



Foreword from Chairperson CPB

It is that time of the year again, which calls for a retrospective look over the ending year and I am pleased to report that we have carried out the mandate of the Board to the letter and had processed no less than 33 procurement projects of a total value of Rs 8,535,128,478/- in the following categories: Works: 18 ; Goods : 8, and Consultancy Services : 7.

2023 has seen the CPB engaging more than ever with Public Bodies, on whose behalf, the CPB carries out the procurement. Analysis of data shows huge variation in the quality of Bidding Documents received and this is proportional to the time taken for vetting. A workshop was thus held on the 28 July 2023 where case studies were presented with a view to help the Public Bodies, more specifically the Local Authorities in the preparation of their Bidding Documents. It is to be noted that the KPI for vetting a Bidding Document is 15 working days.

Another concern addressed was the decreasing number of bids being received. To address this, the CPB in collaboration with the Procurement Policy Office (PPO) and Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC), engaged with the members of Business Mauritius (BM), that is the Bidding Community, with the objectives of communicating to them the most transparent and accountable bid evaluation process in line with best international practices, based on the United National Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). This workshop was organised over a half day on 10 November 2023, whence the Board made a detailed presentation of the various and most transparent processes in place, with checks and balances, for evaluation of bids. This process has stood the tests of scrutiny and is fully open to challenges by any aggrieved party, throughout the various stages of the evaluation process.

Upon the retirement of the Chief Executive, Mr. Mannick in April 2023, the Board went through a difficult period operating without a substantive Chief Executive (CE) or Deputy Chief Executive (DCE). Therefore, the Board is grateful to the Mrs. R. Chettiar, Manager Central Procurement who filled in as Ag CE and Mrs. R. Ramjuttun, Assistant manager Central Procurement who stepped up as the Ag DCE. On 03 November, 2023, Mr. Jaichand Rughoobur was appointed as the new DCE of the CPB.

This being the last newsletter of the year, on behalf of the CPB family, I would like to thank all our partners (bidders, evaluators, subject experts) for their most valuable and much appreciated collaboration.

Seasonal Greetings: We extend to you, dear readers and your loved ones, our best seasonal greetings and we wish you a very happy New Year 2024.

Raj H Prayag GOSK. PDSM. C.Eng. P.Eng. FIEM. FAeSM
Chairperson, CPB

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THE BENEFITS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

It is a year now that Chat GPT, a generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool, was launched. Instantly, it took the world by storm. Within a few months the number of subscribers exponentially shot up to reach 100 million active users, a performance never attained before. In 2023, we were fascinated and awed by new generative AI models popping up everywhere. The launch of Google's Bard and Gemini have seen even more extraordinary and mind blowing capabilities of these AI tools. Experts, whisper of a revolution brewing, a tidal wave poised to upend every corner of our lives. But are we ready? Are we even braced for the unforeseen consequences this AI tsunami could unleash?

AI tools such as Chatgpt and Bard are now allowing the internet-using public to experience a kind of intellectual vertigo caused by software which has improved suddenly to the point where it can perform tasks that had been exclusively in the domain of human intelligence.

As Vice Chairperson of the Central Procurement Board, I have had deep reflections on the subject matter by taking on board the views of experts in AI.

While our current eProcurement system has contributed to significantly improve efficiency, compress Procurement cycles, ensure transparency and accountability as well as promoting a green culture, yet I believe that it is an opportune moment to gear up to another level by leveraging on AI to further enhance our Public Procurement processes.

At the heart of AI's potential lies its ability to automate and streamline tedious tasks. This innovative tool can analyze vast quantities of data, including vendor qualifications, historical performance, and market trends, with exceptional speed and accuracy. This eliminates the need for time-consuming manual procedures, reducing administrative burden and allowing procurement teams to focus on more strategic issues.

AI can also, in my opinion, combat the inherent biases and subjectivity that can creep into traditional procurement processes. AI can eliminate unconscious preferences and bias thus ensuring a level playing field for all vendors. Additionally, transparent AI models can provide clear explanations for selection decisions, fos-

tering trust and accountability within the procurement process.

AI can go beyond simply finding the lowest evaluated and substantially responsive bid. Its advanced analytics feature can predict future needs, optimize inventory management, and identify potential risks in contracts. This allows for proactive planning, reducing waste and ensuring the government receives maximum value. Furthermore, AI-powered fraud detection systems can identify suspicious patterns and red flags, mitigating the risk of corruption and abuse in the procurement process.

The impact of AI on public procurement is far-reaching and profoundly transformative. While challenges exist, the potential for optimizing efficiency, promoting fairness, and maximizing value for the public funds is undeniable. By approaching this technological disruption with foresight, ethical considerations, and a commitment to continuous improvement, governments can unlock the true potential of AI and forge a new era of responsible and efficient public procurement.

Effective AI integration in public procurement demands a collective effort. I thus propose to bring together government officials, procurement professionals, technology experts, vendors and even citizen representatives – to harness their collective expertise. Through collaborative brainstorming and strategic planning, we can chart a course that leverages AI's potential to streamline processes, enhance transparency, and ultimately deliver greater value for the public good.

In the meantime, wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2024. May God bless you all.

Swaminathan RAGEN
Vice-Chairperson

Competitive Negotiation as a Method of Procurement

Strategic Excellence: Harnessing Competitive Negotiation as a method of Procurement in line with Public Procurement Act

This year has presented Central Procurement Board with a new challenge of executing competitive negotiation as a method of procurement further to its inclusion under Section 25 of the latest Public Procurement Act for a pivotal sewerage project.

Within the sphere of public procurement, the strategic integration of competitive negotiation represents an advancement in contractor selection methodology. This approach fosters value maximization and robust competition as fundamental tenets of our procurement framework.

Competitive Negotiation Methodology

Initiating with a meticulous selection process pursuant to the relevant clauses of Public Procurement Act and Regulations, a minimum of five contractors potentially qualified to have the technical capability to undertake the project were requested to submit their offers. Based on the submissions, a first evaluation exercise is conducted whereby at least three technically responsive bidders are to be retained for the competitive negotiation stage. In compliance with Directive 61 issued by Procurement Policy Office, the subsequent phase entails the composition of a selection committee which will carry out the negotiation process with each of the technically compliant bidders, with the aim of selecting the bidder whose final offer represents best value for money.

The experience gained has fostered numerous advantages as follows:

- **Elevated Competition:** The inclusion of multiple qualified contractors initiates a captivating environment that encourages innovation and efficiency, where participants are encouraged to present their most competitive proposals.
- **Optimized Value for Money:** Rigorous negotiation empowers exhaustive evaluations, ensuring the selected bid not only meets but surpasses the stipulated criteria by optimizing benefits within the allocated resources.
- **Customized Solutions and Risk Mitigation:** The in-depth negotiations facilitate tailored, inventive solutions while early risk identification ensures meticulous quality assurance.

Chittaman JUGROO
Vice-Chairperson

Experience as New Board Member

As I complete my first year at the CPB, it is my pleasure to share with you my deep appreciation of some activities realised over this time. To push through this year successfully, I have empowered myself to learn the core duties around the procurement processing cycle, from vetting to evaluation and closing the cycle with an award. While complying with the code of conduct and ethics in line with Section 11(2) of the PPA, my goal has been to ensure the highest level of service in line with good governance principles such as transparency, integrity, fairness and confidentiality.

There have been two events organised at CPB for stakeholders such as Public Bodies and Business Communities (Bidders), which have left a lasting impression on me during 2023. The event for Public Bodies was organised with the objective to provide more clarity on the standards required for clean documentation as this will help instil more efficiency in the vetting process. The second event was organised jointly with Business Mauritius and ICAC for business communities (Bidders) to provide better understanding of the public procurement process with the aim to build trust and transparency. During that event, the Chairperson rightly gave assurance that for each procurement project that is processed through the CPB every attention regarding fairness and transparency to all concerned stakeholders are given the highest consideration and no stone is left unturned to preserve the reputation and integrity of this key institution of our country. In my appreciation of these events, both have been successfully and professionally carried out bearing a broader vision for the good running of the procurement process by encouraging collaboration with the relevant stakeholders.

I look forward to trainings projected for 2024 which will be targeting evaluators, team leaders and EPS features. With bright expectations that the ISO standards will be successfully implemented in 2024, this will help us improve our productivity and efficiency allowing us to aim for excellence.

I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Chairperson, Board Members and all staff members, for their unflinching support during this first year. Like the motto of my favourite football team, they have never let me walk alone. I seize this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2024 to you and your family.

Dyaneshwar RAMDHONY
Board Member

My experience as the newly appointed Deputy Chief Executive (DCE)

I was appointed as DCE of the Central Procurement Board by the Public Service Commission as from 03 November 2023. My mission as a new Deputy Chief Executive is to execute the policies of the Government within the precincts of the law.

I was warmly welcomed by the Chairman and Board Members and staff who assured me to provide their full support.

One of the challenges that I anticipate going forward is to create a bond of friendship amongst the staff which will create a synergy towards knowledge driven process with continuous improvements. Motivating the staff will create some sort of impetus that will make them become hungry for innovation and change due to ever-increasing economic pressure which is creating a disbalance in procurement system.

The procurement function has been developing very rapidly and becoming much more professional throughout the years.

Visibility is the key to success and we are all witnessing how procurement is being redesigned and upgraded within organisations. At the end of the day, we have to create excellent procurement professionals toward result orientation and outcome driven professionalism in the order of the day.

Working at CPB is not just a job but it is a calling in life to serve an institution of highest integrity.

Let's continue working hard and smart for the benefits of our most esteemed organisation, its stakeholders and the Republic of Mauritius in general.

Jaichand RUGHOOBUR
Deputy Chief Executive

FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

Projects under Framework Agreement are implemented by Public Bodies as mentioned below:

1. Central Electricity Board
2. Central Water Authority
3. Ministry of National Infrastructure & Community Development (Building Section)
4. Road Development Authority
5. National Development Unit

Central Electricity Board

The Framework Agreement consists of selection of Contractors based on predetermined schedule of rates already provided by the Central Electricity Board in the Bidding Documents.

Central Water Authority

The Framework Agreement consists of selection of Contractors on a zone-wise basis, based on prices quoted for quantities already provided by the Central Water Authority in the Bidding Documents for several items of works for each zone.

The total quoted amount also includes a bill for Preliminaries and General Costs.

Ministry of National Infrastructure & Community Development (Building Section)

The Framework Agreement consists of selection of Contractors on a district-wise basis, based on prices quoted for quantities already provided by the Ministry of National Infrastructure in the Bidding Documents for several items of works in each district.

The Framework Agreement does not provide a separate bill for Preliminaries and General Costs.

Road Development Authority

The Framework Agreement consists of selection of Contractors on a region-wise basis, based on prices quoted for quantities already provided by the Road Development Authority in the Bidding Documents for several items of works in each region.

The total quoted amount also includes a bill for Preliminaries and General Costs.

National Development Unit

The Framework Agreement consists of selection of Contractors on a zone-wise basis, based on prices quoted for quantities already provided by the National Development Unit in the Bidding Documents for several items of works in each zone.

The Framework Agreement does not provide a separate bill for Preliminaries and General Costs.

It appears that each Public Body is executing projects under Framework Agreement differently and in order to have consistency and uniformity in the implementation of Framework Agreement projects, working sessions will be held with Public Bodies.

Rameshwurdass RAMDHAN
Civil Engineer

Role of Engineers in the CPB

The Central Procurement Board (CPB) started employing Engineers in its pool of officers since early 2008 to look after the increasingly complex nature of Government projects requiring more technical know-how.

The Engineers use the skills and experience they have acquired in the procurement of works and services for Government projects during their career, to assist the CPB in the following duties:

1. The vetting of bidding documents which comprise:
 - checking that the documents are in line with the standard bidding documents recommended by the PPO for the particular type of procurement.
 - checking of the tender conditions.
 - checking that all the administrative requirements have been spelt out.
 - check the requirements laid down in the documents to assess the Technical and Financial capability of the bidders. These requirements need to be adequate, well spelt and reasonable.
 - See whether the conditions of the contract, specifically the particular conditions have been well addressed and do not contain abusive requirements and that the conditions are well balanced in the sharing of responsibilities between the Employer and the contractor.
 - Also, in relation to the type of Contract, the Engineer will use his experience to ensure that the correct format of the bid has been used, e.g a BOQ with firm quantities, a BOQ with provisional quantities, the format of the BOQ with respect to the various types of Framework Agreement used by the different Public Bodies.
 - Review the specifications in the bidding documents to ensure that the requirements have been well addressed, are not “tailor-made” and correct information are sought from the bidders for a correct assessment of their offers.
2. Check replies to be made by Public Bodies in respect of clarifications sought by bidders prior to the closing of bids.
3. Check requests from Bid Evaluation Committees in respect of clarifications to be sought from bidders in relation to their submissions.
4. Prepare a due diligence report on Bid Evaluation Reports prior to their approval by the Board.

The above duties call for a good understanding of works/services procurement and require numerous years of exposure in pre and post contract management on Government projects from seasoned Engineers from the Government service.

Lately, the experience tried by the CPB in the employment of young Engineers recently recruited in the Government service, did not prove beneficial as their lack of procurement and contract management skills was too evident.

The CPB has recently reviewed its policy and is currently employing the services of three Engineers who have retired after a long career in the Government service as Consultant under the Expert Skills Scheme.

In addition, three newly recruited Civil Engineers of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development (N.I Division) have also been outposted at the CPB. These Engineers are mentored by the Consultants who provide them with technical advice and help them in their technical grooming in the procurement field which will be beneficial in the pursuit of their career.

In view of the nature of Government projects becoming more and more complex, it is essential that the CPB avail itself of the services of experienced Engineers in its mission to ensure value for money in Public Procurement and the timely acquisition through a fair and transparent process, and its vision to be a model for efficient and effective Public Procurement in Mauritius.

Telkraj PARBHUNATH
Civil Engineer

Workshop with Business/Bidding Community

The Central Procurement Board (CPB) in a joint initiative with the Business Mauritius/Procurement Policy Office/Independent Commission Against Corruption organised a workshop at the Caudan Art Centre on 10 November 2023. The main objective of the workshop was to create awareness among the key stakeholders of the public procurement system in Mauritius and to promote a collaborative environment between the business community and the authorities responsible for ensuring good governance in the public procurement sector.

The workshop provided the participants with a platform to better understand the intricacies of the public procurement process, the procedures involved in the e-procurement system, recent legislative changes in public procurement in Mauritius, and the various mitigating factors of corruption risks.

126 participants emanating from various private companies, consultants, and professionals registered as Team Leaders for Bid Evaluation Committees at the CPB attended the workshop.

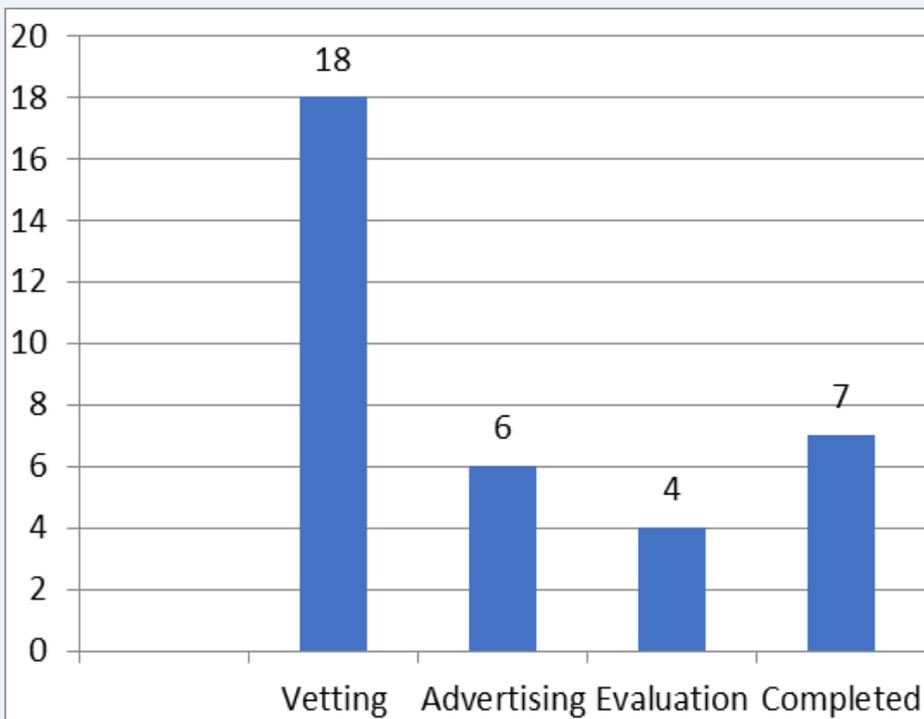


Statistics Snapshot (01 October 2023 - 15 December 2023)

Balance of Live Procurement Projects as at 01 October 2023	35
No. of Projects Received	13
No. of Bidding Documents vetted (completed)	3
No. of Public Openings	8
No. of Evaluations Completed	6
No. of Approvals of Award	9
Balance of Live Procurement Projects as at 15 December 2023	35

PROJECT STATUS

As at 15 December 2023, the CPB was handling 35 procurement projects falling under the category of major contracts. Out of which, 18 were at vetting stage, 6 at advertising stage, 4 at evaluation stage and 7 have been completed. (graph below).



Vision

To be the model for efficient and effective public procurement in Mauritius

Mission

To ensure value for money in public procurement and timely acquisition through a fair and transparent process

Core Values

Transparency - Integrity - Ethical Practice - Equality/ Fairness - Accountability

Contact Us

Give us a call for more information and visit our website for additional information.

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