

15/12/2015

Mr. Abubakar Malami (SAN),
The Honorable Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice
Federal Ministry of Justice,
Shehu Shagari Way,
Abuja.

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR PARTNERSHIP ON ADOPTION OF THE OPEN CONTRACTING DATA STANDARDS (OCDS)

We respectively convey our utmost appreciation to you for meeting with us on Thursday 10th December 2015 to extensively discuss subject matter. Be rest assured that we have taken your suggestions and recommendations into consideration. We further write to request a partnership with your ministry to have the Open Contracting Data standards reviewed and adopted in Nigeria.

As earlier explained, over the years, PPDC has been mobilizing and supporting groups to observe and report on procurement processes and in the last few years, the Freedom of Information Act, 2011, has enabled increased access to procurement related information on request. This improvement in accessing some procurement records has shown some disparity in the way that contracting information is made available; thus making it difficult to link budget and procurement data provided to the eventual public service.

A Background

Over the years, PPDC has been mobilizing procurement monitors to track and verify the performance of contracts awarded for projects such as Almajiri schools and Primary Health Care Centres across the country. This is with the aim of ensuring that public resources have been judiciously utilized in providing public services.

Whilst some progress has been made, there is the challenge of linking available budget and procurement data to the expected public service each of these contracts seeks to deliver.

Procurement monitors have observed that most of the information is available only through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. Additionally, the data that is being made available at various stages leading to the public service in question, is often provided in different formats; making it difficult to link data from one stage to the other.

In our bid to make information around public contracts and the procurement process more coherent, procurement monitors have adopted the Open Contracting Data Standards (OCDS) to visually enable linkages across the procurement value chain.

This initial demonstration shows how utilizing the OCDS can enable budget and procurement data to be linked to public services and how the Government can use this analytical tool to easily discover red flags in the system.

Why is this Important?

According to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the primary function of Government is the provision of welfare and security. This primary function is realized through the procurement process. In addition, the constitution ensures the participation of people in their Government.

The number of public contracts executed in each year is such that no one agency or unit can verify them all. It is therefore, imperative that data standards are integrated into the current practice of keeping records around public resource utilization and that at each stage, the records can be linked to other stages and ultimately, to the resulting public infrastructure/service.

If such a system is deployed, then without having to physically visit every single location that a contract is being executed in, the analyses can point to red flags which indicate projects whose performance needs to be verified because of a questionable record. However, this would require data standards that link each contracting process across various stages. The OCDS has mapped all stages in the contracting process from conception to project delivery and created uniform standards that enable links to be drawn.

How does the OCDS work?

1. Each contract from conception, to budget, to contract award and execution is given a unique identifier.
2. Based on the unique identifier and visualization tools, comparison can be made between budgets and eventual contract sums, contracts without prior budget allocations can be easily identified, the completion rates of various contractors can be seen etc, the released amount of each project can be easily determined, the pricing of various contracts across public institutions can be compared etc.

The OCDS is premised on the fact that we can prevent some of the expensive corruption investigations and prosecutions as well as inefficiencies across the procurement value chain by deploying data standards that enable us link various data from the budget, to procurement and ultimately to public services in a timely way.

Our Proposal

In view of the above, we write to request for partnership with the Ministry of Justice to have the OCDS reviewed and adopted across all Ministries, Departments and Agencies in Nigeria.

Specifically, we request that:

1. Your office set up a team to work with PPDC in the review and adoption of the OCDS
2. Through the team constituted, your office would bring additional hands from relevant Ministries including the Federal Ministry of Finance, the Bureau of Public Procurement to review the template
3. After the review, facilitate a demonstration of the template's utility to the Federal Executive Council of Ministers
4. Facilitate the adoption of the template across Ministries, departments and agencies across the Federation.


We thank you sincerely for your support and we look forward to a long and mutually benefiting relationship with your office.

About the Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC)

The Public and Private Development Centre is a citizen sector that seeks to promote increased citizen's participation in governance in a way that supports improved integrity in public sector governance through monitoring and reporting on public finance expenditure. We are also members of the Open Data Working Group (Nigeria) set up by the Ministry of Communication Technology.

Should you require further clarification, do not hesitate to contact us via phone: 07066618896.

Thank you,


Seember Nyager
CEO

Public and Private Development Centre