

# Cameroon country paper

## Information Technology Procurement

### Abstract

Government departments and agencies in Cameroon are experiencing nowadays a tremendous increase in the use of IT to automate and assist their operations leading, to an observed increase in public investment for IT goods and services.

Government expenditure in this domain usually takes the form of:

- Routine purchase of hardware and software
- Investment in large specific IT projects in different government departments.

This presentation focuses on the investments in specific IT projects.

The Government department investing the most in IT projects in Cameroon is the Ministry of Finance.

Government departments frequently use contracting to procure the goods and services they need for these IT projects. There are two distinct aspects of the procurement phase.

In this phase, the administration advertises its intention to carry out a construction project by means of a public invitation to tender. It requests the submission of bids in order to select the one that best fits its needs.

The procedures for selecting the contractor may be normal or exceptional. Under the normal procedures, the prevailing principles are publicity and free competition, which do not apply in exceptional procedures.

Among the exceptional selection procedures, we can mention the direct contracting, which is practiced only in cases of absolute urgency or for very low cost contracts

Normal procedures can be open, consisting of only one phase during which any contractor can present a bid. However, they may also be restricted, consisting of a phases in which several possible bidders are selected and invited to submit concrete tenders. For large IT projects, the restrictive method is applied.

There are two forms of award procedures, the automatic or ordinary form award in which the cheapest bid is automatically accepted. And, the discretionary procedure in which, the administration must consider not only the financial aspects of the bids but also the technical

specifications and, if appropriate, the technical, commercial and financial capacity of the bidder, as defined in the invitation to tender.

The application of one or other form of award does not depend on the wishes of the agency initiating the project but on the special conditions of the individual project. Thus, the automatic procedure is used when the IT project is clearly defined and delimited, so that bidders cannot introduce technical improvements in their tenders, for low cost projects and, for the purchase of routine hardware and software.

The discretionary procedure, on the other hand, is used in cases in which the administration considers that the project it has prepared can be improved through the presentation by the bidder of new technical variants or when the structure is of such technical difficulty that the contractor must meet special requirements. This is the case with large IT projects.

The supervisory role of the SAI in this context consist of determining first, whether the selection and award procedures have been followed appropriately and, secondly, whether the relevant operating guidelines have been correctly observed in implementing them.

The decision on the award is made by an independent contracting committee and not by the department initiating the project.

Certain weaknesses have been observed in this system as it is now applied:

Overutilization of the discretionary award procedure whereas the necessary objective criteria that can serve as a basis for such award has not been defined. This has led to some IT projects costing too much because less importance was given to price consideration during the award procedure.

The use of the automatic procedure has in some cases caused awards to go bids that are too low to guarantee a proper execution of projects.