

# Navigating Public Sector Procurement as a Small Business

## The Government



As a university in Ontario, York is considered part of the broader public sector. We aren't part of the government itself, but we provide vital services to the Ontario public and we are governed by the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. This Act outlines how we are to ensure accountability and transparency for government reporting and to taxpayers.

## The Trade Agreements

Any purchase **over \$121,200 (pre-tax)** at York University must undergo an open, competitive procurement process. This means that the opportunity is posted publicly for a minimum period and all responses are evaluated to determine best value for the University.

There are two exemptions to this general rule. These are called non-applicability clauses which allows the University to suspend the open competitive process. They are as follows:

1. Purchases made exclusively by businesses owned by Indigenous Persons.
2. Procurements that promote Poverty Reduction (procurement cannot exceed \$200,000).

Procurements valued at **under \$121,200** are typically governed by the institution and it is up to the institution to make policies and procedures to ensure it is still getting best value for the goods and services required. Remember, even though the trade agreements don't affect these thresholds, institutions are still expected to be a good steward of public funds. York defines best value for purchases in the following way:

# Procurement Thresholds at York

Procurement Threshold	Actions	Tips for Bidding
<p><b>Procurements Over \$121,200</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities are posted openly on Merx, an online e-tendering site</li> <li>• Opportunities are posted for a minimum amount of time (usually a minimum of 15 days)</li> <li>• ANY qualified bidder may submit a bid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Register on Merx and set up notifications for opportunities that interest you. Note: A fee applies.</li> <li>• If the project is bigger than what you can manage, consider reaching out to companies who have downloaded the documents to explore partnerships.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Procurements Between \$25,000 - \$121,200</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• York community members solicit quotes from <b>at least three</b> vendors</li> <li>• There is a smaller pool of bidders but you still compete by demonstrating best value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the quote carefully. Ask questions if there is anything unclear. Submit your best offer.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Procurements Under \$25,000</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• York community members solicit quote(s)</li> <li>• York U/Procurement Services ensure best value by imploring tools like market research, etc. in addition to evaluating quotes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you qualify, register for the Social Procurement Vendor Portal so community members can find you.</li> </ul>

## A Note on Consultant Services

From time to time, the University may also go to market to find experts to help us innovate. Unlike buying goods and services, there are a few added checks we have to consider before awarding a contract. These checks are mandated by the Province of Ontario to ensure we're protecting the public purse. They ensure there is a clear separation of powers between the institution and the consultant to avoid any conflict of interest, and to make sure competition has been sought to ensure we're getting the best advice and the best price. The table below explains how the University determines best value.

Procurement Threshold	Actions	Tips for Bidding
<p><b>For consultancy services valued up to \$50,000</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• York community members solicit quotes from at least three vendors.</li> <li>• Prior to award, you need to liaise with your York sponsor to complete the Independent Contractor Questionnaire</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the quote carefully. Ask questions if there is anything unclear. Submit your best offer.</li> </ul>
<p><b>For consultancy services valued over \$50,000</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities are posted openly on Merx, an online e-tendering site</li> <li>• Opportunities are posted for a minimum amount of time (usually a minimum of 15 days)</li> <li>• ANY qualified bidder may submit a bid</li> <li>• Prior to award, you need to liaise with your York sponsor to complete the Independent Contractor Questionnaire.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Register on Merx and set up notification for opportunities that interest you. Note, a fee applies</li> <li>• If the project is bigger than what you can manage, consider reaching out to companies who have downloaded the documents to explore partnerships.</li> </ul>