

# EDUCATION PROCUREMENT SERVICE

OUTRIGHT WINNERS

Public Sector Services Award



Excellence in Business Awards

Education Procurement Services

Excellence in Public Sector  
Services Award

The Education Procurement Service (EPS) is a Central Purchasing Body (CPB), operating as the Department of Education and Skills sector sourcing hub in the centralised procurement model, a key element of the Government's Public Service Reform agenda that saw the establishment of the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) in 2013. Value for money and savings are achieved by centrally procuring common goods and services used across the public sector and making them available for drawdown under cover of compliant national frameworks. Suppliers are processed through a fair and balanced system onto the frameworks with a high rate of SME inclusion.

EPS provides sourcing services to all Public Sector Bodies (PSB's) for the following categories of expenditure:

- Laboratory/Research Diagnostics, Services & Equipment
- Agriculture and Veterinary Goods & Services
- Library Goods & Services

The dynamic team of Procurement Specialists at EPS operates within a complex environment, offering a compliant professional sourcing service to its broad range of customers in the public sector. EPS takes a customer-centric approach in delivering sustainable solutions through the employment of whole life cycle cost and consideration of social and environmental factors. The commitment and work ethic of the team was recognised as recipients of "Best Green Procurement Project 2019" at the National Procurement Awards ceremony at the Ballsbridge Hotel Dublin, in partnership with colleagues at the buildings and estates department at the University of Limerick. The high-impact project focused on the reduction of single-use plastic at the university and the award was a significant achievement in highlighting its success. Twice winners of "Best Procurement Team of the Year" in 2016 and 2018, plus "Best People Development Initiative" in 2018 is testament to how EPS values its people and its commitment to the continuous professional development of the team.

EPS leads in the strategic planning and development of services to promote procurement awareness and engagement across the education sector. In 2017, in partnership with the HEA, EPS launched the Corporate Procurement Plan (CPP) template for Higher Education Institutes. In 2018, it was rolled out to the Education and Training Board sector. Through its customer engagement programme, EPS meets with customer groups focus groups and workshops to look at framework utilisation and discuss any common issues and concerns in the sector. Progress reports are fed into the office of the Head of Sourcing Education who provide the education representation at OGP executive level.

Looking to the future EPS has developed a forecasting model in its data analytics and reporting capabilities to ensure the full scope of education requirements are mapped under the OGP categories and comprehended in the planning and timely





delivery of future fit for purpose frameworks. This has been achieved in collaboration with sector partners across Higher Education Institutions and Education and Training Boards under the CPP programme of work. EPS is also leading a review of how the OGP Category Councils operate under the model. This project aims to deliver a guide to developing a category strategy that can be adapted to meet the needs of each council.

According to EPS Director Philip Gurnett, good governance is the cornerstone of achieving excellence in procurement. Planning, organisation and communication skills are key elements to ensure budget holders are aligned with the policies and practices to drive compliance and ensure value for money, he says. "Resource capacity is a concern for many. EPS understands the complexities and challenges of public sector procurement and has the experience and expertise to deliver a compliant and professional sourcing service to its partners. There are varying centralised, devolved and hybrid structures with multiple user levels operating within the procurement systems.

Closing Philip explains: "It is essential to have strict controls in place to ensure uniformity and compliant practices. Senior Accounting Officers can deliver a strong message for compliance under procurement governance by ensuring the CPP is maintained as a live document and shared widely across the organisation. Key performance indicators in the CPP will provide a benchmark and roadmap for the milestones to be achieved."

#### Lifetime Leadership

Philip Gurnett is a Director of EPS and Head of Sourcing Education. Philip has a successful track record of achievement as a leader and

senior manager in the public and private sector spanning three decades, demonstrating the necessary vision, knowledge, expertise and resource management skills to align strategy, drive improvement and influence performance.

In 2013 Philip was appointed to the OGP executive as Head of Sourcing Education with responsibility for implementing and operating the centralised procurement model and he is responsible for sourcing education procurement spend of approximately €900m per annum. Philip successfully implemented a change management programme across education and the wider public sector employing his extensive knowledge, skills and experience in strategic development, change management, utilising his significant experience of leadership on interdisciplinary projects. As Director of the EPS, he has established and developed a business model and change management strategy to on-board the model and has delivered savings of over €20m to date. Through his strong leadership and change management, he created a national shared service where he oversaw the centralisation and transfer of education sector procurement tendering functions to one shared office, including the recruitment and the development of staff and the design and implementation of new systems of administration and finance.

Philip's visionary leadership was the driving force behind the establishment of the EPS. Working with the Department of Education in driving the shared services plan in the sector, Philip has forged close working relationships across representative bodies including the Higher Education Authority, Irish Universities Association and the Technological Higher Education Association, allowing him to support those organisations and benefit the Governments Reform Programme.