



Oifig um Sholáthar Rialtais
Office of Government Procurement

Communications Strategy

2018 - 2020

OGP Communications Strategy 2018 – 2020

Introduction

Communication has been a core feature of the Office of Government Procurement's (OGP) work since its establishment. This has included widespread engagement with public sector clients to establish their procurement needs as well as issuing regular status updates on the progress of the OGP in implementing public procurement reform.

The internal and external consultation informing this new communications strategy has solicited feedback that our communications should be proactive and dynamic, and targeted and clear, in order to be consistent and effective.

This strategy sets out the OGP's communications approach to championing, advocating for, supporting, and promoting the value that strategic public procurement can bring.

The OGP

Procurement is a key element of Government's Public Service Reform programme. The Irish State spends approximately €12 billion every year on goods, services and works.

The OGP commenced operations in 2014 as part of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (PER). The OGP is accountable to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and advises on public procurement policy across the entire public sector. Our work is carried out in the context of EU legislation and national legislation passed by the Oireachtas, and is guided by Government policy.

In the new national procurement model, the OGP has responsibility for leading national public procurement reform. With our partners in four key sectors (Health, Defence, Education and Local Government), we source goods and services on behalf of the entire public service.

In our work, we seek to maximise the buying power of the State to deliver value for money for the public while maintaining fair and open access to procurement opportunities for businesses of a range of types and sizes. The OGP also encompasses construction procurement policy and initiatives such as eInvoicing for the Irish public sector.

The OGP has a wider role to modernise and professionalise the procurement process across goods, services and works. We provide procurement solutions, advice, guidance and systems to organisations across the public service. The OGP also provides policy advice to the Minister and Government and represents Irish interests in the development of European procurement legislation.

OGP Vision, Mission and Values

OGP Vision and Mission

To deliver sustainable procurement savings for the tax payer by optimising value for money across the public service.

Customers will have easy access to high quality procurement services that they have confidence in and procurement staff are proud to provide.

OGP Vision for 2020

Our ambition is to

- (a) modernise and professionalise the public procurement function by providing procurement solutions, advice, guidance and systems for public bodies and promoting best practice and
- (b) to leverage collaborative and cooperative governance arrangements across the public service to optimise outcomes for citizens.

OGP Core Values

- Communicate openly and honestly
- Plan effectively to deliver our service and take responsibility for our results
- The capability and engagement of our people are the key drivers of our service

OGP accomplishments to date

This strategy aims to build better awareness of the OGP's mission and accomplishments, remit, and operating environment. The strategy aims to support the OGP in being recognised as a centre of excellence modernising and professionalising public procurement.

Key positive messages about the OGP's accomplishments to date include:

- An extensive suite of contractual arrangements, advice and supports ("procurement solutions") is available to our public sector clients across a wide range of categories
- A proactive approach has been adopted to market analysis, allowing the OGP to develop the right structure of competition to support engagement by SMEs and micro-enterprises where possible - almost 70% of businesses on OGP framework agreements come from the SME sector
- OGP data collection has helped to develop of a coherent view of government spending, supporting evidence-based policy making
- The OGP supports public sector bodies in delivering key Government initiatives in individual areas such as rapid build housing, pharma negotiations, e-passport gates, etc.

Challenges

There are a number of challenges to communicating effectively about our work in public procurement. These include:

- The regulatory and legislative framework governing public procurement can make the subject seem complex and difficult to understand
- The varied nature of OGP stakeholder groups - from the European Commission to local SME suppliers - demands a tailored approach to delivering relevant messages that connect with different audiences, as well as finding ways to listen to their feedback
- The delivery of some of our high profile projects is led by our public sector clients, making it challenging for OGP to clearly identify its role to the media
- A broad remit that requires a large number of people in the OGP speaking to a large number of stakeholders and includes related but diverse topics such as construction policy and eInvoicing raises challenges around delivering a consistent message with one voice

- The success of the OGP in establishing a large number (>130) of procurement solutions has led to high levels of demand meaning that the promotion of specific procurement solutions needs to be strategically driven to areas of greatest capacity

The Strategy

Objective

Our approach to effective communications is to identify key stakeholder groups, the messages that are relevant to them, and the best means of communicating those messages. The strategy aims to:

- Actively engage our public sector clients with the procurement solutions available to them,
- Promote participation in the public procurement process by SMEs and micro-enterprises,
- Build awareness of the work of the OGP and the legislative and policy environment within which it operates among the public and public representatives,
- Achieve a reputation as a great place to work among potential recruits seeking to build a career in procurement and the public service.

Context

The strategy is informed by the public service values of openness and transparency and strives to meet the OGP's commitments under the National Action Plan for Open Government and the Civil Service Renewal Plan with its objective of making the civil service unified, professional, responsive, open and accountable.

Scope

The strategy identifies core OGP stakeholders, key messages about the OGP's work and accomplishments, challenges associated with communicating those messages, the core actions we have identified, and some of the tools and channels that we intend to use. The strategy is focused on the communications strand of the OGP's work, rather than providing a comprehensive statement of policies or activities.

Stakeholders

Our stakeholders include our Minister, Minister of State, and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Oireachtas Éireann, our governance structures and four sector partners, the public sector bodies who access our services, the businesses who seek to become suppliers through the public procurement process, the Irish public, unions, international institutions including the European Union, other Government departments, and potential recruits considering a career with the OGP.

Core actions

A wide range of actions have been identified to support us in tackling the challenges above and communicating more effectively with our stakeholder groups. Core actions that we will carry out include:

- A visual brand refresh to establish a more robust and recognisable identity for the OGP, clearly aligned to the Government of Ireland brand
- A review of our publications to ensure that they are easy to understand, useful, and written in plain English wherever possible
- Supporting OGP staff to access training opportunities around improved communication including report writing, use of plain English, and universal access standards

- A sustained focus on listening to our stakeholders through a variety of methods including: client and staff surveys; the SME Advisory Group; regular client and supplier engagement events; and responding to queries, representations and parliamentary questions
- Better and more consistent social media engagement to raise awareness of the OGP across a wide range of stakeholder groups
- Improved internal communications including a dedicated communications working group that will agree key messages, suggest methods to improve communications, and identify benefits from the OGP's work that can be communicated to the public
- Identifying new ways to communicate with businesses to support access to public procurement opportunities including through the production of videos and the development of new events
- Improvements to our communications channels including developing the website of the OGP as the primary portal for definitive procurement information
- Developing a baseline of measures to monitor the effectiveness of our communications to support evaluation and review of our strategic approach.

Tools and resources

The OGP has used a variety of communications tools since its establishment including its website, Twitter feed, email bulletins, conferences and events, and client and supplier briefings. We will expand this range of tools over the course of the strategy including through the production of videos, enhancing our presence on social media, and developing internal tools such as the communications working group.

Effective communications are the responsibility of all staff within the OGP, who regularly engage with a wide variety of stakeholder groups. A dedicated resource has been provided through the four-person communications team, however, and they support the organisation in delivering a consistent message to all our stakeholders.

Conclusion and review

The OGP has achieved significant success across public procurement policy and operations in a relatively short period of time. This communication strategy will support the OGP in meeting further goals identified in the organisation's business plan. The implementation of this strategy will be assessed annually by the OGP Management Board.