

THE TIME IS NOW TO ACCELERATE  
WOMEN'S PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

# How To Make Public Procurement Work For Women

On November 11, 2020, the International Trade Centre (ITC) launched a powerful new publication, a “how-to” guidebook, *Making Public Procurement Work for Women*.<sup>1</sup> To continue to build knowledge, share lessons learned and accelerate progress, ITC developed this guidebook to provide policymakers, statistical officers and procurement officials with tools for reform.



YAGAZIE EMEZI/GETTY IMAGES/IMAGES OF EMPOWERMENT

In the Foreword, Pamela Coke-Hamilton, ITC's Executive Director, points out: "In developed countries, public procurement accounts for almost 15 percent of gross domestic product; in some developing countries, this figure can reach as high as 40 percent. It is shocking that women-owned businesses account for a mere 1 percent of this critical sector."

The ITC's long-time work to promote women in public procurement includes the catalytic 2014 guide called *Empowering Women through Public Procurement*,<sup>2</sup> an e-learning course on women in procurement which includes a *Procurement Map* that indicates specific legislation for women-owned businesses, as well as in-country advisory work.

1. Jonna van der Krift and Astrid ter Wiel, *Making Public Procurement Work for Women* (Geneva, Switzerland: International Trade Centre, 2020), [https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/ITCGuide%20WOB%20PP\\_20201106\\_web.pdf](https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/ITCGuide%20WOB%20PP_20201106_web.pdf). Ter Wiel also authored the European case study in the Chatham House publication, *Gender-smart Public Procurement Policies for Driving Change*.

2. Keric Chin, *Empowering Women through Public Procurement* (Geneva, Switzerland: International Trade Centre, 2014), <https://www.intracen.org/publication/Empowering-Women-Through-Public-Procurement/>.

The Time Is Now To Accelerate Women's Public Procurement is a 23-part toolbox and call to action series created by USAID.



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This rich experience and background material provide the foundation for the critical insights and targeted Technical Support that have enriched the recommendations included in ITC's new guidebook. ITC wants the publication to “inspire discussions for policy reform to support women-owned businesses and women entrepreneurs through public procurement,” and to “serve as a roadmap for countries and organizations to develop robust women’s public procurement programs.”

## Highlights Of ITC’s New Guidebook On Public Procurement

To address the ongoing gaps in knowledge and know-how, ITC had been working for many months on developing, testing and finalizing its new “how-to” guidebook, *Making Public Procurement Work for Women*. It will provide policymakers, statistical officers, and development and procurement officials with tools for reform. In addition, it provides advice “on how to design a roadmap, implement preferential policies and other measures, and monitor progress, drawing on effective models, case studies and snapshots for best practices.” The report outlines four key steps (outlined below) to reshaping public procurement for women-owned businesses, based on learnings by the International Trade Centre over the past decade, especially the past six years. Crucially, it also underscores the need to obtain input from women-owned businesses and their associations—a necessity often overlooked in previous efforts to develop public procurement programs focused on women entrepreneurs.

Because this new ITC publication is a major breakthrough in the nuts and bolts of public procurement for women, we have incorporated in this Toolbox, with permission, three of its case studies, as well as content about laws and regulations concerning practices in the various countries profiled in ITC's *online Procurement Map*. The ITC report's Executive Summary is reprinted with permission below (as shaded text), followed by a link to the full ITC how-to manual. To successfully implement a program on women’s public procurement, we highly recommend careful study, especially of Chapters 1 and 2 in *Making Public Procurement Work for Women*, in addition to the materials presented here that its authors have generously provided for this annotated anthology of models and good and best practices.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When competing for public tenders, women-owned businesses face six barriers that need to be overcome:

- » Inadequate national legislation and policies
- » Misfit tender design
- » Excessive requirements
- » Poor government practices
- » Lack of information
- » Limited capability

Policymakers and procuring entities can take measures that specifically apply to each barrier. These are among the steps to empower women-owned businesses through public procurement.

## OVERVIEW OF THE FOUR STEPS AND FIVE TOOLS

### STEP 1: ASSESS THE SITUATION

- » This publication offers two tools for assessing the current situation.
- » Tool I maps the current situation and the country and procuring entities in terms of facilitating participation of women-owned businesses.
- » Tool II identifies existing barriers. The aim is to assess the current national capacity for public entities to facilitate procurement from women-owned businesses.
- » The outcome is discovery of what governments are and are not doing, and why. This provides an understanding of the obstacles women-owned businesses face to win public tenders.

### STEP 2: DESIGN A ROADMAP

- » Define the legal and policy framework
- » Work on organizational readiness
- » Assess the purchasing spend and current contract portfolio
- » Tool III: Find procurement opportunities
- » Create an action plan

### STEP 3: MAKE IT HAPPEN

- » Execute tenders in a manner that is user-friendly for women-owned-businesses
- » Tool IV: Tackle barriers and seize opportunities

### STEP 4: MONITOR PROGRESS

- » Tool V: Track achievements

—[Making Public Procurement Work for Women](#) (reprinted with permission)

## DOWNLOAD THE FULL ITC HOW-TO REPORT

*Making Public Procurement Work for Women* is essential reading for countries that want to develop an effective system for gender-equitable public procurement.

**The TIME IS NOW for Women's Public Procurement. Read how the stage is set for action!**

