

Hon. Stephen Crawford
Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement
College Park, 5th Floor 777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3
Via email: stephen.crawford@ontario.ca

Re: ORR #25-MPBSD008 – Use of Promotional and Other Engagement Activities to Increase Participation in Ontario Public Sector Procurements

Dear Minister Crawford,

We are pleased that your Ministry is seeking input on how to increase Ontario and Canadian business participation in provincial public sector procurement.

This is a valuable opportunity for Supply Ontario to:

- Recognize that nonprofit social enterprises, co-operatives, and social purpose organizations are local, small, and medium sized businesses. They provide goods and services, but [with additional public benefits](#).
- Ensure that the purchasing power of the province and broader public sector (BPS) specifically leverages nonprofit social enterprises, co-operatives, and other social purpose organizations as suppliers.
- Maximize public spending to diversify supply chains, create local jobs, and build a prosperous and resilient economy for all.

Recommendations

To increase the participation of Ontario and Canadian nonprofit social enterprises, co-operatives, and other social purpose organizations in Ontario Public Sector Procurements, we recommend the following actions:

1. Simplify the RFP process to make it easier for nonprofit social enterprises, co-operatives, and other social purpose organizations to bid and compete:

- Similar to [Alberta](#) and [British Columbia](#), use “short-form RFPs” to help simplify the RFP process.
- Other than RFPs, establish pilot projects and set-aside programs to test new relationships with nonprofit social enterprise suppliers by providing direct awards to those suppliers that align with social procurement objectives. Direct awarding to social enterprises [can be legally used](#) for non-profit organizations and for contracts under \$25,000.
- Simplify terms and conditions in contracts.
- Unbundle large purchases to allow smaller suppliers to compete.

2. Engage in targeted promotional and other engagement activities for nonprofit social enterprises, co-operatives, and other social purpose organizations, with sector partners like ONN:

- Facilitate vendor fairs to connect BPS institutions, Group Purchasing Organizations (GPOs), and local nonprofit social enterprises, co-operatives, and other social purpose organizations.
- Offer targeted workshops on procurement timelines, requirements, opportunities, and early engagement to get advice on considerations for procurement opportunities that address unique nonprofit needs and challenges.
- Develop a communication strategy to raise awareness of procurement opportunities among local nonprofit social enterprises, co-operatives, and other social purpose organizations.
- Ensure that the single digital procurement solution has search features for: region, contract sizes, types of services, and any social value considerations.
- Leverage [existing social enterprise directories](#) to conduct targeted outreach.

3. Work with nonprofit social enterprises, co-operatives, and other social purpose organizations to co-develop a made-in-Ontario social enterprise strategy to scale up efforts and build supply capacity through activities such as:

- Catalyzing incubators.
- Providing mentorship and coaching opportunities.
- Launching business development support.
- Offering low barrier financing for suppliers to scale up.

4. To reach your goal of engaging more local business in public sector procurement, develop a province-wide social procurement policy that commits to purchasing from Ontario and Canadian nonprofit social enterprises and co-operatives.

With [social procurement](#), goods and services will still be purchased through a competitive and transparent bidding process, but new assessments of social value will encourage innovation, and help reach broader policy goals, such as buying local and employing people with multiple barriers. A formal social procurement policy will also enable BPS institutions to set benchmarks and track progress in local procurement.

The policy should:

- Incorporate price, quality, environment, and social factors into consideration when making a procurement decision:
- Include second-tier targets, requiring (or promoting through procurement point systems) its suppliers to (such as construction companies, food services, cleaners, and couriers) increase their own social purchasing by half a percentage point each year.

- Embed social procurement goals within RFP processes and amend the BPS Directive to include procurement standards.

Conclusion

Ontario's nonprofit social enterprises and co-operatives can boost the province's innovation and prosperity, but to do so, they need support from the Ontario government to access procurement opportunities. By implementing the activities outlined in this submission, the provincial government can maximize the impact of public procurement to deliver the best overall value for taxpayers, increase local business opportunities, while solving multiple social, economic, and environmental issues at the same time.

Sincerely,



Pamela Uppal-Sandhu
Co-Executive Director (Interim), Director of Policy
Ontario Nonprofit Network

About ONN

ONN is the independent nonprofit network for the 58,000 nonprofits in Ontario, focused on policy, advocacy and services to strengthen the sector as a key pillar of our society and economy. We work to create a public policy environment that allows nonprofits to thrive. We engage our network of diverse nonprofit organizations across Ontario to work together on issues affecting the sector and channel the voices of our network to government, funders, and other stakeholders.