

Executive summary

Taxpayers increasingly demand trustworthy and efficient public spending, particularly at times of fiscal consolidation. Governments in OECD countries are paying greater attention to the way they spend scarce budgetary resources, and Mexico is no exception. Restoring trust in public institutions has been central to many recent reforms and initiatives by Mexico's government. The sheer size of public procurement and its heightened exposure to risk provide clear opportunities to restore public confidence not only in the integrity of the government, but also in its efficiency.

In addition to laws and regulations, the evolution of the technology used in procurement generates a spillover effect on the entire system, since it can radically change the way in which procurement operations are conducted and reported. E-procurement platforms have long been used by OECD countries to promote transparency, and CompraNet has always been seen as a crucial tool in that endeavour. Recent advances in technology now provide public authorities with new possibilities for improving efficiency and strategic risk management in procurement.

The OECD report *Mexico's E-procurement System: Redesigning CompraNet through Stakeholder Engagement* provides an assessment of the current scope of the system, how it operates, and how well it is suited to supporting efficient, effective and transparent public procurement in Mexico. Reforming CompraNet will entail upgrading the system, so that in addition to allowing access to government procurement documents, it can offer a more strategic approach to procurement. This will help identify weaknesses in the procurement cycle where technology can help streamline the process and minimise exposure to risk.

Introducing e-procurement reform will involve a multitude of stakeholders with different and sometimes conflicting interests. Stakeholder engagement has so far been broad and comprehensive, resulting in an inclusive and collaborative reform process led by the Ministry of Public Administration (*Secretaría de la Función Pública*, SFP). Leading figures in business, civil society and the public sector were invited to help develop recommendations to enhance CompraNet, and a Plural Working Group on Public Procurement was established. The objective of the Working Group was to build consensus on upgrading and expanding the CompraNet system.

To achieve the desired results, SFP will need to focus on implementation. A phased approach will enable closer monitoring and control of delivery, while reducing the impact of change on system users and other stakeholders. A roadmap for CompraNet has been developed, taking into account the specific context of Mexico and the current state of the CompraNet system. Three phases (for the short, medium and long term) were distinguished, so that CompraNet can evolve from a compliance-driven system into a platform that generates procurement intelligence and, in the third phase, a fully integrated transactional system.

Key recommendations

Align the e-procurement strategy with a broad and co-ordinated reform programme.

The e-procurement system should be part of a multifaceted programme that aligns with other aspects of procurement reform (such as legal and policy settings, or the private sector environment). If considerable changes to CompraNet are seen simply as a technology enhancement project, without an accompanying reform of procurement, the project may not achieve the anticipated benefits.

Work towards a more efficient, effective and transparent e-procurement process.

The focus for e-procurement systems in OECD countries has recently shifted from a platform for transparency and disclosure of public procurement opportunities towards helping to increase efficiency and effectiveness in public procurement. This requires identifying the stages of the procurement cycle where technological solutions are most needed.

Ensure integrity in public procurement processes.

Despite efforts to provide an institutional, legal and regulatory framework to prevent corruption in public procurement, citizens' trust in government institutions and activities remains low, and the perception of corruption is still high. SFP and Mexico's Federal Government could benefit from building a coherent and efficient institutional and normative public procurement framework, including dedicated measures intended to combat corruption and better manage public funds. A system like CompraNet can contribute by minimising direct contact between public procurement officials and bidders and by establishing electronic records of procurement operations for the purposes of audit and oversight.

Public procurement officials should be trained in the skills needed for e-procurement tools.

In addition to implementing recommendations related to technical changes and process improvements, SFP should also identify ways to overcome other barriers to the effective functioning of the public procurement process. Procurement practitioners require additional support and guidance to carry out their roles effectively. The data gathered during the OECD's mission suggest that the low number of enquiries to CompraNet's help desk reflects a lack of familiarity with the system's processes and norms.

Robust open data practices can standardise public procurement data and enhance accountability mechanisms.

A large amount of information on Mexico's public procurement activity is available in CompraNet, but it is not comprehensive, and it is not available in formats that can help to increase accountability. The quality of insights that can be extracted from the system will affect its ability to increase accountability, guide public policy design and generate value for public funds. Public disclosure of high-quality data is necessary, in a format that allows for analysis of trends and exceptions. CompraNet should thus aim to provide shareable, reusable and machine-readable data that make it possible to develop statistics and conduct data analysis.



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