

A GUIDE TO SELLING TO
**GOVERNMENTS IN
ATLANTIC CANADA**



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Purpose

The Atlantic Provinces are working together on a range of awareness and development activities that will make it easier for Atlantic firms to access government procurement opportunities.

All selling to government is regulated and many businesses overlook this multi-billion dollar market because they perceive it as being too complex. Yet each year, thousands of competing businesses in Atlantic Canada are awarded government contracts.

Held within the pages of this guide is everything a business owner needs to know in order to tap into this **lucrative market**. This guide will provide insight into the goods and services purchased by the four Atlantic Provinces and the Government of Canada and help business owners navigate the procurement process to maximize their opportunities for success.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Atlantic Supplier Development Team (ASDT) is a group of government procurement professionals who have come together to help firms in Atlantic Canada gain access to public sector supply opportunities. The ASDT has representatives from the four Atlantic Provinces, the Government of Canada and the Council of Atlantic Premiers Secretariat.

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What do we buy?

Just about everything is on the list, from buckets right on up to and including backhoes. The key question really is how are these items purchased?

- ▶ Aircraft Components
- ▶ Building Materials
- ▶ Clothing
- ▶ Communication Services
- ▶ Consulting Services
- ▶ Fax Machines
- ▶ Fuel Oil
- ▶ Heavy Equipment
- ▶ IT Hardware & Software
- ▶ Janitorial Supplies
- ▶ Marine Ferry Services
- ▶ Office Supplies and Furnishings
- ▶ Photocopiers
- ▶ Plumbing Supplies
- ▶ Temporary Services
- ▶ Vehicles
- ▶ Medical Equipment and Supplies
- ▶ Laboratory Supplies
- ▶ Environmental Equipment
- ▶ School Supplies
- ▶ Professional Information Technology Services



DID YOU KNOW?

The federal government is one of the biggest national buyers of goods and services, purchasing over \$17 billion worth each year.

To find out more about what the Government of Canada buys and how to sell to them see the Government of Canada section of this guide.



How do we buy?

Public procurement is governed by legislation and trade agreements to ensure that all purchasing is open, fair and transparent.

Each Atlantic province has legislation which guides its procurement activity. The legislation can be found on each provincial website.

Trade agreements play a vital role in our economy. They create market access for our goods and services by reducing barriers to, among others things, labour mobility, investments, energy, agriculture, and government procurement. Agreements can be comprehensive, covering a number of different topics, or more concentrated, covering individual topics. Each agreement has unique language, exemptions, rules, and requirements and can be domestic or international in scope.

Domestic Agreements

The two main domestic agreements are the **Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT)** and the **Atlantic Procurement Agreement (APA)**. The AIT includes all provinces, Northwest Territories, Yukon, and the Federal Government as well as their respective Municipalities, Academic Institutions, School Boards and Health Authorities (MASH sector) and Crown Corporations.

The APA is an agreement among New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and their respective MASH sectors and Crown Corporations. The following table outlines the thresholds for these two agreements.

	AGREEMENT	PROVINCE	COVERAGE	MASH	CROWNS
	Atlantic Procurement Agreement (APA) Signed 1992; updated 1996 and 2008	Includes NB, NL, NS, & PEI, their respective MASH and Crowns	Goods: \$10K+ Services: \$50K+ Construction: \$100K+	Goods: \$25K+ Services: \$50K+ Construction: \$100K+	Goods: \$10K+ Services: \$50K+ Construction: \$100K+
	Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) Signed 1995	Includes all CDN Provinces, NWT, YUK, their respective MASH and Crowns, and the Federal Government	Goods: \$25K+ Services: \$100K+ Construction: \$100K+	Goods: \$100K+ Services: \$100K+ Construction: \$250K+	Goods: \$500K+ Services: \$500K+ Construction: \$5M+

International Agreements

Currently, there is one international trade agreement that commits provinces in the Atlantic Region to procurement obligations. The Canada-US Agreement on Government Procurement includes all provinces and Territories, and the Federal Government. The thresholds are quite high as you can see in the following table.

AGREEMENT	PROVINCE	COVERAGE	MASH	CROWNS
Canada - US Agreement on Government Procurement Signed 2010	Includes all CDN Provinces and Territories, and the Federal Government	Goods: \$560.3K+ Services: \$560.3K+ Construction: \$7.8M+	N/A	N/A



DID YOU KNOW?

In 2010-2011, 69% of goods contracts, 80% of services contracts, and 98% of construction contracts issued in accordance with the Atlantic Procurement Agreement were awarded to suppliers in Atlantic Canada. 4,562 suppliers were issued contracts totaling \$2.281 billion.



Thresholds

Our governments approach low dollar value items very differently than high dollar value items. As a business owner your approach will also be different depending on the goods and services you offer.

NEW BRUNSWICK	PROCUREMENT CATEGORY	PROCUREMENT APPROACH THRESHOLDS		
		DIRECT PURCHASE	PRICE SOLICITATION / INVITED TENDER	PUBLICLY ADVERTISED TENDER/RFP
	Goods	< \$1,500	\$1,500 - \$10,000	> \$10,000
	Services	< \$10,000	\$10,000 - \$50,000	> \$50,000
	Construction	< \$10,000	\$10,000 - \$40,000	> \$40,000
	Highway	< \$30,000	\$30,000 - \$75,000	> \$75,000

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR		REQUEST FOR QUOTATION / DIRECT PURCHASE	PUBLIC TENDER
		Goods & Services	< \$10,000
	Construction	< \$20,000	> \$20,000

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND		INVITED QUOTES / DIRECT PURCHASE	PUBLIC TENDER
		Goods	< \$5,000
	Services	< \$50,000	> \$50,000
	Construction	< \$100,000	> \$100,000

NOVA SCOTIA		INVITED QUOTES / DIRECT PURCHASE	PUBLIC TENDER
		Goods, Services and Construction	< \$10,000



DID YOU KNOW?

The Atlantic Provinces use standard terms and conditions when buying goods and services. You can view the Atlantic Standard Terms and Conditions at www.atlanticsuppliers.ca

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Our Approach

There are several methods government can use when procuring goods and services. The approach selected will depend on the type of good or service and its estimated dollar value.

	SOLICITATION TERMS	ACRONYM	DEFINITION
	Public Tender		Means procurement for goods, services, construction and facilities obtained through public advertisement.
	Public Tender Notice		Means notice of intended procurement for goods, services, construction and facilities obtained through a public advertisement.
	Standing Offer	SO	A contractual arrangement between a purchasing organization and a pre-approved supplier or suppliers where the supplier agrees to provide certain goods or services on an “as required” basis, during a particular period of time at a predetermined price or discount. There is no obligation on the part of the purchasing organization to buy the good or service. Used for both high and low dollar value purchases.
	Request for Proposals	RFP	A process used to seek both competition and creative input from suppliers. The RFP document outlines the what, when and why, but the “how” is left up to the supplier and is usually the key component for evaluation. Both mandatory and weighted criteria are used to help the purchasing organization determine best value.
	Request for Quotations (AKA Invited Tender or Price Solicitation)	RFQ	Request for Quotations are generally used to solicit bids from known vendors, except where policy dictates public advertising. An RFQ is often used for the acquisition of goods, but may also be used for services. It is typically issued for lower dollar value acquisitions.
	Request for Information	RFI	Request for Information is used to obtain more information about a particular good or service offering. These products or services are often complex and not well understood by buyers. Respondents to RFIs have an opportunity to educate and shape the solutions the issuing government will require in the future.

High Dollar Value Purchases

High dollar value purchases usually go through a formal tendering process and must be publicly advertised. This process is open to all businesses and is also referred to as the bidding process. Each tender is available for a specific number of days, allowing time for it to be advertised and for suppliers to prepare their bids. The timeframe often depends on the complexity of the tender. Sometimes conditions change after a tender has been advertised. If the changes are major, the bid closing date may be extended to give bidders time to respond to the changes and finalize their submission. Any changes or extensions will be posted in an addendum/amendment.

This process is designed to be fair and as such the rules are strictly adhered to so even a simple oversight of an unsigned bid document can lead to disqualification. Bidders should pay special attention to the evaluation criteria listed in the tender when outlining the benefits and unique value of their product or service as the selection is not always made on price alone.

The thresholds at which high dollar value purchases are publicly tendered/advertised are outlined in Section 3.

Sites to Bookmark

Increasingly Canadian businesses are moving online and Canadian Governments are no different. Each province in Atlantic Canada publishes the vast majority of high dollar value contracts online. To ensure you access all publicized tenders check the provincial tender websites regularly. Tender opportunities may also be advertised in local newspapers, where feasible. Suppliers can register to receive automatic e-mail tender notifications from electronic tendering sites in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

	TENDER SITE	TENDER RESULTS
NB	NB Tenders	NB Tenders Results
NL	NL Tenders	NL Tenders Results
NS	NS Tenders	NS Tenders Results
PEI	PEI Tenders	PEI Tenders Results

Low Dollar Value Purchases

Like a regular household or business, Provincial governments go through low ticket items quickly and formal tendering processes are not practical, thus the processes for these purchases are designed for efficiency and best value.

There are three approaches for low dollar value items:

- ▶ **Buyers can go directly to a supplier that they know will offer best value.**
This approach is dependent on the dollar value of the purchase and the policy in place and varies by province.
- ▶ **Buyers can invite/request a minimum of three quotes from known suppliers.**
The buyer will ask for a price and a timeline and anything else that may be important to meeting their needs.
- ▶ **Buyers can go to a supplier on an existing standing offer.**

These approaches can reduce the demand on supplier resources as compared to the formal tendering process. This reduced demand on resources and the increased efficiencies in the process result in a win-win situation.

For the convenience of suppliers, governments in Atlantic Canada employ the use of direct deposit and/or "PCARDS." The provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island use Procurement Cards. The "PCARD" is intended to provide a simplified purchasing/payment tool for the acquisition of low dollar value goods, services and construction directly from suppliers. The PCARD can replace the Direct Purchase Order (DPO) in most, if not all, small dollar purchases.

The provinces of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia are now using Direct Deposit as the standard method of government payments. Suppliers are required to provide bank account information (and email address if available) for remittance. Forms are available online. For more info, visit the web links below:

[NB DIRECT DEPOSIT](#)

[NL DIRECT DEPOSIT](#)

[NS DIRECT DEPOSIT](#)



DID YOU KNOW?

Government buyers encourage potential suppliers to contact them for guidance on any tender or RFP prior to the closing date.

Standing Offer

Even though Standing Offers are frequently used for commodities or low cost items, this approach is not exclusively used for low dollar value purchases. Standing offers for goods include items such as fuel oil, office equipment, building supplies, shop material and road maintenance. Standing offers for services include consultants for communications, business, information technology, training, human resources and temporary staffing services.

Under a standing offer arrangement, successful suppliers offer their goods and services for a set price for the term of the standing offer. When and if a need arises, the supplier will be contacted for the item at the agreed upon price. While many standing offer agreements include estimated quantities, it is important to recognize that this is not a guaranteed level of business. Each approved supplier should establish and maintain contact with end users of the standing offer to help identify needs and ensure items are available when required.

Standing offers come in different shapes and sizes. They can be a single-source standing offer where one supplier is identified for a particular good or service or a multi-source standing offer where several suppliers are placed on a list as optional vendors of that good or service.

The standing offer process is beneficial for suppliers as they are often exposed to a much wider audience than the government department with the identified need and they have to compete less often due to the duration of the agreement.



DID YOU KNOW?

In some provinces, standing offer agreements are used by all government departments, agencies, boards and commissions as well as Municipalities, Academic Institutions, School Boards and Health Authorities. This group is commonly referred to as the MASH sector.



How can I ensure my bid is accepted?

When responding to any type of bid request whether it is a tender, RFP or standing offer, it is important that vendors provide a quality response. This is an introduction to your business and should reflect your capability to meet the needs and the quality of the product or service required.

Best Practices

- ▶ Register to receive tender notices.
- ▶ Review tender documents carefully.
- ▶ Read terms & conditions closely. The process is designed to be fair, transparent and open to all suppliers so any bid failing to meet all requirements can be rejected.
- ▶ Ask questions! Suppliers are encouraged to contact buyers prior to the closing date to review any questions they may have regarding the opportunity.
- ▶ Watch for addendums/amendments. It is possible to register for addendums /amendments in some provinces while others require the suppliers to monitor the tender online for notices and updates.
- ▶ Note closing date, time and submission location as late bids can be rejected.
- ▶ Ensure bid is signed and the tender #, closing date and time are apparent on the submission.

I submitted my bid, what happens next?

The next step is for government to evaluate the supplier submissions. Tender responses (or bids) are opened at the location, date and time shown in the tender/RFP document. After the bids have been opened, staff review each submission to ensure it meets the criteria listed in the tender/RFP document. Each bid is evaluated against all criteria outlined in the solicitation document, including cost.

The tender award results are posted online or can be confirmed by contacting the buyer noted in the tender/RFP document.



DID YOU KNOW?

Supplier debriefings are key opportunities to grow a stronger vendor community. Suppliers can find out how their proposal was scored and/or get advice on improving future submissions. The goal of debriefings is to create positive, constructive experiences that win the confidence and trust of suppliers while contributing to better, more competitive proposals.

How do I market my business to governments in Atlantic Canada?

Someone once said “People buy from people” and this adage is true even in a government setting. Yes it is true that procurement is mandated under a great deal of legislation but underneath the policy lies a fundamental need to extract value for budget. A key aspect of any government buyer’s job is to ensure the goods and services meet the requirements of the client at the most competitive price. Some of this knowledge is gained through a formal tender process but even more is gained from discussions with suppliers. When you have something of value to offer a commercial client you do not hesitate to contact them with the details, the same approach can and should be taken with government customers.



Reach out to government buyers

Contact buyers within the government departments likely to require your products or services. Below are links to the current buyer contacts within each province:

[Newfoundland and Labrador Public Sector Procurement Directory](#)

[Nova Scotia Public Sector Purchasing Contacts Directory](#)

[New Brunswick Department of Government Services Buyer Contacts](#)

[New Brunswick Department of Transportation & Infrastructure Buyer Contacts](#)

Prince Edward Island
Email: procurementservices@gov.pe.ca



GROW YOUR BUSINESS

While this guide provides a good overview of procurement in the Atlantic region, each province has a wealth of information to help you expand your business and explore new markets.

[NEW BRUNSWICK](#)

[NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR](#)

[NOVA SCOTIA](#)

[PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND](#)



Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a charge for viewing and downloading tenders from the Government Purchasing websites?

Any business wishing to download a bid package for an opportunity advertised on the Atlantic Government Procurement websites can do so at no charge. In some cases, a bid notice may be posted and there may be a fee to obtain the bid documents. This is usually the case for construction projects which include blueprints and/or drawings.

How can I find out when a change to a tender (addendum/amendment) is issued?

Some governments send automatic notices to potential suppliers; however, in some cases, the onus will be on the supplier to monitor the tender site for addendums/amendments.

How can I find out why my bid was not successful?

Government buyers encourage bidders to contact them for feedback on unsuccessful proposals. Through a process called Supplier Debriefings, buyers can often provide information and guidance to help make your next submission more successful.

Do governments buy together?

Yes, governments will sometimes buy together to realize cost savings on common items they all need, like office and maintenance supplies, financial and security services, school buses, and computers. This is called "joint purchasing." In addition to cost savings for governments, this type of purchasing provides opportunities for suppliers to expand into markets outside of their home province, partner with other suppliers in a joint venture arrangement and expand their current capacity.



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

The Governments of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and the Government of Canada offer educational events in the region to support supplier development. These events provide information on the public sector procurement process, the types of goods, services and construction required and upcoming projects.

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA ATLANTIC REGION EVENTS

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR EVENTS

NOVA SCOTIA EVENTS



Government of Canada

Public Works and Government Services Canada is the main purchaser of goods and services (including construction) for the Government of Canada. Public Works and Government Services Canada buys over \$17 billion a year of goods and services on behalf of a large number of federal departments and agencies.

Where do I start?

The best place to obtain information on how to access Federal Government opportunities is on the website www.buyandsell.gc.ca. This website has an extensive library of information for business owners wanting to do business with the Federal Government. A good place to start is to register your business. The Supplier Registration Information (SRI) system is a database of registered companies interested in selling to the federal government. By registering in SRI, you make your company's name and supply capabilities widely known to federal departments and agencies, who may use the system to identify sources of supply for the goods and services they buy.

Where can I see tenders from the Federal Government?

Many of the Federal Government's opportunities over \$25,000 are posted on the Government Electronic Tendering System (GETS) at www.buyandsell.gc.ca/tenders. There is no cost to access federal government opportunities.

How do I access contracts under \$25,000?

When the value is below this amount, buyers may contact suppliers directly. Many departments have their own processes and should be contacted for more information.

How can I market my business to these buyers?

Contact the people in the organizations, directorates and division that need your good and services. A list of buyer contacts can be found here - <https://buyandsell.gc.ca/for-businesses/contacts>.

Contact the Atlantic Regional Office

Telephone: 902-426-5677

Fax: 902-426-7969

Email: osme-bpme-atl@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca

Contacts

▶ NEW BRUNSWICK

Central Purchasing Branch

Marysville Place, Room 205, 20 McGloin Street
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H6

Tel: 1-800-561-1422 within Canada
Tel: 1-506-444-5636
Fax: 506-444-4200
Email: nbon@gnb.ca



▶ NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Government Purchasing Agency

30 Strawberry Marsh Road
St. John's, NL A1B 4R4

Tel: 709-729-3348
Fax: 709-729-5817
Email: tenders@gov.nl.ca



▶ NOVA SCOTIA

Procurement Services

Suite 200, 6176 Young Street
Halifax, NS B3K 2A6

Tel: (902) 424-3333
Fax: (902) 424-0622
Toll Free: 1-866-399-3377
Email: ptenders@gov.ns.ca



▶ PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Room 27, 2nd Floor Shaw Building
95 Rochford Street
Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Tel: 902-368-4040
Fax: 902-368-5171
Email: procurementservices@gov.pe.ca



About the Guide

This guide is a publication of the Council of Atlantic Premiers in cooperation with the Atlantic Supplier Development Team. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication, neither the Council of Atlantic Premiers, the Atlantic Supplier Development Team, the Governments of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and the Government of Canada, nor its agents, will be responsible for losses, no matter how incurred, as a result of using the information contained herein.

For more information about the Atlantic Supplier Development Team, please visit www.atlanticsuppliers.ca.

