



Evaluation of the City of Toronto project, “From Policy to Action: Building Infrastructure for Social and Economic Impact” - 3.0 Findings

Prepared for: Future Skills Centre (FSC)

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3.1 Activities



A1: Conduct research and engagement of businesses and public sector institutions

This activity included the following:

- Researched models of diversely owned/social supplier Certification:
- Released a report titled "Self-Attestation: Removing Barriers to Diversity in Supply Chains" by Buy Social Canada in June 2023.
- Collected and analyzed COVID's impact on hardest-hit communities and sectors:
- The Y2Q1 Report anticipated a forthcoming report from the Black business stakeholder engagement and Resource development project, **although no evidence of its completion was received.**
- Mapped social procurement ecosystems against hardest-hit communities and sectors:
- The Y2Q1 Report indicated the expectation that this deliverable would be fulfilled by the upcoming Black business engagement report, but **there is no evidence of its completion.**
- Engaged with businesses to understand readiness needs and barriers to social procurement pathways:
- The Y2Q1 Report marked this activity as complete, with plans to share the report in the next quarterly report, **but no evidence of its completion was received.**
- Engaged business associations for market analysis:
- The Y2Q1 Report marked this activity as complete, with plans to share the report in the next quarterly report, **but no evidence of its completion was received.**

A2: Develop user resources for public sector institutions

This activity included the following:

- Co-design a Supplier Certification Program for Equity and Social Impact:
 - Y1 Annual Report reflects objective revision based on vendor and anchor input, transitioning from council certification to a model incorporating supplier self-attestation.
 - Y2Q1 Report mentions AnchorTO's role in supporting the newly launched York Vendor of Records portal with supplier attestation.
 - Y2Q1 Report outlines plans for an MOU agreement between York University and AnchorTO, signed by the City of Toronto on August 19, 2022.
 - Y2Q2 Report indicates progress is "On track to complete," **though no evidence was provided of completion.**
- Co-design User Resources for Accelerated Social Procurement Uptake:
 - Y1 Annual Report indicates that the activity is "On track to complete", with an expected Q3 2022 completion.
 - Y2Q1 Report mentions the development of an Anchor Blueprint hosted on the AnchorTO website (not found) and resource development plans.
 - It's unclear if new resources were developed from the portal materials.**
- Co-design and Prototype Interventions to Address Procurement Barriers:
 - Y2Q1 Report indicates the objective is progressing well, **but no evidence of completion was provided.**
- Create a Platform for Businesses in Public Sector Procurement:
 - Y1 Annual Report showcases a successful partnership between an anchor institution and a local social enterprise.
 - Y2Q1 Report indicates progress is "On track to complete," **though no evidence was provided of completion.**



A3: Develop business hub prototype

This activity included the following:

- Design and Launch Vendor Portal / Business Hub Prototype:
- Y1 Annual Report advised revising the activity to avoid redundant efforts if existing resources could be utilized for social procurement support.
- Y2Q1 Report renamed the activity to "Support the design, launch, and use of a vendor portal / business hub prototype."
- The report notes the launch of two vendor hubs: one by the University of Toronto and another by York University.

A4: Make available access to public sector procurement training (through resource hub)

This activity included the following:

- Conduct public sector procurement training and support to facilitate more effective work with diverse and social purpose vendors.
 - Based on insights from the Y1 Annual Report, the objective was adapted to "Facilitate access to public sector procurement training and support," stemming from research highlighting diverse systems for measuring social procurement spending among network institutions. As network-wide spend analysis training wasn't universally relevant, the focus shifted towards identifying training for diverse and social purpose vendors. The emphasis lies in ensuring this training's availability via the vendor portal.
 - The Y2Q2 Report highlights progress towards completion. Meanwhile, an issue has been identified where selecting the "Employment and Training Opportunities" button on the AnchorTO website results in a message stating that the page cannot be found.

3.2 Process / Partnerships





EQ1: What was the process used to engage Anchors in the decision to use a portal? What worked well? What didn't?

- Anchors engaged in discussions during monthly meetings about the vendor portal decision.
- The choice was between building a new portal or using an existing one from network partners.
- Despite building its own portal, AnchorTO's portal was deemed limited by key partners.
- AnchorTO eventually adopted York University's portal due to its better fit and signed an MOU.



EQ2: How have the Anchors' relationships evolved with each other? How have the Anchors relationships evolved with AnchorTO?


- Participation rates in the project's first 6 months showed high engagement with around 30 to 34 participants in 5 out of 6 months.
- Recent feedback indicates a decline in participation, with "5-10 participants" mainly from City of Toronto staff attending more recent meetings.
- Interviewees mentioned unmet expectations, attributing this partly to AnchorTO dictating actions instead of involving input from others.
- Some interviewees believed that the project didn't meet their initial expectations.
- The collaboration between certain Anchors has improved, according to feedback from partner organizations.



EQ3: How well did AnchorTO do in carrying out the research to address the priorities identified by Anchors? What worked well? What didn't?

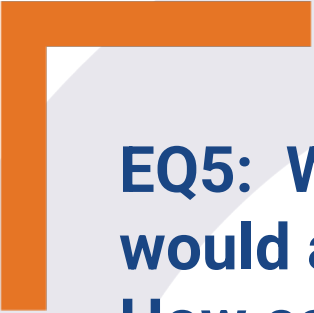
- Two out of the four individuals interviewed gave specific feedback on the matter.
- One respondent mentioned that priorities weren't established by Anchors but by AnchorTO. These priorities were then presented to Anchor Institutions for confirmation. This respondent also believed that some research was unnecessary due to recent information from various sources. They wished to participate in deciding where research would be valuable.
- A second respondent praised AnchorTO for effectively compiling the research, even though most of it didn't offer new insights.

3.2 Delivery



EQ4: How did you become aware of the hub? What would you recommend for others to find out about the hub?

- All interviewees learned about the hub from monthly AnchorTO meetings.
- Anchor organizations hesitated to recommend the hub due to content nature, calling it an "information library" or "repository".
- The hub lacks specific implementation details, like RFP language for different goods/services.



EQ5: What have you used from the hub? Is there anything that you would add / like to see (e.g., training, research, presentations)? How easy is it to navigate the hub? What issues (if any) do you have with the hub?

- Both Anchor organizations haven't used information from the hub.
- The content lacks specific details on organizational processes and doesn't provide a blueprint.
- Feedback suggests the material is outdated and not vetted for relevance in the jurisdiction.
- A City of Toronto staff member proposed a "hub librarian" to assist in finding relevant materials from the 100+ available documents.
- Respondents found the hub easy to navigate.



EQ6: How accessible is the information available on the hub? How useful is the information?

- Three respondents have used the hub.
- All agreed that the hub's information was accessible.
- The usefulness of the information varied among stakeholders.
- An individual not directly involved in procurement found the material helpful for understanding social procurement concepts.
- Individuals directly involved in procurement found the material limited in value, lacking in-depth policies and procedures.
- One respondent warned that the content might be harmful if taken out of context.

3.3 Effectiveness



EQ7: How have you benefited from the material on the hub?

- Of the four people interviewed, only one indicated that they received some benefit from the material on the hub.
- The benefit received was indirect as they indicated that “there were resources available to share” with others.



EQ8: To what extent has your organization implemented new, or modified existing, social procurement practices?

- Anchor organizations haven't adopted new or changed current social procurement practices due to their association with AnchorTO or the hub's content.
- Both organizations see themselves as social procurement leaders and are independently advancing their practices apart from AnchorTO's initiatives



EQ9: To what extent have you advocated for changes in the procurement process?

- Both interviewed Anchor organizations are actively pursuing social procurement practices.
- A representative from the City of Toronto, among the two individuals interviewed, is engaged in advocating for changes in the City's procurement process, but noted that this falls outside the current scope of AnchorTO's activities.

3.4 Sustainability





EQ10: To what extent is the project sustainable (if at all)?

- All interviewees believe project sustainability requires fundamental operational changes.
- AnchorTO's impact is seen as marginal due to limited resources and a perceived top-down approach.
- AnchorTO should facilitate a "community of practice" rather than dictating actions.
- AnchorTO can play a role as a collaborative "facilitator of change."
- Organizations struggle with standardizing policies, procedures, and definitions.
- Project needs refocused scope and more resources for success.



EQ11: How can this project be scaled (if at all)?

- Feedback from the two Anchor Institutions is that they are not sure how the project could be scaled.
- They point to the waning participation levels as an indicator of this uncertainty.



EQ12: What should be the priorities for next steps for social impact procurement?

- Based on the feedback received, the priorities need to be reset with the full input and support of the network institutions.
- Once the scope is redefined, appropriate staffing needs to be put in place to ensure that the work can be completed.



Thank you!