

OC Process Outline

A human-centered approach to open contracting procurement reform in cities

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This document is a guide to generating human-centered Open Contracting reforms in collaboration with City governments.

This public set of documents and templates captures a repeatable version of the process the Sunlight Foundation developed in partnership with the Open Contracting Partnership (OCP) for pilot projects with the Cities of Los Angeles and Philadelphia. The pilots were conducted in partnership with the cities from September 2018 to June 2019. You can read more about these [pilot projects here](#). Improvements and lessons learned are integrated into the description of the process.

Intended audiences for this document are civil society practitioners and City teams interested in implementing Open Contracting reforms using problem-driven, design research, and/or open data strategies.

Where to Start

Cities can arrive at the need for open contracting in a number of ways. Some are responding to a financial transparency crisis while others have elected officials who simply prioritize running a cost-efficient government. Others still recognize that the quality of a city's procurement practice can have an effect on a variety of sociopolitical issues, for example, to improve public health by buying higher quality food for institutions, or to support strong workforce development through high quality, holistic contracts with service providers. Sometimes cities choose to undertake open contracting when they're buying a new e-procurement solution and have an opportunity to overhaul governance processes, other times a change in leadership means that public servants can work to solve the problems they have long seen in their roles.

In any case, open contracting can help cities manage their public spending to bring better outcomes to residents. Here's what cities need to be successful:

Components of successful reform efforts:

- A [strong project team](#) that includes a high-level manager with the ability to champion cross-departmental policy reforms, an open data expert or data analyst, and a strong project manager
- An executive or legislative policy commitment to change legacy policies and systems
- Capacities in terms of skills and resources to adopt the Open Contracting Data Standard as the foundation for procurement data systems
- A commitment to publishing [non-sensitive project materials](#), including plans, baseline performance indicators, and other products or deliverables

Potential outcomes and benefits of undertaking reform:

- Improved relationships with local stakeholders and understanding of their needs
- Development of City staff capacity and skills for open, effective and responsive contracting
- A pilot to test the impact of opening new data or contracting processes, and implementing new tools, governance, or policies that can be scaled across the City
- Enhanced processes to measure and improve vendor performance
- A public example of this administration's commitment to transparency and accountability
- Improved outcomes like number of local or certified vendors, quality of goods, etc.

Process Summary

High-level phases of the process are summarized below with detailed instructions and links to document templates on the following pages. The process has three phases, which can be divided into parallel Research and Data workstreams to cover the many angles of open contracting reform. A key element of completing this process and generating impact is selecting a strategic goal or policy issue to guide reform efforts toward specific outcomes.

Phase		Deliverable	Time	
0	Project Scoping Capacity Assessment Strategic Goals Definition	Workspace	2 mo	
I	Research I Environment Questionnaire Key Informant Interviews Baseline Observations	Data I Data Systems Map Baseline Indicators	Baseline Summary Report Site Visit 1	2 mo
II	Research II Data User Interviews Synthesis Workshop	Data II Priority OCDS Mapping	Actionable Opportunities Report Site Visit 2	2 mo
III	Pilot Pilot Creation	Data III Data Management Reforms	Action Plan	6 mo

For more information about our how this process worked in Sunlight and OCP pilots, visit <https://sunlightfoundation.com/open-contracting/reform-in-cities/>.

Phase 0 (2 months)

Selection

Capacity Assessment

For Civil Society partners or external reformers to assess City preparedness. Assessing the procurement landscape for opportunities and barriers to reform.

<u>Owner</u>	Project Manager
<u>Activites</u>	Research potential City partners to compile a long list Identify and evaluate key selection criteria to compare Cities Develop a shortlist to consolidate potential City partners Conduct informational interviews to introducing Open Contracting to shortlist Select the best fit City partner and identify members of the Core Team Identify a focus area within procurement at the selected City Document a City/Civil Society org scope of work
<u>Tips</u>	Consider factors like the city size, location, currently published open data, openness to OCDS, and desire to be user-centered Look for political will within the priorities of the City in the form of Political Champions and/or recently published strategic plans. Identify the City’s budget cycle, upcoming major procurements, or large IT investments. Ideally, we would want to be part of an ongoing project trying to reform a specific procurement process. Instead of being external advocates for reform, we want to steer the City in the right direction. One of the reasons why it is so successful and sustainable to work on existing specific procurement process reform or RFP already in development is that the government is required to do that work. We are there to steer them in the right direction.

Objectives Definition

For the entire team working with a single city. Set clear expectations and goals for the project with all project collaborators.

<u>Owner</u>	Project Manager
<u>Activites</u>	Introduce Core Team members and clearly define expectations for roles of each

Conduct an introduction to OCDS with the **Core Team**
Set short and long term project goals
Create and share the Workspace
Discuss potential barriers to project goals with the **Core Team**
Review the fundamental tenets of Open Contracting with the **City's Core Team**
Set expectations and negotiate transparency of work products
Document goals in the workspace

Working Docs [\[TEMPLATE\] Workspace](#)

Tips The **Project Manager** should pull key information, especially document links, from emails and other exchanges to be stored centrally on the Workspace.

Encourage everyone on the project team to collaboratively edit the Workspace document with links, notes, and updates.

Workspace

The Workspace is a Google document that serves as a central project management hub for all project collaborators. It summarizes the project goals and timeline, as well as consolidates project resources including meeting agendas, meeting notes, and links to deliverables. Any member of the team should be able to use the Workspace to ramp up and stay up to date on the project.

[\[TEMPLATE\] Workspace](#)

Phase I (2 months)

Research I

Political Environmental Assessment

Evaluate the city’s environment for procurement reforms by assessing goals, political support and pain points.

<u>Owner</u>	Policy Expert
<u>Activites</u>	Have City team fill out the environment questionnaire Conduct working call to talk through questionnaire
<u>Working Docs</u>	[TEMPLATE] Environment Questionnaire
<u>Tips</u>	Questionnaire should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Overall procurement goals, political support & pain points- Specific issue focus goals, political support & pain points- Data governance reform efforts currently underway- City performance management practice overall and for procurement

Key Informant Interviews

Collect detailed information from City stakeholders about the current status of procurement processes.

<u>Owner</u>	Design Researcher
<u>Activites</u>	Draft <u>KII Interview Guide</u> with questions customized to types of interviewees <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Types of interviewees may be technical or non-technical- Investigate pain points from political environment and data systems Review draft guide with Core Team Revise guide based on Core Team feedback Identify potential key informants to interview with the Core Team Collect background on key informant interviewees from the Core Team Create <u>Interview Outreach Tracker</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- A spreadsheet often works well with a status column and other key information that can be easily sorted Contact interviewees to introduce the project, set expectations, and schedule

Coordinate interviewers and schedule

Interview remotely or in person

- Take detailed interview Interview Notes in a Google Doc
- Interviews may be conducted individually or in small focus groups

Label and document observations in observation Airtable, or any other qualitative research coding platform, based on the interview notes

Working Docs [\[TEMPLATE\] Key Informant Interview Guide](#)
[Interview Outreach Tracker](#)
[Interview Notes](#)

Tips

Key Informants are internal, high level stakeholders with a bird's eye view of relevant policy or implementation history and nuance (max 10).

Arrange for one interviewer and one notetaker in each interview whenever possible

Present yourself as an impartial observer, not a member of the City staff.

Assure interviewees that there are no right answers and they should feel free to give their honest opinion.

For focus groups, limit size to no more than 8 interviewees. Watch for strong personalities and ensure everyone's voice is heard.

Baseline Observations

Generate insights from the data collected in Key Informant Interviews.

Owner

Policy Expert

Activities

Review key informant interview observations for recurring topics and themes

Rate City Staff perceptions toward / summarize comments on issues like:

- Internal data use
- Internal procurement efficiency
- Potential for community impact through open contracting
- Desire to publish more contracting data
- Desire to improve existing open contracting data

Synthesize observations into 4-6 key challenge areas and document in a draft of the Baseline Summary Report

Working Docs [\[TEMPLATE\] Baseline Summary Report](#)

Tips

These are qualitative insights that will inform the creation of key challenge areas for the baseline summary report

Site Visit 1

The first site visit is focused on meeting with City staff to understand the contours and challenges of the current procurement process. Information collected in Key Informant Interviews and meetings with technical staff during this visit are the basis for the content compiled in the Baseline Summary Report.

Data I

Systems Map

Document the structure and quality of procurement data sources inside the City.

Owner **Data Governance Expert**

Activites Share Data Systems Map Template
Identify data linkages and lack thereof
Review with **Core Team**
Prepare document for review during Site Visit 1

Working Docs [\[TEMPLATE\] Data Systems Map](#)

Tips Have City staff take a pass at filling out the systems map on their own before assisting them, and then use the Data Systems Map as an opportunity to start a discussion about data challenges. Beyond just filling out the Template, this can be a good opportunity to learn which data improvements City staff would like to prioritize. The [OCDS help desk](#) can also help cities complete the Data Systems Map on their own.

Baseline Indicators

Identify and calculate baseline indicators using existing City procurement data sources.

Owner **Performance Management Expert**

Activites Draft indicators from key informant interviews
Discuss with **Data Governance Expert**
Discuss with **Core Team**, including sustainability of measuring these over time and processes for doing so

Calculate indicators with readily available data and create a work plan for indicators that require more work to calculate
Document indicators in the Data Systems Map template, or another consistent space
Set up timelines for measuring performance (re-calculating indicators)
- Ex. Quarterly, every 6 months, annually

Working Docs [\[TEMPLATE\] Data Systems Map](#)

Tips These are quantitative insights for the Baseline Summary Report.
Make sure these can be measured from existing data sources.

Baseline Summary Report

The Baseline Summary Report is a review of major process challenges and the current state of the procurement process based on Key Informant Interviews. The report includes a set of quantitative baseline performance indicators to run throughout the project work and specific issue areas. Be sure to align baseline observations into challenge areas that include relevant baseline indicators.

[\[TEMPLATE\] Baseline Summary Report](#)

Phase II (2 months)

Research II

Data User Interviews

Collect detailed information from additional procurement stakeholders such as vendors and frontline staff.

Owner

Design Researcher

Activities

Align on research goals to identify data reform needs and process reform needs
Align on the issue context from a community perspective
Discuss Research Goals with **Core Team**
Identify groups of Data Users to interview about Lines of Inquiry
Compile Design Research Framework document and share with **Core Team**

- Include a Data User Interview Guide

Identify potential data users to interview from with the **Core Team**
Update the Interview Outreach Tracker with data user interviewees
Contact interviewees to introduce the project, set expectations, and schedule
Coordinate interviewers and schedule
Collect background on data user interviewees from the Core Team
Create a draft guide with questions customized to specific interviewees or groups as needed based on background information
Review draft guide with Core Team
Revise guide based on Core Team feedback
Interview remotely or in person

- Take detailed Interview Notes
- Interviews may be conducted individually or in small focus groups

Label and document observations in observation Airtable or other qualitative research coding platform, based on the interview notes

Working Docs

[\[TEMPLATE\] Data User Interview Guide](#)
[\[TEMPLATE\] Design Research Framework](#)
Interview Notes

Tips

Arrange for one interviewer and one notetaker in each interview whenever possible
Present yourself as an impartial observer, not a member of the City staff
Assure interviewees that there are no right answers and they should feel free to give their honest opinion

Iteratively revisit data interviewees list and add based on contacts made through interviews; snowballing, etc.

For focus groups, limit size to no more than 8 interviewees. Watch for strong personalities and ensure everyone's voice is heard.

Synthesis Workshop

Identify procurement reform opportunities collaboratively with City stakeholders.

Owner

Design Researcher

Activities

Prep workshop materials from Airtable observations
Conduct the Synthesis Workshop with City stakeholders
Type up post-its and organize other documentation from the Workshop
Share draft Synthesis Workshop Writeup
City Core Team discusses solutions from Synthesis Workshop Writeup
Core Team rates impact and feasibility of each solution

Working Docs

[\[TEMPLATE\] Design Research Framework](#)

Tips

Be flexible with the design of the synthesis activity. Tailor it to what the City staff would benefit from learning for future design thinking activities conducted on their own.

Site Visit 2

The second site visit extends research activities to procurement stakeholders beyond city staff. In addition to in person data user interviews, the Synthesis Workshop should be held in person at the end of the site visit. This rapid turnaround from interviews to collaborative ideation gives the research project momentum and engages City staff at a key moment in the ideation process.

Data II

Priority OCDS Mapping

Map City procurement data systems to OCDS to identify data gaps and custom OCDS needs.

Owner

Data Governance Expert (with OCDS Expert)

Activities

Draft an Actionable Opportunities report based on solutions generated in the Synthesis Workshop

- Should contain overall summary of how OCDS might help meet community-identified needs for open contracting data
- Should contain an update of baseline summary report challenge areas
- Should contain fully calculated baseline *or newly calculated* indicators for each challenge area
- Should contain a set of actionable opportunities for each challenge area, classified by short-, medium-, and long-term feasibility based on synthesis workshop solutions
- Should contain priority OCDS fields for each actionable opportunity

Review the report with the **City Core Team**

Revise the report based on feedback from the **City Core Team**

Final review of the revised report by the **City Core Team** then close Google doc to comments

Final formatting pass and deliver report as PDF

Working Docs [\[TEMPLATE\] Actionable Opportunities Report](#)

Tips

Think of this process as matching the demand identified through design research to the supply identified through systems mapping and other data governance exploration. Use OCDS to demonstrate that solutions fit together into a long-term strategy of improving the overall interoperability of data systems, and that solutions feed directly into meeting expressed community needs for information.

Actionable Opportunities Report

This report presents actionable opportunities to solve public procurement challenges and the steps needed for open contracting reform. It contains procurement reform solutions derived from qualitative research and identifies the top opportunity areas where community stakeholders identified a need for improved procurement policies, open data, and processes.

Each opportunity area contains short, medium, and long term opportunities to address pain points in the procurement process identified by vendors, advocates, and City staff, linking these opportunities to long-term goals. The goal of the report is primarily to support the planning of a short term pilot that can build toward medium and long term cascading reforms.

[\[TEMPLATE\] Actionable Opportunities Report](#)

Phase III (6 months)

Pilot

Pilot Creation

Tackle short term actionable opportunities and test out scalable solutions with City departments.

Owner

Project Manager

Activities

Select a solution from the report and fine-tune
Create an Action Plan that summarizes the AO report, and includes technical requirements, tasks, and timeline as needed for the pilot

- Clarify who owns each task between the City and Open Contracting Practitioners
- Include how the pilot will fit into medium-, and long-term reform efforts
- Include complete executive summary of the AO report

Core Team develops short term pilot collaboratively

- Engage **OCDS Expert** to help implement using OCDS where appropriate
- Identify City departments to help pilot the solution, as needed
- Engage **Pilot Department Leadership** and **Pilot Department Procurement Staff** to confirm feasibility, provide feedback on the pilot plan, and assist with implementation

Working Docs

Action Plan

Tips

Primary goal: to open new data and provide it in a public and accessible way. Backup goal: to reform policy or governance so that meaningful open data comes into existence

Data III

Data Management Reforms

Initiate procurement data reforms in collaboration with the City’s technical teams and plan to fully implement OCDS.

Owner

Data Governance Expert (with OCDS Expert)

Activities

- Host an OCDS orientation with a focus on applying OCDS to implement the Pilot
- Invite IT + department-level contracting data users + procurement staff to a training on OCDS
 - Customize the training for the City-specific project needs
 - Conduct the training

Complete an OCDS Technical Assessment

- Core city support team takes first pass at assessment
- IT + procurement staff review first pass and add detail
- Technical assessment gets passed off to help desk
- IT and help desk coordinate on firming up responses
- Create a new technical working team with IT + procurement staff

Create an OCDS work plan that describes how Pilot Action Plan OCDS steps taken should fit into overall OCDS rollout (written for an IT audience specifically)

Working Docs

[OCDS Technical Assessment](#)

[OCDS Work Plan](#)

Tips

Pull actionable opportunities from the report that require data governance reform
Highlight OCDS fields that connect directly to community + governance reform needs

Generate buy-in among **IT leadership**

Provide links to next steps: OCDS Field-level Mapping, and other implementation guidance

Action Plan

The Action Plan is a brief, public facing document that summarizes the high level opportunities identified in the Actionable Opportunities Report, including a data wishlist, a focused listing of topline recommendation with relevant solutions, and the short term pilot. The Action Plan may be used as an advocacy tool to build support for solutions detailed in the Actionable Opportunities Report. It can also serve as a method to close the loop with interviewees and other community stakeholders outside the City who are interested in outcomes of the project research.

[\[TEMPLATE\] Pilot Action Plan](#)

Template Document Summary

The following is a list of relevant documents to guide open contracting reformers through a technical assistance process to find community-centered opportunities for cities to share open contracting data and implement OCDS:

- [Project Workspace](#)
- [Environment Questionnaire](#)
- [Key Informant Interview Guide](#)
- [Data Systems Map](#)
- [Baseline Summary Report](#)
- [Data User Interview Guide](#)
- [Design Research Framework](#)
- [Actionable Opportunities Report](#)
- [Action Plan](#)
- [OCDS Technical Assessment](#)
- OCDS Work Plan (To be created)

Project Roles

Project roles may be filled by various combinations of individuals depending on skills. This is not necessarily a 1:1 list of team members.

Civic Innovation Practitioners

Core Team

- **Project Manager** is experienced with managing complex stakeholder relationships and prioritizing tasks to meet project goals under shifting timelines. This role is a consistent point of contact throughout the project phases for all project stakeholders.
- **Design Researcher** is a specialist in qualitative research to generate insights for the public sector.
- **Local Policy Expert** has experience working with city governments on policy reform. Ideally this team member also has connections and/or firsthand knowledge of the City and its governance.

- **Data Governance Expert** has experience implementing open data policy from a technical, procedural, and political perspective.

Contributors

- **Communications Expert** is a skilled writer with experience collaborating with City Communications Teams. Ideally this team member has connections to local media or is able to build relationships quickly.
- **Open Contracting Policy Expert** has wide-ranging experience implementing Open Contracting procurement reforms. Knowledge of current work by cities in this space and examples of successes as well as lessons learned is a must.
- **Performance Management Expert** is a data scientist with experience setting and calculating key performance indicators in the public sector. Ideally this team member is an expert in data collection and analysis methods employed by city governments.
- **OCDS Expert** can be a combination of support from the OCDS Help Desk and others with OCDS expertise. Ideally a dedicated Help Desk representative is assigned to each City project who can follow the context and goals of the project, even if they do not attend every Core Team meeting.

City Implementers

Core Team

- **Lead Coordinator** assists with project management tasks across the City team. Has a cross-departmental view of how the City government operates and is a savvy communicator.
- **Procurement Leadership** guide procurement procedures and reporting for the City.
- **Procurement Staff** execute procurement procedures and reporting for the City.
- **IT Staff** manage data systems for the City, especially contracting databases. May be a member of a IT department, finance department, city clerk, innovation department, or controller's office.
- **Subject Matter Expert** works on the area of focus for the project (for example, food procurement or inclusion) inside the City.

Contributors

- **Pilot Department Leadership and Staff** work on contracting within the department selected for the short term pilot.
- **IT Leadership** guide the management of data systems for the City, especially contracting databases.
- **Political Champion** is an influential government official with a committed public interest in procurement reform. May be an elected official like a city council member or an executive level city employee.

Community

- Current and Potential Vendors
- City Service Clients or Consumers
- Business Community Leadership
- Procurement Reform Advocates
- Journalists and Media
- Technologists and Data Users

References

- [Open Contracting in Cities](#) One Sheet
- [Policy Guidelines for Municipal Open Contracting](#)
- [Open Contracting Global Principles](#) and [OCDS documentation](#)
- Use Case [guidance and resources](#)
- [7 Steps](#) for open contracting implementation