



BUY SOCIAL CANADA SUMMIT REPORT

Exploring the Future of Social Procurement

Prepared by Buy Social Canada

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Executive Summary

This report is based on information shared at the Buy Social Canada Summit: Exploring the Future of Social Procurement, hosted by Buy Social Canada, November 27 and 28, 2017 in Gatineau, Quebec.

Over 115 participants attended the Summit from provinces and territories across Canada, including British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Nunavut. Participants represented social enterprises, community, intermediaries, private sector, and municipal, provincial, and federal governments.

This report details the content and feedback shared during the Learning Exchanges, segments of the Summit that discussed social procurement policy, programs, and experiences. The Learning Exchanges focused on the following four social procurement topics: Government Social Procurement, Infrastructure and Community Benefit Agreements, Anchor Institutions, and Beyond Corporate Social Responsibility and Charity.

This report begins with themes from the Summit, followed by top-level themes and concerns, and then by specific purchaser and supplier recommendations that were consistently mentioned during the Learning Exchanges. Next, it highlights the themes and recommended next steps to seize opportunities and overcome barriers associated with each Learning Exchange topic. It concludes with final recommendations shared during the Closing Plenary.

Why is Social Procurement Important?

The opening panel, entitled “Why Social Procurement?” explored community, private sector, and government perspectives on the importance of social procurement.

- Community Perspective
 - Provides opportunity and equal access for people with barriers to traditional employment to change their lives through meaningful work
- Private Sector Perspective
 - Adds another value lens to why people do business
 - Develops new partnerships between the business community and the social/public community
- Government Perspective
 - ***The most important reason why it needs to continue to emerge is because we spend so much money at the government level, if we can even take a small part of the spending and deploy it to social procurement, imagine the impact it can create.” –Parliamentary Secretary MacKinnon***
 - The government saves money on social service programs and it creates long term benefits for communities

Key Themes from Opening Conversation with Minister Qualtrough, Public Services and Procurement Canada

“If we can begin to think about how we can procure more socially as we repurpose housing and consider the rest of our supply chain, we will be able to access more opportunities as a government to procure socially and build the business case to adapt policy for social procurement to be a part of the regular government purchasing process.” – Minister Qualtrough

“We have to attribute value to broader social policy objectives we are trying to achieve as a government.” – Minister Qualtrough

- Minister Qualtrough's key objective is to modernize procurement and work horizontally across different government departments. She emphasized the need to look at the social benefits, not just the price/quality and talked about the need to focus on best value for purchasing decision.
- Social housing is an easy starting point to implement social procurement practices, which can lead to policy shifts, in getting the best value for purchasing.
- Minister Qualtrough and Public Services and Procurement Canada want to develop a set of guidelines regarding the ethical approach to procuring clothing in Canada. This can support the national culture shift towards ethical procurement of all goods.
- Minister Qualtrough encouraged big ideas regarding social procurement and emphasized that nothing is off the table.

Top-Level Themes & Concerns

The following is a summary of what we heard from various stakeholder groups participating in the Summit discussions. This includes gaps in the sector, concerns, and top-level themes that were consistently highlighted by social enterprise suppliers and purchasers.

- A need for further education and awareness building of social procurement and community benefits
 - a. Awareness for all stakeholders, especially government and private sector leaders, of the opportunities related to and the value of social procurement
 - b. Technical training for procurement practitioners
 - c. Development of a toolkit to share best practices, case studies, social enterprise directory, definitions, and data
 - d. Dispel myths, misperceptions, especially related to trade agreements and legal barriers
- Social impact measurement methodology is critical to be able to demonstrate the value of social procurement
 - a. Identify best practices for measurement and evaluation, and possibly identify one universal streamlined method
 - b. Collecting clear, numerical data is especially important for private sector
 - c. Impact stories are important and should be circulated outside of the social enterprise sector, with mainstream media
- Intermediary organizations serve a necessary role for social procurement design, consultation, social enterprise certification, monitoring and compliance, and relationship building
- Social Procurement Coordinator positions need to be created in community, government procurement departments and private/anchor institution procurement departments
- Collaboration and relationship building is a fundamental component of social procurement
 - a. Increased collaboration and relationship building between all sectors - exchanges about daily practices needed in order to create effective strategies/partnerships - organize roundtables to identify all stakeholder needs.
 - b. The government can gain a better understanding of community needs through collaborative partnerships, which could encourage a culture shift within government and private sector and help generate growth for social enterprises
 - c. Social enterprises working together, joining networks
- Take action. Find an internal champion within government, institutions, or corporations. Government should see itself as an activator for social procurement. They have the power to drive the movement.

Purchaser Themes

- Identify internal champions to shift culture and push for change from the inside
- Join networks of suppliers and purchasers to build relationships and learn about best practices and examples
- Purchaser concerns: capacity of social enterprises to get the job done

Supplier Themes

- A need for increased support for the social enterprise ecosystem. Specifically, mentorship and help identifying and bidding on contract opportunities as a means to improve social enterprises' capacity and scalability
- Social enterprises recommend more support for market development, including a searchable social enterprise database and support accessing new bid opportunities

Key Themes from Learning Exchanges

Government Social Procurement

- Diversify government purchasing from social enterprise beyond the employment based social enterprises, such as construction and catering. This leads to social enterprises' ability to provide long term, more diversified skill development job opportunities
- All government staff and political leaders need further education about social procurement models, its benefits, and how to implement it in regular practice
- Raise awareness of the social procurement value proposition to top political leaders via mandated training
- Legislate social procurement and community benefits in government policy, request for proposal processes, and procurement practitioners' roles and responsibilities
- The Federal Government can demonstrate leadership by piloting social procurement projects to address our country's complex social problems.
- All levels of government need to take initiative to educate and support social enterprises on how to bid on requests for proposals and win contracts

“Stop trying to be so perfect, just start incorporating social into the procurement practices. Take the risk and try and get it done.” – John Baker, Consultant, Panelist

Infrastructure & Community Benefit Agreements (CBA)

- Active partnerships are essential between community, developers, and municipal government in the design, operational, and implementation process of both community benefit agreements and infrastructure plans
- Strong CBA policy requires early engagement with all stakeholders, legally binding agreements and includes measurable and monitored targets and timelines.
- Social procurement requirements need to be clearly stated in contracts and the occupancy and building permits should be dependent on the fulfillment of those requirements. Examples of requirements include targeted employment for people with barriers, sourcing goods and services from social enterprise, and community-based training and apprenticeship programs.
- The government and private sector can demonstrate leadership by aligning and connecting government projects with community, agreeing to develop and implement a community benefit agreement policy or framework in collaboration with community, advocating alongside community in raising awareness and educating unions about community benefit agreement process and their role
- Success stories relevant to community benefit agreements and social procurement need to be shared publicly on mainstream media to increase civic support.

“We need to see the community and people as a source of power to make the change” – Alejandra Bravo, The Broadbent Institute, Panelist

Anchor Institutions

- Both anchor institutions and the social enterprise/social procurement sector need to better understand each other’s operations, businesses, and how money is spent within anchor institutions. Anchor institutions also need to be educated about perceived barriers of social procurement, to understand that social enterprises can relieve some of the pain points and pressures of current contractors (i.e. social procurement is not restrictive to legal agreements and social enterprises can meet demand and deliver quality goods and services on time).
- Senior level management and board members of anchor institutions need to take the first step and join community networks relevant to social procurement and community benefits
- Social procurement advocates need to build champions inside anchor institutions' boards of directors.
- Anchor institutions can support the activation of social procurement pilot projects, especially post-secondary institutions
- All levels of government and anchor institutions need to take a collaborative role in promoting social procurement strategies specific to anchor institutions

“Developing a social procurement program is the hardest easiest thing you can do as a city.” – Wayne Chu, AnchorTO, Panelist

Tools and Resources for Social Procurement

This segment of the Summit demonstrated various tools to help both social enterprise suppliers and social purchasers engage in social procurement. Each description contains a link to the resource. Slides from PowerPoint presentations can be found in Appendix C.

- Lynda Rankin, Manager of Sustainable Purchasing at the Government of Nova Scotia, presented a video highlighting her government’s commitment to advancing social enterprise through their [Social Enterprise Framework](#).
- Alisha Maxfield, Manager of Community Engagement at Buy Social Canada, presented a social purchasing bid evaluation tool, called [Ethelo](#). Ethelo is an online intuitive interface for collaborative stakeholder engagement, useful for social purchasing policy design, criteria selection, and vendor bid review. Buy Social Canada supports purchasers in including a social value component into their bid process and in determining what criteria should be included in a social procurement framework. See Appendix C for more details from the presentation.
- François Vermette, Director of Development and Operations at Chantier de l’économie sociale, launched Akcelos, the online marketplace for social purchasing. [Akcelos](#) is a national platform that enables social enterprises to display their products and services on their online directory as well as sell directly online.
- Anne-Marie Saulnier, Director of Espace québécois de concertation sur les pratiques d’achat responsable (ECPAR), presented the Responsible Procurement Barometer, a responsible purchasing practice ranking tool that helps organizations assess their progress in responsible procurement and identify areas for improvement. The 2016 Responsible Procurement Barometer Report is available [here](#). See Appendix C for more details from the presentation.

Other tools: The Summit used various case studies to illustrate social procurement practices and policies across Canada. These case studies are available on our [website](#).

Beyond Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) & Charity

- Education is crucial to making corporate executives and board members aware of the opportunities with social procurement and motivating them to shift culture. Education will help debunk myths about what social enterprises can do.
- True partnerships need to be developed between community service type organizations and corporations. All sectors (community, private, and public) need to work collaboratively to build the value proposition for operational CSR and to move beyond the idea that CSR is cutting cheques. One means of knowledge sharing is community roundtables.
- Find internal champions within corporations to shift culture and help build the value proposition for social procurement.

"Invest in the community's future through CSR and this way you invest in your company too."- Bill Schaper, Imagine Canada, Panelist

Closing Plenary

- Take action on social procurement, even if it's risky. Allow for failure, and keep moving forward.
- Find the expertise and use the expertise
- Educate and create awareness around social procurement and its impact
 - Share best practices and case studies
 - Develop tool kits with concrete tools and frameworks
 - Provide procurement officers and policy makers with technical guidance
- Find champions in local government, institutions, and the private sector
- Start evaluating the impact, setting targets and developing measurement tools
- Producer approach rather than consumer approach
- Have a central intermediary for communications on this movement



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