



# Surveying Your Vendor Community to Assess Satisfaction and Identify Pain Points

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## In this how-to guide, you will:

- Understand how hearing from current and prospective vendors can provide valuable feedback on your procurement process.
- Learn how to design and implement a survey to understand challenges that businesses — especially those that are small, local, and minority-owned face —when interacting with your government.
- Read about concrete examples and promising practices in vendor survey implementation across governments.

# Best Practices in Vendor Surveys

## Why is it important to engage vendors?

### ***When vendors have positive experiences, government delivers better results***

To deliver critical services for residents, government agencies frequently contract with external vendors. When the procurement process is efficient, inviting, and inclusive, more organizations and firms will want to work with your government, resulting in greater competition. Having more proposers can then position the government to negotiate the best solution at the optimal price.

Furthermore, positive relationships between vendors and governments during a contract can lead to more collaboration and problem-solving while services are being delivered, which drives better outcomes for residents.

### ***Vendor feedback creates a call to action***

Although you may hear anecdotally from firms that parts of your procurement process drive vendors crazy, reaching out to vendors directly can provide a more complete picture, test assumptions, and unearth new perspectives. You may even be able to identify small, low-lift changes to vastly improve the vendor experience! Plus, this step signals to vendors that you care about their experience and want to be a supportive partner.

Understanding vendor perspectives is also key to increasing your government's ability to contract with minority- or women-owned, small, and local businesses. These firms can face unique challenges due to size, industry, and experience or inexperience with government contracting. Understanding these barriers is the first step to reducing bias within your procurement process and opening the door to a larger, more diverse vendor pool.

## Why are surveys an effective tool for hearing from vendors?

### ***Broad outreach brings in diverse and representative perspectives***

Surveys are relatively low-resource and easy-to-administer ways to gather feedback from many vendors. Surveys can be run on paid platforms such as SurveyMonkey or Qualtrics or using free tools such as Microsoft Forms or Google Forms. These surveys can be easily repeated over time to see how opinions evolve. A survey could be a large-scale annual survey or a micro-survey that asks just a few satisfaction questions to proposers responding to a specific RFP.

By gathering information from a large pool of vendors, you can analyze trends by vendor type (e.g., small businesses, frequent bidders) or sector (e.g., construction, IT). You may be interested in how the experiences of minority-owned businesses compare to others, or whether firms who have never bid have different perceptions about contracting with your government compared to your existing vendor pool. Surveys enable you to gather this data with less effort than one-on-one interviews or focus groups (although these qualitative tools pair well with surveys).

**Focus groups** are an opportunity to go deeper into survey findings to explore and add additional nuance to opinions shared. For instance, in one GPL engagement, survey respondents ranked prequalification of vendors as a contracting technique of interest. Focus groups allowed facilitators to understand why: participants wanted to be in the system so they would not need to submit repetitive paperwork and could receive more timely payments. Although prequalification was one way to achieve this type of efficiency, the focus group discussion suggested that a simplification of requirements and clearer communication throughout the contracting process could be beneficial as well.

The GPL has found that successful focus groups use these key techniques:

- Have a clear participant identity (e.g., professional service contractors, or members of a specific ethnic chamber of commerce)
- Establish group norms and confidentiality (e.g., “Step in, step back” to allow others time to speak)
- Establish a topical focus and follow a prepared set of questions, leaving adequate time for discussion
- Maintain a small group size for discussion (around 5-8 people)

For a more detailed exploration of focus groups, and some tools to use in hosting a focus group, check out the PEN publication [\*\*Get In Focus: Using Stakeholder Focus Groups to Improve Your Procurement Process.\*\*](#)

### ***A survey is a chance for your government to build relationships and trust***

The survey development and outreach phases also present opportunities to connect with community-based and entrepreneur support organizations to help you identify potential vendors to survey, learn about local priorities, and share new developments your government has to offer.

**Table A. Characteristics of a good vendor survey**

While vendor surveys can vary in size, scope, and format, the most effective surveys we’ve seen contain the following characteristics.

CHARACTERISTIC	CONSIDERATIONS AND ACTIONS
<p><b>Actionable:</b></p> <p>Use only questions that collect actionable data tied to your survey’s goals.</p>	<p>Start by identifying your goals for the survey and then craft each question to help you meet your goal.</p> <p>For each question, carefully consider: Does this question reveal something new about the vendor community? Will this question provide new information or evidence to prompt a change, such as a new practice or updated process step?</p> <p>Only use as many questions as you need to achieve your goals. No more, no fewer.</p>
<p><b>Specific:</b></p> <p>Collect information about the vendors themselves.</p>	<p>Understand who the respondents are and how they have worked with your government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First, the basics: location (zip code), business type (LLC versus nonprofit) and size (less than or greater than 100 employees), products/services offered.</li> <li>• Then, understand how respondents have interacted with your jurisdiction previously: Are they a current or past vendor? Have they bid but were unsuccessful? Have they never bid but could in the future?</li> <li>• The vendor survey may also help you identify how many businesses identify as small, local, or minority-owned or women-owned (MWBE).</li> </ul> <p>These questions can help pinpoint disparities in your engagement efforts and help your jurisdiction better target subsequent outreach.</p>
<p><b>Targeted:</b></p> <p>Apply specific questions to the relevant audience (e.g., never bidders).</p>	<p>If you’d like to ask different questions to different categories of respondents (current vendors vs. those who have never held a contract, for instance), consider adding <b>“conditional branching”</b> that creates a custom path through the survey based on respondents’ answers.</p> <p>For example, a question that identifies prospective vendors who have never bid could then put those respondents on a path to only see questions about why they have never pursued a contract, rather than asking them about their experience as vendors, which would not be relevant to them.</p>

CHARACTERISTIC	CONSIDERATIONS AND ACTIONS
<p><b>Accessible:</b></p> <p>Employ simple language and offer a pleasant experience for respondents.</p>	<p><b>ACCESSIBLE:</b> Keep out the jargon! Use simple, accessible language throughout. Test this language with colleagues who are not as familiar with procurement and contracting or - ideally - with a small sample of firms.</p> <p><b>ENGAGING:</b> To keep respondents engaged, diversify your question format. Employ a mix of binary (yes-no), Likert (5-point scale, such as Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree), and free response questions.</p> <p>Binary and Likert questions are easy for respondents to fill out and give you quantifiable data you can analyze readily. Free response questions allow respondents to add detail and context as part of their responses.</p> <p><b>CONSIDERATE:</b> Provide sufficient time for vendors to respond to the survey (at least two weeks, with one or more reminders after the initial invitation).</p> <p>Create ways to stay in touch with respondents! Ask vendors to opt-in if they would like more opportunities to provide feedback.</p>
<p><b>Fast:</b></p> <p>Keep it short!</p>	<p>Businesses are busy. Make sure the survey takes <b>no longer than 15 minutes</b> to complete.</p>

**Table B. What Survey Questions Should You Avoid?**

It's crucial that each of your survey questions is direct, goal-oriented, and accessible. Often, survey writers overcomplicate the questions or fail to pinpoint key information.

WEAK QUESTION	WHY IT'S WEAK	STRONGER QUESTION
What do you think is wrong with the bidding, procurement, contracting, and payment processes in the City of Metropolis?	<p>It's imprecise and contains a judgment that something is wrong:</p> <p>A respondent can take this question in many different directions and address distinct aspects of the bidding process. That makes this question hard to analyze across respondents to identify potential solutions.</p> <p>While it can be helpful to have open-ended questions, it's best to make them specific and targeted.</p>	<p>Choose one aspect of the process and provide a set of responses for respondents to select from. You may need to include a separate question for each aspect of the process.</p> <p>"When bidding on a contracting opportunity with the City of Metropolis, it was clear what I was required to submit as part of my bid."</p> <p>Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly Disagree</p>
What activities or initiatives would best promote procurement innovation and vendor equality in Metropolis?	<p>It's too vague and filled with jargon:</p> <p>Without accessible definitions or examples of jargon like "procurement innovation" and "vendor equality," respondents may not understand the question.</p>	<p>Avoid or define jargon to make it clear that you are looking for their ideas on how to improve customer service. Use concrete language and examples.</p> <p>What would make you more likely to recommend working with the City of Metropolis? (For example, faster payments following invoice submission, more feedback on work quality, or removing a specific contracting requirement.)</p> <p>Free response</p>
What was the annual revenue for your company over the last five years at each of your locations?	<p>It provides minimal value to you and may be information a firm is uncomfortable disclosing:</p> <p>This question both makes assumptions (it implies the firm must have multiple locations) and would likely take significant work for the respondent to complete. You'd probably get few responses to a question like this.</p>	<p>There may be proxy questions that respondents feel more comfortable answering that help you get at a similar idea - in this case, the general size and stability of the business.</p> <p>How many full-time employees are currently employed at your firm or organization?</p> <p>1-10   11-50   51-100   101-500   Over 500</p> <p>How long has your firm or organization been in business?</p> <p>Less than one year   One to five years   Five to ten years   Ten to twenty years   Twenty years or more</p>

WEAK QUESTION	WHY IT'S WEAK	STRONGER QUESTION
For Metropolis, one of our major programmatic goals is to increase vendor equity. Let's say we launched a series of outreach efforts. First, a virtual webinar specifically targeted to small, local, and minority/women-owned businesses. Then we would establish trainings and coaching services, such as mentor-protege programs and technical support on select IFBs and RFPs, to build capacity of small/local businesses. Last, we would offer virtual networking events on a quarterly basis. Together, do you think these would make it more likely for you to pursue a bid opportunity with Metropolis?	<p>It's too complicated and hard to follow:</p> <p>You are left waiting until the paragraph to know what the question is. Several different program ideas are squeezed into one question (webinars, training, vendor equity).</p>	<p>Instead, make it simple. Keep the question short and use the program ideas as suggested responses, not part of the question itself:</p> <p>What top three things could the City of Metropolis offer to increase your interest in bidding on future contracting opportunities?</p> <p>(Select 2-3)</p> <p>Host informational webinars</p> <p>Promote contracting opportunities over social media and email</p> <p>Post clearer instructions and informational materials on the Metropolis website</p> <p>Reduce requirements involved in putting together a bid or proposal</p> <p>Increase communication, instruction, and outreach in languages other than English (e.g., Spanish, Vietnamese)</p> <p>Other: _____</p>

## How can you successfully administer a vendor survey?

### ***Bring your team along***

Early in your planning process, **consider who should be involved** in developing, approving, and administering the survey. In a city government, this might involve the Purchasing Agent or Chief Procurement Officer, a buyer team to support outreach, economic development, legal, communications and community affairs staff. Given the public nature of the survey, the Mayor or City Manager's office may be the final approvers. Develop a plan for how to engage each of these stakeholders to leverage their expertise and help you gain buy-in.

**Identify your key objectives** for the survey. Consult existing internal information to develop an initial perspective on challenges and goals of the survey – you may review existing data, meet with key internal staff, and review department policies to help identify pain points or focus areas for your survey. From here, identify the 3-5 big questions your government is trying to answer. Do these questions map onto any existing strategic plans or key performance indicators (KPIs) you have?

**Set key milestones and roles** with your project team. Milestones should include when the survey will be launched, when reminders will be sent, how long the survey will be open, and who will be responsible for each step. Survey respondents tend to answer in bursts based on email outreach.

If leadership is concerned around the potential for negative feedback, remember to **frame the survey as an opportunity and not a vulnerability**. The survey is an opportunity for your government to present itself as a partner who is willing to listen to the community - and take action to improve. Share this framing in your outreach to participants and in the introduction to the survey itself.

### ***Build trust***

**Engage community-based and entrepreneur support organizations** (for instance, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, business associations, small business incubators) not just in final outreach, but in the development of the survey and its plan. These organizations carry trusted relationships with the business community and have additional insights on how to reach vendors.

**Build trust with participants** by making it clear that participation is anonymous and voluntary and will have no impact on future bidding the firm does with the government. If any identifying data, such as emails, are collected, store this data separately from responses.

Finally, before launching the survey, **pilot the survey with a small group of staff and vendors** to catch any errors, estimate the time needed to respond, evaluate survey flow, and check if content is clear and readable.

### ***Use creative vendor outreach and communication methods***

Promote the survey through all reasonable channels available to your government. These options may include direct email, mail, social media, press releases, and advertisements. Design your survey to be compatible with mobile devices, increasingly the device survey takers use.

Your primary outreach targets will likely include existing lists of vendors your government has, from registered vendors in an e-procurement system to current vendors in a financial system and businesses registered with the state. You may have the option to contact these vendors through government e-procurement software or a CRM.

In one GPL-led survey, a city wanted to reach local businesses who had never contracted with the city before, and who would not be in the city's vendor database. The city mailed out postcards to a subset of licensed businesses in industries the city contracts with to invite them to take the survey. The postcards used a simple QR code that linked to the online survey (see example in appendix).

Reach out to colleagues, small business groups, community-based organizations, incubator and accelerator programs, and additional partners to spread the word. Each community has its own set of trusted messengers to engage! To make it easier for external organizations to share the survey with their members, include language and graphics that the organization can incorporate in an email, newsletter, social media post or flier.

You can consider translating the survey and outreach material to other commonly spoken languages in the community you are targeting to promote accessibility.

## What should I do with the data once I have administered the survey?

1. First, prepare basic **summary statistics**. How many firms responded? What kind of firms were they (e.g., location, number of employees, industry)? How many identified as small, local, and/or minority- or women-owned businesses? How many hold contracts with other agencies?
2. Next, **calculate percentages or tabulations for all binary (yes-no) and Likert (5-point scale) questions** for the entire sample. For Likert scale questions, you might consider combining some response categories. For instance, what percentage of respondents said that they had “good” OR “very good” experiences as a vendor? What percentage of respondents felt the process was unfair (“unfair” OR “very unfair”)?
3. Determine how to analyze your data to answer the survey's main questions. Looking at your summary statistics, prepare **a list of respondent categories you want to learn more about**. Categories could include whether they have contracted with the government before; whether they are small, local, or minority-owned or women-owned businesses; and whether they hold contracts with other public agencies.

**Confidentiality** is essential to vendor surveys. For some specific user categories, your total count may be so small as to accidentally reveal the opinions of individual respondents, even when data is summarized. For example, if only two firms were identified as being owned by disabled veterans, reporting out the results for that category could inadvertently reveal the identity of those vendors. Only conduct (and promote) specific analyses for groups whose size is large enough to preserve the anonymity of its members. You can incorporate small samples into larger groups (i.e., for the example above creating a category such as “minority, women, and disabled veteran-owned businesses”).

4. Next list the questions where you want to compare responses between the selected category and all respondents. Then, **calculate the same percentages you collected for the broad sample, but now for each selected respondent category.**
5. Then review the **free response answers.** As you review responses, make a list of shared themes. Note any feedback you want to bring up with colleagues or stakeholders. Consider quantifying the number of firms commenting on specific themes.
6. Last, track powerful quotes from vendors that illustrate a unique challenge or capture a common critique or observation. These quotes can be powerful to include in presentations or summary reports.

Collectively, these six steps will help make your data analysis thorough, holistic, and compelling to stakeholders.

## How should I communicate my findings and act?

Now it’s time to present your findings to the many internal and external stakeholders curious about the results.

### **First, present to internal stakeholders**

When presenting your findings, be sure to explain your assumptions, use accessible language, and write clear, pithy takeaways.

- Identify whether your questions have been adequately answered by the survey. The survey may highlight the need to further understand some challenges or potential opportunities before moving to action. Vendor interviews, focus groups, or additional qualitative research with specific sub-groups of vendors (e.g., small construction contractors) may be necessary.
- Reflect on the first steps your jurisdiction could take to address suggestions from vendors. In brainstorming next steps, it is often helpful to delineate ideas by the potential impact, resources required, and how soon the next step can be enacted. Tackling a couple of quick, actionable items that address vendor needs can build early trust.

### **Next, share takeaways with vendors, community groups, and the public**

Proactively sharing findings can further illustrate goodwill and build a positive, collaborative relationship with the vendor community. Consider sharing an overall summary of the following: 2-3 areas of strength, 2-3 areas of growth, and 2-3 overarching ways the jurisdiction is now planning to address those areas of growth.

### **Make vendor surveys a recurring, sustainable activity**

With internal stakeholders, discuss how often the jurisdiction plans on conducting a vendor survey. Annual or biennial vendor surveys are common in many jurisdictions. To foster sustainability and consistency, create well-labeled folders on shared drives where current and future staff can access past survey questions, communications, data analysis tools, and project management resources like timelines and divisions of responsibility. Don’t let turnover doom your vendor survey efforts!

### **Celebrate!**

You did it! This is a lengthy process that takes effort and courage. Make sure to acknowledge everyone’s contributions and celebrate as a team.

## Examples

Examples of surveys from three cities (Long Beach, CA; Syracuse, NY; and Tulsa, OK) demonstrate the motivation for surveying vendors, the approach used, and how the results drove change.

LONG BEACH, CA	
<b>Challenge</b>	After a year of internal procurement process improvements, the City of Long Beach was ready to understand vendor experience to shift efforts externally. The Purchasing Division was also planning a transition to a new e-procurement system and didn’t want to leave any vendors behind.
<b>Solution</b>	The city launched a vendor survey, focusing outreach both on existing vendors and prospective vendors, especially local, small, and minority-led firms. The city engaged entrepreneur support organizations, departments across the city, and its vendor database, while targeting local businesses with direct mail invitations to take the survey.
<b>Outcome</b>	Nearly 500 vendors took the survey, greater than the number of vendors that typically bid in a year. The survey results offered the city a strong starting place to build on high vendor engagement in its e-procurement platform transition, increase transparency and efficiency to remedy differences in perceptions among past and prospective vendors, expand communications and outreach, and focus on increasing MWBE market participation. The survey also laid the groundwork to conduct focus groups with targeted categories of vendors to better understand unique industry concerns.

## SYRACUSE, NY

<b>Challenge</b>	The city shares purchasing responsibilities with Onondaga County and largely had not engaged directly with its vendor community. Syracuse leaders wanted to gauge interest in contracting, understand why certain RFPs had low participation, and communicate a message of city support to vendors.
<b>Solution</b>	The city launched a vendor engagement survey to past vendors and its minority- and women-owned business enterprise (MWBE) business directory, offering them the opportunity to share overall perceptions and offer concrete recommendations.
<b>Outcome</b>	Of the nearly 200 vendors who responded to the survey, half were Syracuse-based and 80% had under 50 employees. A key finding was that small and local vendors wanted to be aware of upcoming procurements with more advanced notice, so they would be better able to prepare to bid on opportunities. This finding has led the city to think about new and increased outreach strategies to the vendor community.

## TULSA, OK

<b>Challenge</b>	The city had a poor understanding of vendors' experience with the current purchasing process, especially for small businesses and minority-led firms. Never had the Purchasing team explicitly reached out to the local business community to get their perspective on the Tulsa contracting experience.
<b>Solution</b>	Tulsa's Purchasing team launched an online business engagement survey that gave 1750+ firms the opportunity to share their suggestions related to Tulsa's procurement process and vendor outreach. The survey offered customized questions based on vendors' past experiences with Tulsa procurement: 1) whether the firm was a current vendor, 2) whether they had bid but not yet successfully won a contract, and 3) whether they had not yet bid on a contract. Over two weeks, the City of Tulsa promoted the survey over email and social media to collect responses.
<b>Outcome</b>	Over 200 vendors responded! The city now has a clear picture of vendors' top needs: communication, opportunities for innovation, and additional outreach efforts. They know actionable steps to make it easier for new businesses to participate in city contracting.

## Tools

### Suggested Survey Questions and Structure

The below survey templates embody many of the best practices described throughout this document.

#### Survey Opening

[Jurisdiction] is seeking to understand your experiences and suggestions related to how [Jurisdiction] purchases goods and services. All feedback is anonymous and will have no impact on any contracting you do with the [jurisdiction]. If you have questions, email or call [point of contact].

#### Survey Questions

The sample set of survey questions below explains which questions are used for which categories of respondents.

**Table 1. Opening Section**

Feel free to skip any questions that don't apply to you.

QUESTION	APPLICABLE CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT
<p>Have you ever done business with JURISDICTION?</p> <p>Yes. I am or have been a vendor with JURISDICTION.</p> <p>Not yet. I have bid on a JURISDICTION contracting opportunity but have not been awarded the bid.</p> <p>No. I have never bid on a JURISDICTION contracting opportunity.</p> <p>Note: This is the question that creates the branching logic, i.e., determines which set(s) of questions the respondent will answer. For instance, current/former vendors answer the next set of questions, while “never bidders” skip that section.</p>	All
<p>Which types of business opportunities have you responded to with JURISDICTION?</p> <p>Select 1 or more</p> <p>Quote under \$25,000   Invitation to Bid (\$25,000 and above)  </p> <p>Request for Proposals (\$25,000 and above)   Unknown</p> <p>Note: Replace these options with the ones most appropriate for your jurisdiction.</p>	All
<p>Which types of business opportunities have you been awarded a contract for with JURISDICTION?</p> <p>Select 1 or more</p> <p>Quote under \$25,000   Invitation to Bid (\$25,000 and above)  </p> <p>Request for Proposals (\$25,000 and above)   Unknown</p>	All

**Table 2. Your Vendor Experience with JURISDICTION**

Feel free to skip any questions that don't apply to you.

QUESTION	APPLICABLE CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT
<p>What was the last year you were a vendor with the JURISDICTION? (If you are a current vendor, please put current year.)</p> <p>Short response</p>	Current/former vendors
<p>Which department(s) do you work with in the JURISDICTION?</p> <p>List all departments here.   Unsure</p>	Current/former vendors
<p>My experience as a vendor for JURISDICTION has been positive.</p> <p>(Likert scale - Strongly agree to strongly disagree)</p>	Current/former vendors
<p>I receive payment from JURISDICTION within a reasonable time frame after submitting an invoice.</p> <p>(Likert scale - Strongly agree to strongly disagree)</p>	Current/former vendors
<p>While working with JURISDICTION, I am able to propose innovative solutions to challenges JURISDICTION faces.</p> <p>(Likert scale - Strongly agree to strongly disagree)</p>	Current/former vendors
<p>Would you recommend working with JURISDICTION to other firms?</p> <p>Yes/No/Unsure</p> <p>Note: Consider using a 1-10 scale or a Net Promoter Score for this question, as well.</p>	Current/former vendors
<p>What could staff do to improve your experience being a vendor, or make you more likely to recommend working with JURISDICTION? (For example, faster payments following invoice submission, more feedback on work quality, or removing a specific restriction or contracting requirement.)</p> <p>Free response</p>	Current/former vendors

**Table 3. Your Experience Bidding on a JURISDICTION Contracting Opportunity**

Feel free to skip any questions that don't apply to you.

QUESTION	APPLICABLE CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT
<p>Proposing or bidding on a business opportunity with JURISDICTION is generally efficient.</p> <p>(Likert scale - Strongly agree to strongly disagree)</p>	Current/former vendors and proposers/bidders
<p>JURISDICTION is generally fair in how it evaluates my bids.</p> <p>(Likert scale - Strongly agree to strongly disagree)</p>	Current/former vendors and proposers/bidders
<p>When bidding on a contracting opportunity with JURISDICTION, I had the opportunity to highlight my organization's strengths.</p> <p>(Likert scale - Strongly agree to strongly disagree)</p>	Current/former vendors and proposers/bidders
<p>In general, I believe that JURISDICTION wants to do business with a wide variety of firms.</p> <p>(Likert scale - Strongly agree to strongly disagree)</p>	Current/former vendors and proposers/bidders
<p>Which statements apply to your experience last proposing or bidding on a contracting opportunity?</p> <p>I understood what JURISDICTION hoped to achieve from the resulting contract or purchase.</p> <p>I understood what should be included in my bid or proposal.</p> <p>I understood how to submit my bid or proposal.</p> <p>I understood how the winner would be selected.</p> <p>I understood how I would learn who won.</p> <p>I understood what would happen next if my bid or proposal was selected.</p> <p>I understood what my role would be as a vendor while working with JURISDICTION.</p>	Current/former vendors and proposers/bidders

QUESTION	APPLICABLE CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT
<p>JURISDICTION aims to be efficient, fair, transparent, and equitable in our contracting practices. Have you experienced any of the following challenges with a JURISDICTION contracting opportunity?</p> <p>(Select all that apply)</p> <p>The specifications were overly restrictive</p> <p>The bonding requirements were overly restrictive</p> <p>The insurance requirements were overly restrictive</p> <p>JURISDICTION's stated budget or overhead limits were too low</p> <p>I did not agree with JURISDICTION's planned scope of work</p> <p>I didn't believe that my firm would be selected because the process felt unfair</p> <p>I didn't believe my firm would be selected because there were many other qualified firms</p> <p>I worried about my firm's capacity to take on the project</p> <p>I did not feel I had adequate time or staff to put together a proposal or bid</p> <p>The start date for the work or project was unpredictable</p> <p>If you identified any barriers in the questions above, please provide more information below:</p> <p>(text entry)</p>	Current/former vendors and proposers/bidders

**Table 4. Learning More About Your Interest Working with JURISDICTION**

Feel free to skip any questions that don't apply to you.

QUESTION	APPLICABLE CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT
What has prevented you from bidding with JURISDICTION? (Select 1 or more)	
I don't know how to find out about contracting opportunities	
The specifications were too restrictive	
The bonding requirements were too restrictive	
The insurance requirements were too restrictive	
JURISDICTION's stated budget or overhead limits were too limiting or unreasonable	
JURISDICTION's planned approach seemed flawed	Never haves
I didn't believe that my firm would be selected because the process feels unfair	
I didn't believe my firm would be selected because there are too many other qualified firms	
I don't have the capacity to take on projects, or projects are too large for my firm	
I don't have adequate time or staff to put together a proposal or bid	
Too unpredictable when the work or project would begin	
I fear I wouldn't be paid promptly	
Other	
<i>What are the largest barriers you face in becoming a vendor with JURISDICTION?</i> Free response	Never haves

QUESTION	APPLICABLE CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT
<i>What top three changes could JURISDICTION make for you to be likely to bid on future contracting opportunities?</i> (Select 3)	
Host informational webinars	
Promote contracting opportunities over social media and email	
Host networking opportunities for you to connect with other firms	
Post clearer instructions and informational materials on JURISDICTION website	All
Reduce requirements involved in putting together a bid or proposal	
Increase communication, instruction, and outreach in languages other than English (e.g., Spanish, Vietnamese)	
Expand coaching, programming, and technical support for small and local businesses	
Have a JURISDICTION staff person able to provide support	
Increase the time to respond to an Request for Proposals or Invitation to Bid	
Better forecasting of upcoming contracting opportunities	

**Table 5. Basic Firm Information**

Your answers to these questions help us understand the experiences of organizations like yours. This information is anonymous and will not be used to identify respondents.

**GPL Note:** Collect this information at the close of the survey to encourage higher response rates.

QUESTION	APPLICABLE CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT
<i>In a few words, please share what types of services/goods your firm offers.</i>	
Short response	All
<b>Note:</b> You can consider adding a drop-down menu or a selection of options to make this question easier to analyze.	
<i>What type of enterprise is your firm?</i>	All
Non-Profit   For-Profit   Other	
<i>How many full-time employees are currently employed at your firm?</i>	All
1-10   11-50   51-100   101-500   Over 500	
<i>What is the zip code of your firm's headquarters?</i>	All
Numeric entry	
<i>How long has your organization been in business?</i>	All
Less than one year   One to three years   Three to five years   Five to ten years   Ten to twenty years   Twenty years or more	
<b>Note:</b> This question is a great way to get a snapshot of how many respondents are early vs. established businesses.	
<i>Does your organization identify as any of the following?</i>	All
Please select all that apply, whether you hold certifications or not.	
<b>JURISDICTION</b> Local Business or Organization   Small Business   LGBT-Owned   Minority-Owned   Women-Owned   Veteran-Owned   Disability-Owned	

QUESTION	APPLICABLE CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT
<i>Does your firm hold any of the following business certifications? (Please include certifications from any certifying entity, whether state, local, federal, or private.)</i>	
Local Business Enterprise   Small Business Enterprise   Very Small Business / Micro-Business   HUD Section 3 Business   LGBT-Business Enterprise   Minority Business Enterprise   Women-Owned Business Enterprise   Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise   Disabled-Veteran-Business Enterprise   Disability-Owned Business Enterprise   Disadvantaged Business Enterprise   Not Applicable or Ineligible	All
<i>Does your firm hold contracts with other public agencies (e.g., cities, counties, states, school districts)?</i>	All
Yes   No   Unsure	

Table 6. Closing

QUESTION	APPLICABLE CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT
<p><i>What top three changes could JURISDICTION make for you to be likely to compete on future contracting opportunities?</i></p> <p>Rank your top three</p> <p>Increase opportunities to prequalify for contracts or join a bench of vendors.</p> <p>Promote contracting opportunities over social media and email</p> <p>Host networking opportunities for you to connect with other organizations</p> <p>Post clearer instructions, informational materials, and webinars on JURISDICTION website</p> <p>Reduce requirements involved in putting together a proposal/bid</p> <p>Increase communication, instruction, and outreach in languages other than English</p> <p>Expand coaching, programming, and technical support for small and local businesses</p> <p>Have a staff person able to provide support in preparing bids and RFPs</p> <p>Increase the time to respond to a Request for Proposals or Invitation to Bid</p> <p>Forecast upcoming contracting opportunities</p>	All
<p><i>Is there anything else JURISDICTION can do to increase awareness of contracting opportunities?</i></p> <p>Free response</p>	All
<p><i>Please share any additional thoughts or feedback you may have about procurement and contracting in JURISDICTION.</i></p> <p>Free response</p>	All
<p>Are you interested in being included in future updates or outreach? If so, please provide your email address.</p>	All

## Sample Vendor Survey Communications

### Outreach Email to Vendors

SUBJECT: [insert jurisdiction] Business Engagement Survey - Share Your Feedback!

Hello,

[insert jurisdiction] invites you to take a business engagement survey to share your experiences and suggestions on how [insert jurisdiction] purchases goods and services. **Please complete this 10-minute survey (linked here) by DAY, MONTH DATE.**

The survey is open to businesses and organizations of any sector or size, whether or not you have been a vendor with [jurisdiction].

All responses are anonymous and will have no impact on any business you do with [insert jurisdiction]. If you have questions about this survey, email [jurisdiction contact].

Thanks – we greatly appreciate your feedback.

[insert jurisdiction]

### Social Media Example - Long Beach, CA:

Caption: Have you been a vendor with the City of Long Beach? Are you interested in doing business with the City? If so, we want to hear from you. Take the vendor survey today: [LINK]



## Sample Outreach Plan

Action	Additional Details	Date
Mail survey invitations to targeted businesses (optional)		Prior to launch
Share heads up that survey will launch with general economic development and entrepreneur support organizations	List out relevant contacts and create digital collateral for organizations to share  <b>Examples:</b> Black Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts, Small Business Development Center	Prior to launch
Email to all vendors in database	Launch Date	
Share via central + departmental social media		Launch Date
Share via website		Launch Date
Share via mailing lists		Launch Date
Share with targeted entrepreneur and business support organizations	<b>Examples:</b> Black Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts, Small Business Development Center	Launch Date
Share with industry-specific membership organizations (optional)	<b>Example:</b> Local Subcontractors Association	Launch Date
Reminder Email 1		Survey Close - 1 Week
Reminder Email 2 (Optional)		1 Day

The **Procurement Excellence Network** is an initiative of the Government Performance Lab designed to help public sector leaders use government procurement as a tool to improve resident outcomes and advance equity. The **Government Performance Lab**, housed at the Taubman Center for State and Local Government at the Harvard Kennedy School, conducts research on how governments can improve the results they achieve for their citizens. An important part of this research model involves providing hands-on technical assistance to state and local governments. Through this involvement, we gain insights into the barriers that governments face and the solutions that can overcome these barriers. By engaging current students and recent graduates in this effort, we are able to provide experiential learning as well.

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What Works Cities Certification provides cities at all points in their data journey with a standard of excellence that shows how investing in data and evidence practices can lead to better and more equitable results for residents. This guide includes strategies in alignment with the following What Works Cities Certification criterion:

- Results-Driven Contracting (RDC) 8: Supporting Vendor Participation and Competition

**Learn more** about how to get your city Certified.

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