economic empowerment, advance workplace gender equality and create more gender-equal societies and economies. Gender equality in procurement is a win for individuals, businesses, society and the state economy.

Key business and economic benefits for procuring organisations includes:

- Improves long-term financial performance and business resilience.

³ Oxenbridge, S. & Galea, N. (2020). Gender equitable procurement: Insight paper and guide, WGEA commissioned research paper. Sydney, Australia

- Improves organisational reputation amongst internal and external stakeholders.
- Diversified supplier base promotes innovation and drives competition.
- Recognising and celebrating the success of businesses that support women's employment.

Key benefits of gender equality in procurement for the community includes:

- Increases women's labour force participation
- Increased visibility of women at all levels of the workforce
- Reduces occupational gender segregation, particularly in male-dominated industries
- Reduces gender pay inequality
- Increase the supplier base of women-owned and women-led businesses

Contact

For further information please contact the Department of Communities Women's Interests team.

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