

Brief Manual of Best Practices for Public Book Procurement

(print and digital)

Introduction

**A good public book
procurement policy can
have a significant impact
on the cultural, social,
economic, and political
development of a country
in numerous ways.**



These include, among other aspects:

The quality of democracy.

Books play a crucial role in shaping participatory citizenship. Public spaces associated with books help counteract growing inequality between those who have access to books and those who do not. It is essential that regardless of their economic status, age, and geographic location, all citizens have access to books and can participate in public and/or educational spaces dedicated to books and reading.

Public and school libraries play a very important role in this, with staff trained to help motivate and encourage curiosity with diverse and regularly updated bibliographical catalogs.

Intellectual creation and production.

Books and reading play a key role in shaping thoughtful, proactive, critical, and creative citizens. Boosting the presence of local creation and publishing in public procurement generates a virtuous circle in local creation and production, promoting discourses and perspectives that are closer to citizens' everyday reality.

Economic development.

Unless we promote a citizenry with cultural, educational, and scientific depth, stimulating creativity and reflection, it will be hard to move beyond the role of primary exporting countries, hindering any prospect of achieving sustainable development. Cultural industries and sectors tied to knowledge are currently significant generators of wealth for nations. In this sense, it is important for a country to promote its own industries, such as the book industry, with particular emphasis on the small and medium-sized members of the ecosystem.

Quality of education.

Prioritizing the presence of books by local authors stimulates and promotes a personal, experience-based, and emotional relationship with books and writing in very young children, as a beneficial practice and a potential path to follow. This can also be reinforced by inviting authors to classrooms and kindergartens. Teaching with books by local authors fosters local intellectual production among teachers and students, empowering them by opening up new paths towards the construction of their own thinking, creation, and discourse. At the same time, the use of diverse and updated bibliographic catalogs with works and authors from countries in the region enhances a sense of fellowship among peoples.

Addressing inequality.

The reproduction of social inequality is based in part in the educational system, in unequal access to culture. Promoting books and reading, in a democratic and diverse way, in kindergartens, schools, universities, and public libraries helps reduce this inequality.

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It is important to understand the key role that the public procurement of books plays—similar to that of roads in a country’s development—and the related impacts of these actions on the ecosystem of books, culture, and education. In purchasing books and socializing the processes of reading, the state’s actions may have numerous impacts. The selection of books is not only a question of quality and price, nor is it a simple technical process or an isolated action.

For all these reasons, it is essential that in the public procurement of books the presence of local authors and publishers is improved, increased, decentralized, reinforced, and made more transparent. It is also important to constantly analyze, review, and diversify the areas in which spending is focused, such as textbooks, which generally account for a large part of public spending on books.

It should be noted that this manual was developed generically and should be adapted to the specific reality of each country in order to foster transformations and guidelines based on local realities.

Principles

**Cultural
diversity**

Interculturality

Transparency

As stated in the **Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions**, “‘cultural diversity’ refers to the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies. Cultural diversity is made manifest not only through the varied ways in which the cultural heritage of humanity is expressed, augmented, and transmitted through the variety of cultural expressions, but also through diverse modes of artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution, and enjoyment, whatever the means and technologies used.” It is part of the rights and obligations of the parties, as stated in the convention, “a) to create, produce, disseminate, distribute, and have access to their own cultural expressions, paying due attention to the special circumstances and needs of women as well as various social groups, including persons belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples; b) to have access to diverse cultural expressions from within their territory as well as from other countries of the world.”

As stated in the **Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions**, “‘interculturality’ refers to the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect.” Parties “shall endeavor to create in their territory an environment which encourages individuals and social groups (...) to foster interculturality in order to develop cultural interaction in the spirit of building bridges among peoples.”

It is essential that the effective transparency of the public sector be achieved in “government acts, resolutions, procedures, and documents as well as its underpinnings, and in facilitating the access of this information to anyone” (Law number 20.285 On Access to Public Information, Chile).

Chapters

1

Mechanisms to ensure transparency and sufficient broadcasting of the calls for public procurement.

- **In every call for procurement**, we will seek to inform potential bidders extensively and proactively at the various stages of procurement, i.e. in the process of title selection and in the process of acquiring the selected titles.
- **In every call for procurement** the mechanism for selecting titles will be outlined in detail (first stage) as well as the selection of the bids for selected titles (final stage).
- **In the calls for procurement** sufficient time periods will be established to enable local suppliers to effectively participate in the bidding process.
- **To ensure the calls are broadcast in an appropriate and widespread manner**, all public institutions will have a centralized form on their websites so that those interested in applying as suppliers can register. In addition to publishing the procurement processes on the websites of public institutions, the list of registered suppliers will be simultaneously notified via email.

2

Mechanisms to ensure relevance, quality, and diversity in the evaluation and selection criteria of the call for proposals as well as in the various stages of public procurement.

- **In every call for procurement**, the evaluation mechanisms and the weighting of each criterion such as relevance, quality, diversity, price, discounts, etc. in the various stages of the procurement process will be made explicit. Particular emphasis will be placed on explaining the mechanisms of title selection, a fundamental stage of the process, since once the titles have been chosen, the option to participate is very restricted.
- **All programs and institutions that procure books** must consider criteria that prioritize diversity over the concentration of bids and selection, in terms of titles, publishers, and suppliers, ensuring diversity in the procurement of the program and institution overall.
- **In every call for procurement**, criteria related to gender, the presence of indigenous peoples, disabilities, and sexual diversity will be included to ensure diversity in the selection process.

3

Mechanisms to ensure at least 60% of public procurements in each program will be of national publications.

- **All programs that procure books** will contemplate mechanisms in their evaluation criteria to ensure that at least 60% of the total annual purchases are national publications, thus favoring the protection and promotion of the diversity of local cultural expressions, while fostering local cultural creation and production.



National publication is understood to mean a work with the country's ISBN code as an identifier or, when there is no ISBN, printed locally and published by an individual or legal entity of the country (in the case of companies, at least 75 percent must be owned by citizens or permanent residents of the country).

4

Mechanisms to facilitate procurement processes.

- **In all book procurement processes**, while respecting the general and specific regulations regarding public procurement, efforts will be made to simplify the procurement processes and avoid entry barriers that limit the participation of small and medium-sized suppliers, such as high guarantees, bids that require a large number of copies or numerous legal documents, etc.

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Mechanisms to encourage local supply in specific regions.

- **In every purchase of books made from specific regions**, respecting the general and specific regulations for public procurement, a score will be included in the criteria for the evaluation of bids that rewards bidders from the same region as the entity making the purchase. This criterion may not exceed 20% of the total weighting, in order to promote proximity, without excluding bidders from other regions from the procurement process. To qualify for this benefit, bidders, whether individuals or legal entities, must have been legal residents for at least two years in the region and be active in the field. This criterion will not be considered for acquisitions made from the capital city and/or metropolitan region.
- **In all acquisitions of books from institutions** that are present in several parts of the country, the aim is to avoid centralism and promote local purchases and decisions.

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Mechanisms to help strengthen the range of national publishing options in the medium and long term, explicitly identifying certain thematic areas to be strengthened, the characteristics of the books preferred, etc.

- **All programs that regularly acquire books**, in addition to openly announcing the mechanism for selecting titles (first stage) and selecting the supplier for the selected titles (final stage), as well as for annual procurement plans, will openly communicate the areas of interest for medium- and long-term procurement in terms of content, intended audience, and book formats. It is important that the regional demands of each program be included in this announcement. Particular emphasis will be placed on notifying topics or areas where, according to the program, supply is limited, in order to encourage the creation and production of works in this area.
- **Any program that purchases more than two thousand copies per title**, for areas where the demand will be greater than that number of copies, will openly report the topics and characteristics of the books being sought at least six months prior to the beginning of the purchase process itself, allowing bidders to develop proposals.
- **For any program that purchases more than two thousand copies per title**, the presentation of mockups will be accepted in the selection and purchasing process for items where demand will exceed that number of copies.

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Mechanisms to enable monitoring, metrics, reflection, and constant dialogue to promote ongoing improvements in public procurement processes and their impact on reading comprehension, fostering curiosity, support for educational processes, the democratization of books, etc.

- **All programs and institutions that regularly procure books** will hold an open dialogue at least once a year with the community and actors in the book world to critically reflect on the program, its objectives, and its impact on the community it serves. Both substantive and formal issues will be periodically addressed in an effort to promote the democratization of books, levels of reading comprehension, the community's relationship with books, etc. To encourage this dialogue, the institution will provide simple, transparent, and public indicators. The proceedings of these meetings will be made public and may eventually contribute to the future plans of the program or institution, as well as to the improvement of the indicators themselves used by the institution.
- **The public institution in charge of topics related to books and reading in the country** will hold an open meeting every year or two for all public institutions involved in the procurement of books and reading plans, as well as those involved in the procurement process, along with book associations, in order to continually generate improvements and policies that make it possible to refine processes, information, diversity, and the systemic impact of purchases.

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Mechanisms to contribute to the transparency of all processes and studies related to the public procurement of books.

- **The public institution in charge of topics related to books and reading in the country** will seek to join forces and collaborate in the transparency of information regarding the calls for procurement and public purchases of books; it will also foster research on the mechanisms, processes, role, and impact of these purchases, with particular emphasis on topics related to diversity, transparency, and participation. It will create a space on its website where it will provide information on these topics.

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Mechanisms to foster greater participation and diversity, reducing market concentration.

- **All programs and institutions that purchase books on a regular basis** will report openly each year on the previous year's purchases, including titles, quantities, publishers, suppliers, country of publication, unit values, and totals. A final table will show the total participation of publishers, suppliers, and country of publication in the purchases. This information can be downloaded and processed in spreadsheets.

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Mechanisms to enable the best possible economic conditions for public procurement and strengthen the book ecosystem.

- **In the absence of a fixed price law regulating discounts on public procurements**, all suppliers in the public book procurement process will seek to offer the best possible economic conditions, favoring the democratization of the book and the strengthening of the book ecosystem. To this end, in the procurement of small and medium quantities, publishers will seek to enable the participation of bookstores and distributors, particularly regional actors when they are purchases from regions. On large purchases, significant discounts will be encouraged to enable public institutions to increase the number of books that they can access within their budgets.
- **In the absence of a fixed price law that regulates discounts on the sale price of books to libraries and public institutions**, the evaluation criteria for bids will include a score that rewards the most cost-effective bids for the same title. The most cost-effective bids shall be understood as those that are below the average value of the bids for the same title. This criterion may not exceed 20% of the total economic weighting, so as not to encourage artificial increases in the public price, and to avoid excluding bookstores and distributors from the procurement process if they are not able to offer the same prices as the publishers.
- **In the criteria for the economic evaluation of bids** comparisons must be made based on the final price offered by the bidder, including all discounts that are normally applied in the procurement process. Discounts must also be indicated based on the public price of the bids.

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Mechanisms to avoid corruption and conflicts of interest.

- **Suppliers in the process for the public procurement of books** will not engage “in corrupt or criminal practices such as bribery, the adulteration of documents, infringements of intellectual and/or industrial property, violation of workers’ rights, and non-compliance with environmental standards, among others”. They will respect human rights and comply with the commitments made in the pacts of integrity included in the respective bidding conditions. They will implement programs in their company that mitigate the risk of corruption and ensure good practices. They will avoid conflicts of interest. They must comply with their words and deeds, not submitting false or adulterated documentation in the bidding process, delivering the products tendered, and honoring discounts. They will refrain from exerting undue influence or pressure on officials or authorities of the bidding entity. They will not offer, promise, or deliver donations, advantages, or privileges of any type to the authorities or officials of the bidding entity. They will not have any contact of any kind with officials of the purchasing entity during the evaluation stage. They will not engage in conduct aimed at distorting the bidding process. (Decálogo de probidad en las compras públicas para los proveedores del Estado, Chile).

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Mechanisms to enable an online catalog, the presence of a wide range of publications in the procurement process, and an agile procurement system.

- **In order to facilitate procurement processes, make them more transparent, and strengthen the implementation of the mechanisms mentioned above**, a digital platform should be developed to provide an online catalog that will make it possible to display the publications for public institutions.
- **Particular attention should be paid to the reduction of barriers of entry** so that bookstores, distributors, and publishers can participate as suppliers in the system. Likewise, mechanisms should be sought to facilitate the identification, provision of information, and incorporation of titles and/or catalogs by suppliers in the system, taking into account that several suppliers may propose the same title.
- **It should be the responsibility of a public agency** to keep the platform and all its links active, strengthening the search mechanisms with parameters that will help generate an effective and informed selection.
- **The platform should make it possible to proactively inform and provide transparency** for all suppliers involved regarding inquiries for future procurements made by different services within the public system.
- **The management of the platform's processes** should offer support via e-mail in order to improve transparency and problem solving.
- **The technical characteristics of the platform** should make it possible to incorporate books without entries being blocked due to the length of the title or subtitle, or any other formal characteristics of the work. Although the base identifier code will be the ISBN, the platform should ensure that it can be updated if a new edition changes the ISBN.

- **The platform should make it possible** to update the prices of the works every year.
- **Upon joining the platform**, suppliers must enter the discounts they offer in general and those based on the total amount of the purchase. Each year, suppliers should have the option to update their rebate scheme.
- **For each work to be included**, suppliers should enter the final public price (including taxes, if applicable) and the price with the supplier's base discount.
- **The supply of works may be classified** as inactive or out of stock by the supplier. These offerings will be removed from the system if they remain inactive for over two years.
- **The platform should include an area of general and open statistics** that will update the annual figures of general purchases as well as those by program and/or institution on a monthly basis, also making the levels of participation by suppliers and publishers transparent. It should also report on the level of participation overall as well as the participation by program of national and imported books. For imported books, the information may be disaggregated by country according to ISBNs.
- **The absence of this online catalog** should not be a determining factor or a pretext for the lack of implementation of the mechanisms mentioned above.



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