



The Hidden Cost of Supplier Friction

How Process, Mindset, and Market Dynamics Shape Procurement Outcomes

Kim Cullen Prather, NIGP-PPSM | Beacon Bid | NPI Conference 2026

Introductions



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Poll

When a supplier registers but never bids, how many of you know why?

Three Lenses on the Same Problem

What we'll cover today.

01

Process

Where friction enters the pipeline before a supplier's proposal is ever written.

02

Mindset

What procurement teams often don't see, and what to measure instead.

03

Market Dynamics

How AI, budget constraints and other market dynamics are reshaping what a bid response actually signals.



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Where Friction Enters the Pipeline

Technology enables. People determine success.

Technology Enables. Or Does It?

- Has a supplier ever told you they gave up entirely, or struggled just to register?
- Technology can increase supplier access, competition, and transparency
 - But only when it is implemented with the supplier experience in mind

*Friction is often invisible
to the agency and
obvious to the supplier.*



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Bid Details

Agency Name	The School Board of Broward County, FL - Procurement & Warehousing Services
Bid Writer	Luis Perez
Bid ID	ITB-PY21-12B-Q-2021/LEP
Bid Type	ITB - Invitation to Bid
Broadcast Date	01/27/2021 5:57 PM Eastern
Fiscal Year	2021
Due	03/04/2021 11:00 PM Eastern

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CLOSING DATE
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Mississippi
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IFB1-OAAA-2027000023 - OAAA, 3210, CRWU 26-2007, Bldg. 960 Roof Replacement

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Suppliers Make Participation Decisions Fast

- Is this opportunity worth pursuing, and can we realistically win?
- Is the process clear, and is the effort justified?
- Is this customer easy to work with?
- Are we likely to miss something?

*With AI, all of this happens
even faster.*



Why Suppliers Register But Never Bid

Registration numbers do not always equal supplier engagement.

01

Fit and Clarity

Wrong contact info, registering “just in case,” or no immediate opportunity fit.

02

Scope and Timeline

Scope is unclear, timelines are unrealistic, or requirements arrive too early.

03

Confidence and Effort

Low confidence in winning against high effort for low probability.



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Registration Friction Has a Compounding Cost

- Suppliers drop off before they ever see your bid
- They call your office directly instead of self-serving
- Smaller and newer suppliers are disproportionately impacted
- Frustration with the process becomes frustration with your agency

Take a tour, as your supplier, to feel this firsthand.

Why Suppliers Open Alerts But Don't Download

- Title isn't a clear fit
- Description is vague or too broad
- Requirements seem excessive or are unknown
- Timeline feels compressed

Titles do matter. Your bid title is a supplier's first impression.



Which one would you open from your inbox?

Small, controllable changes that reduce friction: titles

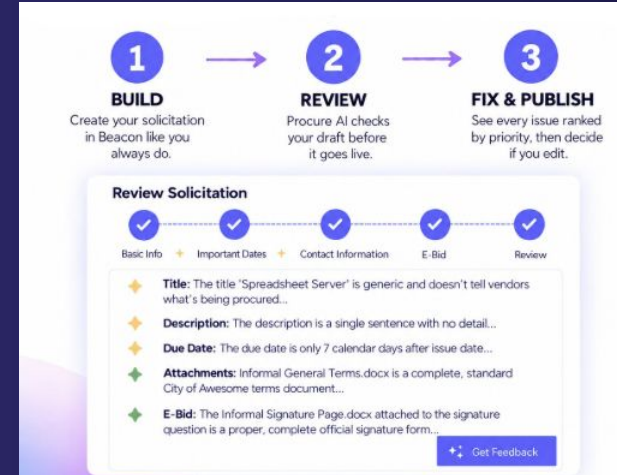
Services RFP 2026-14

OR

Janitorial Services for
3 Municipal Buildings

Write Clearer Titles

Your bid title is a first impression. Vague titles reduce the right suppliers finding you.



Your Bid Title Is Your First Impression

- Clear specifications matter as much as clear titles
- You want suppliers to understand you quickly
- Vague titles make it harder for the right suppliers to find you
- The same vagueness can inflate responses from the wrong ones

*Ask about Beacon Bid Procure AI
for help with this.*



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What Procurement Teams Often Don't See

Registration activity is not the same as competition.

Competition Is Shaped Before the Solicitation

- Awareness: can suppliers find you?
- Clarity: do they understand what you need?
- Accessibility and perceived effort shape who shows up
- Confidence and trust in the process shape who stays

Suppliers cannot participate in pathways they do not understand.

What to Actually Measure

Registration activity is not the same as competition.

01

Beyond Registrations

Track actual submissions received, not just notification counts.

02

Drop-off Points

Track where and why suppliers disengage, not just that they registered.

03

Small and Local Impact

Track participation before and after process changes, especially for smaller suppliers.



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“How Can I Do Business With You?”

- Many suppliers only understand what's listed online
- They may not know about cooperative purchasing
- Or small purchase and departmental buying pathways
- Supplier education directly impacts participation

Informal quote or cooperative processes often go unseen entirely.



What a Bid Response Signals Now

AI, budgets, and market pressure are changing who responds, and why.

AI Has Lowered the Cost to Propose

- Drafting a response once took real time and real judgment
- AI compresses that cost significantly
- A supplier can now generate a plausible response with a fraction of the effort
- Effort used to be a natural filter on genuine interest

*That filter is weakening, and
evaluation has to adapt.*



The Result: Volume Without Genuine Interest

- More proposals arrive, but not because more suppliers are seriously invested
- Suppliers respond to opportunities they never would have pursued before
- Evaluators sort through a larger pool that includes lower-intent responses
- Volume can look like healthy competition while masking fewer committed bidders

More responses is not the same as more real competition.



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Effort Is No Longer a Reliable Signal

For years, the time and care in a proposal told evaluators something about intent.

01

The Old Signal

Polish meant investment. A thorough proposal suggested real understanding and intent to win.

02

The New Reality

Polish is now cheap. AI can produce it regardless of genuine fit or intent.

03

What Shifts

Evaluation criteria need to surface real understanding, not just well-formatted language.



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Budget Pressure Changes Who Shows Up

- Smaller or uncertain budgets make suppliers more selective about which bids are worth the effort
- Unrealistic budget ceilings can quietly drive away qualified suppliers before they ever respond
- Aggressively low bids may signal a supplier buying in, not a better value
- Pressure to reduce scope mid-process erodes supplier confidence in future solicitations

The Market Is Shaping Your Bidder Pool

- Tariffs and material cost swings make fixed, multi-year pricing a harder commitment
- Economic uncertainty makes suppliers more cautious about where they invest bid effort
- Hiring challenges limit how many bids a supplier can staff, and how much work they can deliver
- Consolidation means fewer, larger players, and less competition in some categories

Reading the Signal: What Your Responses Are Telling You

- **Too many responses:** may signal low effort to propose (AI) or a vague scope attracting the wrong fit
- **Too few responses:** may signal friction, unrealistic budget or timeline, or a scope that feels like it's wired for an incumbent
- **No-bids and silence:** a signal too, and most agencies never ask why

Questions Procurement Leaders Should Ask

- Are suppliers confused, or genuinely uninterested?
- Do suppliers understand all our purchasing pathways?
- Are our processes creating unnecessary friction?
- Are we measuring participation correctly?

*Would a new supplier know
where to begin?*



Practical Things You Can Do

Small, controllable changes that reduce friction.

01

Take a Tour

Register, search, filter, and request a sandbox to submit a response as your own supplier would.

02

Write Clearer Titles

Your bid title is a first impression. Vague titles reduce the right suppliers finding you.

03

Communicate Proactively

Tell suppliers early when you change platforms or processes, before they have to guess.



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Five Things to Remember

1. Friction is invisible to you and obvious to suppliers
2. Registration is not engagement, and engagement is not competition
3. Suppliers decide fast, often before you know they looked
4. AI is lowering the cost to propose and changing what effort signals
5. Clarity and communication are the highest-leverage fixes you control

Connect with me!



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