



Helping thousands of public entities and non-profits work more efficiently

Government agency uses eProcurement to give every supplier a fair shot



Now our team is much more agile in running procurements, evaluating bids and awarding contracts to the point where the time and cost savings are better than we imagined. But the most welcome surprise is the time we can now spend on value-added tasks that enable our agency to innovate in other ways.

— **CHRIS ROBINSON,**
Procurement Manager, Sourcewell

THE BACKSTORY

Sourcewell has served over 50,000 public and non-profit entities since 1978, helping them become more efficient through streamlined purchasing and other services. While the Staples, Minnesota-based government agency focuses on serving a five-county region in the central part of the state (which includes cities, counties, public schools, and non-profits in the area) it also supports eligible government, education, and non-profit agencies across the U.S. and in Canada.

Sourcewell uses the power of cooperative purchasing to meet the needs of the public and non-profit entities it serves. By leveraging massive buying power, supplier competition and knowledge of industry best practices, the team at Sourcewell does all the heavy lifting when it comes to procurements, so clients don't have to. This helps thousands of public entities and non-profits work more efficiently by saving them time and money, which allows them to focus on what they do best: providing exceptional public service.

But Sourcewell couldn't truly help its clients work more efficiently without improving its own internal processes first.

THE CHALLENGE

Sourcewell's 12-person procurement team empowers its more than 30 member cooperative purchasing team to administer a program with collective spend in excess of \$4 billion annually for its participating entities. They issue dozens of long-term RFPs and IFBs each year, which bring in more than 400 bids and responses for the department to evaluate and process.

Handling all those responses manually became a burden for both Sourcewell and its potential suppliers. Late deliveries caused the rejection of 28 RFP or IFB responses in the span of only two years, which meant all the time and money spent by suppliers to prepare and deliver these submissions went to waste. And Sourcewell's bids became less competitive by having fewer options available for consideration.

The agency needed to modernize its approach.

We used to have five or six people come to together in a room to physically cut open packages and organize supplier responses for two hours at a time. That's the extreme we had to go to just to tackle the large number of bids and proposals we received. It was very time consuming, but worse than that was missing out on unopened submissions that didn't meet our deadlines. It was just a waste of resources and effort for everyone involved. And we might have received great bids from ideal suppliers without ever knowing it.

THE SOLUTION

Sourcewell decided to solicit for an eProcurement platform to simplify the purchasing process and adopt industry-best practices at the same time. As the procurement team researched solutions, they looked for platforms that allowed vendors 24/7 access to their RFPs and IFBs online, for free.

This was important to Sourcewell, as they wanted "mom and pop" vendors to have the same opportunity as major suppliers when submitting a bid or proposal. And since the agency's contracts were mostly four-year agreements that could easily be missed out on, they wanted suppliers to have the option of registering to their portal to receive notifications of new opportunities. Not only was this critical for increasing the agency's chances of finding the best possible organizations to work with, but also for making sure every potential supplier had a fair shot at making a bid.

By transitioning to **bids&tenders**, Sourcewell completely revamped its procurement practices. After years of using a tedious manual process, the government agency began reaping the rewards of eProcurement seemingly overnight.

THE RESULT

Since switching to **bids&tenders**, Sourcewell's procurement department has gone completely digital, eliminating the need for hard copies of documentation and expensive, time-consuming delivery and handling of physical submissions. And they had no issues getting their team onboard with the tool. A one-day training event was all it took to get everyone using the platform with confidence.

The improvements brought on by the prospective vendor registration system and the elimination of late vendor submissions due to courier or mail service delays have both increased bid competitiveness for Sourcewell. And the eProcurement process ensures that only bids and proposals containing all required documents can be submitted through the platform, so the team doesn't waste any time evaluating responses that aren't eligible to begin with.

When considering the time avoided in handling and scanning proposals, cost savings to vendors in shipping and delivery fees, and reproduction and materials costs, Sourcewell saves at least \$50 per submission. That works out to an impressive \$20,000 a year the agency can now invest in other areas of its operations.

As if that wasn't enough, Sourcewell went on to receive its fourth straight Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award in 2019 from the National Procurement Institute for its exceptional scores across a long list of criteria. Chief among them are a commitment to excellence and continued improvement, which **bids&tenders** helped them achieve through its industry-leading eProcurement platform.

Armed with efficient tools and industry-best practices for procurements, Sourcewell can better fulfill its mission to empower community success for government, education and non-profit agencies. And the organizations that partner with them can take pride in knowing the agency's contracts are the result of an award-winning procurement process.



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to book a live demo with a member of our customer success team.