



CASE STUDY

TRILLIUM LAKELANDS DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

School board creates a process that is faster, safer and better for the environment

Digital procurement platform 'pays off' for Trillium Lakelands District School Board



Our old-fashioned procurement system required vendors to hand-deliver hard copies of their submissions to one of two separate offices, two hours apart from each other. It created a logistical nightmare for everyone involved.

— **DICK KEARNS,**
Former Manager of Purchasing

THE BACKSTORY

The Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) has been educating the communities of Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton and the District Municipality of Muskoka since 1998. With more than 50 schools, alternate education and training centres across 11,500 square kilometres, TLDSB is one of Ontario's largest school boards geographically - in fact, it's more than 18 times the size of Toronto.

THE CHALLENGE

The TLDSB relies on vendors and partners to keep its vast facilities running. For years, its procurement department had an annual budget of about \$20M to spend on goods and services ranging from school supplies to IT contracts and repairs. And in 2015, the board was given an extra \$7M for construction contracts, but were told the central purchasing department had to receive every bid directly from that point on.

Suddenly, suppliers couldn't drop bids off to the nearest school board office anymore. They had to drive to Lindsay instead. This meant a preferred vendor in Thunder Bay would have to drive 4 hours just to make a submission! So while there were plenty of valuable business opportunities for suppliers, few were chomping at the bit.

The long and expensive process of traveling to Lindsay for bids applicable to our northern school, along with the cost of food, fuel and a vehicle, was not always worthwhile for vendors and resulted in reduced submissions.

Even if a bid was submitted successfully, TLDSB's purchasing department consisted of only three people to review what were typically lengthy submissions - we're talking five binders of information that could take weeks or months to sift through. And once bids were finally processed, they had to be manually sorted and kept on file for seven years. Since TLDSB received roughly 30,000 pages per year, they were storing nearly a quarter million pages in a rental space at any given time. This created additional labour and overhead costs.

THE SOLUTION

After years of managing procurement the 'traditional' way, TLDSB switched to a digital procurement platform, **bids&tenders**. The solution drastically improved bid competitiveness, compliance and overall process efficiency.

Gone are the days of in-person deliveries and storage rentals to house paperwork. **bids&tenders** enables vendors and suppliers to submit responses electronically, and seamlessly stores documentation within the program.

But as the first school board in Ontario to transition to eProcurement, the TLDSB also needed a platform that could protect its sensitive information. This was another big reason why they chose **bids&tenders**. The customer onboarding team made transitioning to the digital solution painless and secure for the TLDSB's small, but mighty purchasing department.

All it took was a three-hour training session to get them comfortable using the software, and there was no work required by the school board's IT professionals to make it happen. Once **bids&tenders** was live, all major suppliers were invited to an information session where they learned how to use the platform to submit their bids. The opportunity was so promising that more than 100 suppliers braved a snowstorm to attend the event.

THE RESULT

Since switching to **bids&tenders**, TLDSB's purchasing department has seen a significant return on investment. The organization now receives around 10 bids per opportunity, compared to just three with their previous model.

The ease of posting tenders and the time savings in evaluating RFPs is allowing them to increase bid requests beyond what was previously possible. This has sparked a newfound competitiveness of bids, which has resulted in cost savings of about 20% on goods and services for the school board.

Documenting and comparing evaluations went from a manual process that took weeks to complete, to a digital process that only takes about one minute. And reviewing RFPs used to take months, but now they can be turned around in 21 days or less. Everything has gone paperless - creating a process that is faster, safer and more environmentally friendly. But most importantly, this digital transformation has allowed TLDSB's procurement specialists to focus on what really matters: identifying the right partner and maintaining quality assurance.



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