



Foreword from Chairperson CPB

We have started the year well and we are on track to achieving two major goals of the CPB. Firstly, the Board has set out to improve on the quality of bid evaluation reports within a set timeframe and secondly, to get ISO certified for the quality of service it provides to the Nation.

Training of Evaluators

On 31 January 2024, the CPB in collaboration with the Civil Service College Mauritius, launched its online training on evaluation of bids, at Le Labourdonnais Hotel, for over 355 registered evaluators on the database of the CPB. The goal of the online training is to bring everyone up to speed and to produce consistently high-quality reports. Therefore, all the evaluators must be fully conversant and knowledgeable with the Public Procurement Act, the relevant Regulations, Directives and Circulars as well as the CPB's Operations Manual.

The online five module training course allows the evaluators to follow the course at their convenience and in their own time and thereafter to take the online assessment as proof that they have successfully followed the course. When over 60% of the registered evaluators have done so, the CPB will only select evaluators from that list. The course is provided free of charge to the registered evaluators.

The online training course is also available to those aspiring evaluators, who are not registered, with the CPB but who would like to offer their services as evaluators. To register for the course, they must contact the Civil Service College Mauritius.

ISO Certification

The CPB is back on track with this long overdue project. The Quality Policy Manual has now been approved by the Board and the MSB has been requested to proceed with the external audit and eventual ISO certification of the CPB.

Transparency and Accountability

To be totally transparent, on the next day following the opening of bids, the CPB publishes on its website, all information on the bids received for each procurement project.

Every week, it also provides an update on all procurement projects that have been advertised.

Regarding approval of award of contracts, the Board publishes within three days the list procurement projects approved for award.

With best regards.

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

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THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT A STRONG PILLAR OF OUR VIBRANT DEMOCRACY



In 1748, the political philosopher Montesquieu outlined the doctrine of separation of powers. This divides government authority into three branches (or organs): legislative, judicial, and executive. At that time, most countries were ruled by monarchs which held absolute power. Montesquieu believed such a system concentrated too much power in one person, which could drastically restrict citizens' freedoms. To prevent this, he argued that each branch should act as a check and balance on the others, ensuring no single branch became too powerful. This implies the following principles:

- (i) No single person should form part of more than one organ of Government.
- (ii) No organ of Government should exercise the function of other organs of Government.
- (iii) No organ of the Government should encroach with the function of the other two organs of the Government.

Most democratic countries adopt Montesquieu's doctrine of separation of powers, although with variations. Commonwealth countries, like Mauritius, typically follow the Westminster model.

Since gaining independence, Mauritius has diligently strengthened its legislature, judiciary, and executive branches, solidifying its reputation as a thriving democracy on both the African continent and the global stage. Moreover, international scrutiny incentivises us to adopt best international practices, thus further strengthening our democratic fabric.

I have been serving the executive branch of Government for more than three decades, occupying senior positions in the Public Service and where I retired as Secretary for Public Service in 2021. During these years, I have been a privileged witness and an active player of institutional reforms as they play a vital role in consolidating a thriving democracy like ours.

Now in my role as Vice-Chairperson of the Central Procurement Board, I am proud and happy to see how public procurement has become a cornerstone of our democracy. Over the years, it has evolved significantly into a robust, fair, transparent, and accountable system. A pivotal moment of this evolution was the repeal of the Central Tender Board Act and the establishment of the Public Procurement Act (PPA) in 2006. The PPA was indeed a paradigm shift, particularly in embedding check and balances into the public procurement system thus ensuring that all parties i.e., Public Bodies, procurement institutions and suppliers are able to operate on an equal playing field.

As a matter of fact, prior to the PPA, challenging awards made by the Central Tender was a cumbersome process for suppliers. Their only option was to pursue expensive legal remedies through the Supreme Court. This significantly disadvantaged small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and other small suppliers. This is no longer the case.

Under the PPA, there now exists three independent institutions within the Public Procurement framework, which are, (i) the Procurement Policy Office which elaborates procurement policies, guidelines and directives, (ii) the Central Procurement Board which, *inter alia*, oversees procurement process for major contracts and recommends the awards of contracts and (iii) the Independent Review Panel which adjudicates challenges made by aggrieved suppliers.

This model of governance can surely serve as a benchmark to catalyse the reform process of institutions that need to operate in line with stringent democratic norms.

Let us, therefore, pursue our relentless quest of upholding the highest democratic values, particularly within the executive branch of Government. However, we must not overlook the equally important and pressing need for reforms in the judiciary and legislature, two other vital organs of Government.

Swaminathan RAGEN
Vice-Chairperson

Unbalanced Bids in the form of Front Loading for Works Projects



As we navigate the intricacies of project procurement, one challenge that frequently arises is the detection of front-loaded bids. Front-loading, where contractors influence pricing to allocate more costs upfront, can jeopardize project timelines, quality, and overall success. To address this issue effectively, it is crucial to develop a keen understanding of project cost dynamics and bidder behaviour.

Here are some key insights to help us detect front-loaded bids and safeguard the integrity of our procurement processes:

1. Understanding Cost Distribution: Evaluate bid proposals with a discerning eye, paying close attention to the distribution of costs across project phases. Disproportionately high upfront costs, especially in mobilization or pre-construction activities, may indicate front-loading.

2. Scrutinizing Payment Schedules: Analyse the proposed payment schedule outlined in bid proposals. Front-loaded bids often feature accelerated payment milestones, prioritizing early cash flow for the contractor. Assess the feasibility of these schedules and compare them with industry norms to identify deviations.

3. Assessing Cost Components: Dive deep into the breakdown of costs provided by bidders, focusing on individual components such as labour, materials, and equipment. Look for inflated costs or discrepancies that cannot be justified based on market rates or project requirements.

4. Evaluating Pricing Strategies: Be wary of aggressive pricing strategies employed in bid proposals. While competitive pricing is expected, excessively low bids relative to market rates may signal potential front-loading. Assess the bidder's ability to deliver quality workmanship at the proposed price.

5. Analyzing Cash Flow Projections: Conduct a thorough analysis of the bidder's cash flow projections to assess the feasibility of their proposed payment schedule. Front-loaded bids may rely on aggressive cash flow projections that prioritize early cash receipts, potentially compromising project execution.

6. Benchmarking Against Industry Standards: Benchmark bid proposals against industry standards and historical data to identify outliers or anomalies. Validate bid pricing parameters such as unit prices, overhead costs, and profit margins to ensure they align with industry norms.

By incorporating these insights into our bid evaluation processes, we can enhance our ability to detect front-loaded bids and mitigate the associated risks. Vigilance, transparency, and a deep understanding of project economics are essential in safeguarding the integrity of procurement and ensuring successful project delivery.

Chittaman JUGROO
Vice-Chairperson

CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

The COMESA/TDB (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa/Trade Development Bank) consisting of 21 and 25 Member States (MS) respectively, is currently implementing a project **“Regional Infrastructure Finance Facility (RIFF)** financed by the World Bank. The objective of this project is to encourage private sector participation in infrastructure development in Member States (MSs).

The firm CPCS (Certified Professional Credentialling Specialist) was assigned to characterise the use of PPPs (Public Private Partnerships) in the financing and development of infrastructure in the COMESA region, identify good practices to adopt and gaps to fill, and thereafter develop a Model PPP Law and Guidelines for PPP practitioners when identifying and implementing infrastructure projects under PPP.

In the same vein, a one-week workshop was organised in Kigali, Rwanda from 15-19 April 2024, and the Mauritian delegation comprised two Officers from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning & Development and one representative of the Central Procurement Board

The purpose of the workshop was to harmonize the use of PPP within MS countries, increase the awareness of MSs with respect to PPP, and promote capacity building.

The World Bank defines a PPP contract as a set of *"arrangements, typically medium to long term, between the public and private sectors whereby some of the services, that fall under the responsibilities of the public sector, are provided by the private sector, with clear agreement on shared objectives for delivery of public infrastructure and/ or public services"*.

PPP contracts are usually between 10 and 30 years and entail several activities integrated such as design and/or construction and/or rehabilitation and/or operation and/or maintenance. The project risks are substantially transferred to the private partner and more importantly, the contract is performance-based and expresses the obligations imposed on the private partner in terms of results rather than means.

The CPCS prepared the following 3 important documents that were discussed during the workshop:

(i) Draft Diagnostic Report

The objective of the report was to conduct an as-is analysis of the Member States', experience of PPPs and the main characteristics of their existing PPP frameworks. The aim was to assess the existing strengths and gaps, which will inform and guide the development of a PPP framework for COMESA

(ii) Draft Model PPP Law

The Model COMESA PPP Framework aims at reducing the discrepancies in implementing PPP projects across MSs by establishing coherence among PPP practices while taking into account their respective national realities.

(iii) Draft PPP Guidelines

The Model PPP Guidelines are part of the Model PPP Framework, together with the Model PPP Law, based on the diagnostic of the existing PPP framework and experience undertaken in COMESA/TDB member states in 2023.

The key takeaways from the Assessment of the MSs:

The analysis of the PPP framework and experience of the COMESA/TDB region shows clearly that there is a diversity of practices in the various elements pertinent to the development and implementation of PPPs. While some countries are well aligned with PPP best practices, others still operate with limits in their PPP framework.

It was observed that:

- MSs have different macroeconomic profiles.
- MSs have a relatively low global economic weight (1% of the World's GDP).
- Substantial infrastructure gap across the MS.
- Many MSs have recognized the importance of PPP and have established specific instruments to govern PPP.

The CPCS will come up with the final draft Model PPP Law for COMESA/TDB in the month to come which will be validated by COMESA/TDB and eventually will be applied by the MSs.



From left to right: Ms. U. Seegoolam, Mrs. A. Pankan, Mrs. R. Ramjuttun

Rajnee RAMJUTTUN
Assistant Manager, Central Procurement

Experience as Secretary of the Board



I have been serving the Government for more than 36 years, occupying different positions in Ministries/Departments. Reflecting on my last 13 years of experience as Secretary of the Board at the CPB, with the privilege of working with a diverse array of Board Members across different terms, I have garnered several insights into the dynamics and intricacies of Board operations. This extensive experience allowed me to develop and refine a variety of skills crucial to effective Board governance and organizational success. Here are some key aspects:

Effective Communication

Communication is paramount. I have always ensured that information flows smoothly between the Board Members and the Executive Team. This involves preparing and disseminating meeting agendas, minutes, and reports in a timely and accurate manner.

Understanding Different Perspectives

Each Board Member brings a unique perspective and set of skills. Understanding and appreciating these differences have been crucial in facilitating productive discussions and decision-making processes.

Maintaining Confidentiality

Handling sensitive information with discretion has been a cornerstone of my role. Ensuring that confidential information is protected and only shared with the appropriate parties builds trust and integrity within the Board.

Organizational Skills

The role demands exceptional organizational skills. From scheduling meetings to maintaining records, every detail matters. I've developed systems to manage these tasks efficiently, ensuring that nothing falls through the cracks.

Governance and Compliance

Staying abreast of governance best practices and regulatory requirements has been essential. This ensures that the Board operates within the legal framework and adheres to ethical standards, mitigating risks and enhancing the organization's credibility.

Facilitating Board Development

Supporting the development and onboarding of new Board Members has been another critical function. Providing them with comprehensive orientation and ongoing education ensures they are well-prepared to fulfill their responsibilities.

Adaptability and Learning

The landscape in which Boards operate is continually evolving. Adapting to new technologies, changing regulations, and emerging trends has been a constant learning process. This adaptability is crucial for maintaining relevance and efficiency.

Supporting Strategic Planning

Beyond administrative duties, I've played a supportive role in strategic planning sessions. Providing logistical support and contributing insights based on comprehensive record-keeping and historical knowledge of the Board's decisions has added value to the strategic discussions.

Building Relationships

Developing strong working relationships with Board Members has been vital. Mutual respect and understanding have facilitated smoother operations and more effective governance.

Conclusion

Overall, my experience as Secretary of the Board has been both challenging and rewarding. It has required a blend of administrative acumen, strategic insight, and interpersonal skills to support the Board effectively and contribute to the organization's success.

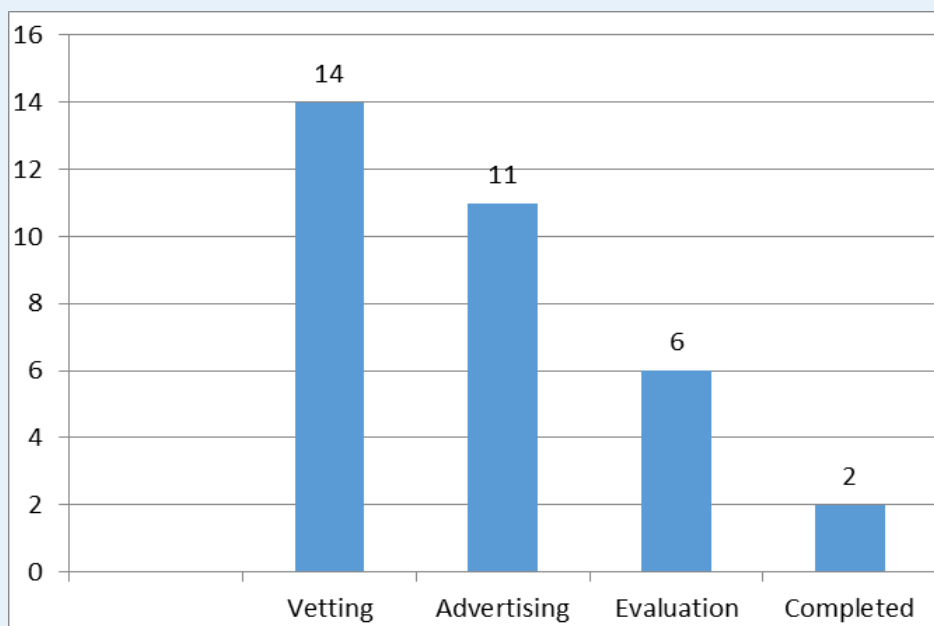
Shimla CHINIAH
Secretary of the Board

Statistics Snapshot (01 January 2024 - 30 June 2024)

No. of New Projects Received	26
No. of Bidding Documents vetted (completed)	24
No. of Public Openings	22
No. of Evaluations Completed	18
No. of Approvals of Award (4 carried forward from 2023)	22

PROJECT STATUS

As at 30 June 2024, the CPB was handling 33 procurement projects falling under the category of major contracts. Out of which, 14 were at vetting stage, 11 at advertising stage, 6 at evaluation stage and 2 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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