How Are Teams Organized?

Idea In Short

Organize a procurement team around the decisions and capabilities required to achieve the outcome. Name a business owner, procurement lead, technical and operational contributors, finance and risk advisers, approvers, and intended contract manager as relevant. Define how members contribute, when they join, who integrates the work, and how decisions are made. Scale the team to complexity and risk: routine purchases need a light structure, while cross-functional services need sustained collaboration. Give members time and authority to participate. A team is effective when expertise reaches decisions at the right moment and accountability remains clear.

Procurement combines business choices with commercial, financial, technical, operational, legal, and risk judgments. No single function has all the information needed to plan a complex acquisition. Team organization determines whether expertise reaches a decision early enough to influence it and whether someone remains accountable for the outcome. The acquisition.gov source material describes a team that includes customers, technical and supply professionals, procurement staff, and suppliers. Generalized beyond that framework, the lesson is to organize around the work and decision rights rather than departmental boundaries.

Start with the outcome owner

Appoint a business owner who is accountable for the need and intended result. That person validates the problem with users, makes trade-offs, and ensures that the organization can use and manage the solution. The business owner should remain involved through planning and delivery, even when specialists produce most of the analysis.

Name a team lead to coordinate schedules, inputs, records, and decisions. The lead may come from procurement or project delivery, depending on the work, but should have authority to convene contributors and escalate barriers. For a major acquisition, an

executive sponsor can secure resources and resolve cross-functional issues. The European Commission's ProcurCompEU framework treats market analysis, stakeholder engagement, and procurement strategy as connected professional capabilities. This reinforces the value of assigning people who can bridge business and market perspectives.1

Assemble expertise around decisions

Build membership from the decisions ahead. Users and business owners clarify outcomes and workflows. Technical specialists assess feasibility, integration, security, and data. Finance evaluates affordability and cost assumptions. Procurement analyzes the market, competition, evaluation, and commercial structure. Legal advisers clarify obligations. Risk specialists assess exposures. Operations and contract management prepare for implementation and performance oversight.

Not every specialist needs to attend every meeting. Core members should participate throughout, while experts can join when their input can change the decision. Bring technical and operational contributors in before the specification is fixed. Involve finance before budget assumptions become commitments. Ask contract management to review performance measures and handover needs before award. The OECD's public procurement recommendation emphasizes stakeholder participation, capacity, risk management, and integration. A well-organized team makes those principles practical by connecting functions at relevant points in the cycle.2

Match team size to complexity

A routine, low-risk purchase may need a small team with a clear business owner, procurement contact, and approver. A complex service involving multiple users, systems, suppliers, or operating risks requires more sustained cross-functional work. Keep the team as small as practical, but do not omit expertise needed to assess a consequential choice.

Consider both capacity and competence. Members need time to perform assigned work and enough experience to challenge assumptions. If the organization lacks a specialist skill, plan training or obtain support. The Government Functional Standard for Commercial describes assigning work to capable staff and matching commercial resources to the pipeline of activity. Although its formal scope is specific, this capability principle applies broadly to team design.3

Clarify roles and decision routes

The team should distinguish who prepares an analysis, who recommends a course, who approves it, and who is accountable for the outcome. Use a simple responsibility matrix for key outputs. Each important decision should have one accountable owner. Multiple contributors may advise, but shared accountability often means that no one can resolve a disagreement.

Agree how the team handles conflicts. First clarify which evidence or assumptions differ. Then identify the trade-off and who has authority to accept it. Escalate unresolved issues in time to protect the schedule. Record decisions and conditions so the team does not revisit settled questions without new evidence. The World Bank's PPSD guidance frames procurement strategy as a fit-for-purpose analysis of objectives, context, market, risks, and arrangements. Integrating these inputs requires explicit coordination and decision ownership.4

Coordinate supplier engagement fairly

Potential suppliers can help the team understand available capabilities, constraints, and alternatives. The team should plan engagement methods, define who speaks for the organization, record material information, and share relevant clarifications consistently. Supplier input should inform the strategy without giving any provider an unfair advantage.

The Asian Development Bank's strategic procurement planning guidance links market analysis and engagement to the design of a fit-for-purpose approach. Teams should include people who can interpret market input and translate it into requirements or commercial choices.5

Plan continuity into contract management

Team structure may change after award, but knowledge must not disappear. Identify the contract manager early and involve that person in performance measures, risk allocation, transition planning, and exit arrangements. At handover, transfer the business case, market assumptions, approval conditions, decision log, risks, and open actions.

Review whether team capacity remains appropriate as the acquisition moves from strategy

to evaluation and implementation. Some specialists may step back; others may need greater involvement. Preserve a core line of accountability through the lifecycle. UNCITRAL's Model Law on Public Procurement supports transparent and accountable procurement systems. A team that carries decisions and responsibilities into delivery helps maintain that continuity.6

Team organization is not an org chart exercise. It is a way to ensure that the right expertise informs decisions, roles remain clear, and the outcome has an accountable owner. Build the team for the work, give members capacity to contribute, and transfer knowledge deliberately into contract management.

- 1ProcurCompEU: European Competency Framework
- 2Recommendation on Public Procurement
- 3Government Functional Standard GovS 008: Commercial
- 4Project Procurement Strategy for Development Guidance
- 5Strategic Procurement Planning
- 6UNCITRAL Model Law on Public Procurement

Summary

Team structure should support the acquisition rather than follow a fixed organization chart. Bring specialists in when their knowledge can shape requirements, strategy, evaluation, and delivery. Keep one owner accountable for the business outcome and one lead responsible for coordination. Review capacity as the work evolves, and make sure contract management receives the knowledge developed during planning.