

Local Stories: Procurement for Community Well Being

CHANGING THE PROCUREMENT LANDSCAPE

SUNSHINE COAST REGIONAL DISTRICT

Contributor:
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LOCATION:
Sunshine Coast, BC

POPULATION:
32,170 (2021)

PROJECT:
Landscaping &
Lawncare
Services

VALUE:
\$67,000
(annually)

“Sustainable social procurement is important to our community because it ensures we are getting the best overall value for the dollars we spend. This means protecting our natural resources as well as ensuring economic, environmental and social development.”

—*Vanessa Schilling, Purchasing & Risk Officer*



LANDSCAPING & LAWN CARE SERVICES



The Sunshine Coast Regional District is located within the traditional territories of the Sechelt and Squamish First Nations. The role of the Regional District is to provide government services and stewardship of public assets while fostering the economic, social and environmental well-being of residents of the Sunshine Coast region. The 2021 census reported a total population of 32,170 people living in the region.

The Regional District operates a number of facilities throughout the region, including parks, reservoirs, fire halls and offices. Because these facilities are typically located on Regional District property, it is also responsible for maintaining the associated landscaping requirements for each. Traditionally, these requirements were maintained by a combination of contracted services, Regional District staff and members of the public.

The Regional District identified an opportunity to undertake a procurement process that would standardize the landscaping requirements for all of its facilities while also considering sustainable and social outcomes that could benefit the environment and communities in the region.

SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL PROCUREMENT

The Regional District is a member of the British Columbia Social Procurement Initiative (BCSPI) and gives preference to procurement that minimizes environmental impacts and promotes a healthy economy. Sustainable social procurement considerations are included in the Regional District's purchasing policy and sustainable social procurement language and criteria are included in the majority of procurement processes to ensure that purchasing activities support the Regional District's strategic goals and objectives.



“We’ve made the shift from being more price-focused to including more environmental and social aspects in our tendering processes. It is critical for us as an organization to stand out in showing that we care about our community and that we want growth to occur in a healthy, positive and sustainable way.”

PROCUREMENT PROCESS

The Regional District issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Landscaping Services with the intent to identify qualified contractors to provide landscaping services at eighteen different locations throughout the region.

In order to maximize opportunities for smaller businesses to respond who might not have the capacity to provide landscaping services at all of the locations, respondents were invited to submit a response to provide services at all or just a few of the sites.

Submissions were evaluated against six point-rated criteria:

- Experience, references and qualifications
- Approach
- Equipment
- Sustainable social procurement
- Value-added benefits
- Price

A total weighting of 5% out of 100% was given to sustainable social procurement with a stipulation that proposals would be consider not only the total cost of services, but also social and environmental factors.



“We didn’t limit the sustainable social procurement values to just one section of the RFP, we also drafted additional sections focused on community growth, how to protect our environment and how to make sure sites are clean, safe and comfortable for the community to use. We wanted to encourage respondents to be creative and to innovate as much as possible.”

Weighted Criteria	Weight (%)
Corporate/individual experience and references for similar projects, general reputation in the industry, capacity, resources, and professional qualifications	30%
Approach, methodology and understanding of the requirements	25%
Equipment	10%
Sustainable Social Procurement	5%
Value-added benefits	5%
Price	25%
TOTAL	100

To address the sustainable social procurement criteria, respondents were encouraged to identify how they might contribute to the Regional District’s social and environmental goals and objectives, including but not limited to:

- Contribute to a stronger local economy
- Promote living wage and fair employment practices
- Increase training and apprenticeship opportunities
- The environmental cost of ownership
- Use of energy-efficient products
- Minimal or environmentally friendly use of packing materials
- Reduce hazardous materials (toxins and ozone-depleting substances).

To further maximize environmental opportunities throughout the lifecycle of the contract, the Regional District included a “Firesmart” requirement within the RFP to help mitigate the risk of wildfires. Requirements for debris to be disposed of in an environmentally-friendly manner and the use of environmentally-sustainable options for fertilizing and liming were also included as well as an invitation for contractors to store heavier equipment on-site where applicable to minimize the overall environmental footprint of the work.



“We are going to continue promoting sustainable social procurement in our organization and to our vendor community. We want to make sure everyone understands that we are interested in this new approach. We want to provide opportunities for vendors to tell us more about what they are doing to support the local community, our economy and the environment.”

OUTCOMES

The Regional District received three responses to the RFP, including responses from local, smaller vendors. Overall, they were pleased with the quality of responses, mainly because the procurement process occurred early on in the Regional District's inclusion of sustainable social procurement considerations, and because smaller vendors often don't have the capacity or expertise to respond to more complex bid opportunities. Following evaluation, the contract was awarded to a single local contractor.

Incorporating sustainable social procurement values into the RFP requirements ensured that they became part of the scope of work and required deliverables. This has meant that the Regional District's landscaping services are now being delivered in a safe, sustainable and responsible manner at all eighteen of their facilities. At the time of publication, the contract timeframe is 50% complete and has been running smoothly, with all social and environmental criteria being adhered to.

The project also represented an opportunity to introduce and begin implementation of the Regional District's newly developed sustainable social procurement policy, and to introduce these new opportunities, concepts and ideas to Regional District staff and members of the vendor community.

LESSONS LEARNED & ADVICE TO OTHERS

- When considering sustainable social procurement and the inclusion of smaller vendors in the process it can be helpful to think about and identify the types of respondents you are hoping to attract. Many smaller vendors do not have existing experience responding to more complex government procurement processes so providing a point of contact for general guidance and some accompanying supporting documentation can be helpful.
- To help encourage better responses around sustainable social procurement criteria the Regional District has put in place a straightforward checklist to accompany their procurement documents. These types of forms and checklist documents can help vendors respond to social value criteria, and can make it easier to understand the focus areas and types of examples that purchasers are looking for.

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