

# Building Better Avenues to Procure Digital Services



## Success strategies

**1. Consult early—and often.** Amend the request-for-proposal (RFP) process to encourage early engagement and discussions with vendors, to help give them a better idea of what an agency is looking for—not to mention encouraging a greater diversity of solutions.



**2. First tell, then show how it works.** Use a two-stage downselect procurement process through first asking for a short concept paper and cost proposal (roughly six to eight pages), then requiring finalists to provide a revised cost proposal, work statement, and functioning prototype.



**4. Show me the prototype.** Rather than sink a bunch of dollars into every new technology that comes along, issue contracts for a number of small, inexpensive prototypes that can be built and evaluated quickly.



**3. Conceptualize, propose, and pilot.** Staged contracts allow evaluators to determine which contractor best understands their needs through a hands-on experience.



**5. Convert contracts into competitions.** In milestone-based competitions, procurement officers carve up projects into smaller, technically feasible targets that are then opened up for competition to a pool of selected contractors.



**6. IT procurement an attractive career choice.** To get the best and the brightest into the profession, offer the same advancement and recognition potential as other career paths, especially ones that are perceived as more “mission oriented.”



**7. Train procurement officers in digital acquisition.** Focus on training acquisition officers to be flexible, adaptive, and innovative when it comes to digital procurement.



**8. Tap into private sector expertise.** Partnerships and industry days offer a few ways that government procurement executives can spend time with private sector counterparts to learn new procurement techniques.



**9. Bake-offs.** An alternative to big multiyear awards, these are smaller awards to teams from different contractors, which foster competition, collaboration, and consistent performance.



## Tools and techniques

**10. Prizes and challenges.** These can be quite effective at helping you engage a diverse, and often unexpected, group of problem solvers – better yet, you pay only for results.



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