

THE TIME IS NOW TO ACCELERATE  
WOMEN'S PUBLIC PROCUREMENT



## Case Study: Canada

RESEARCH IS PERSUASIVE

Canada's approach is heavily based on research and evidence-based policymaking, on top of a multi-dimensional approach to access to markets. Corporate and public procurement, as well as international trade and international procurement, are all part of the mix.



The Canadian case study was developed utilizing the ITC [Procurement Map](#) and research from the Telfer School of Management at the University of Ottawa.



ISTOCK

Canada's women's entrepreneurial ecosystem seems to have interwoven aspects of corporate and public procurement and international trade into the way Canadian women entrepreneurs approach access to markets, to a greater extent than any other country studied for this landscape mapping project.

**The International Trade Centre's (ITC) Procurement Map** reports<sup>1</sup> that Canada has a number of programs "that promote and support women entrepreneurs throughout Canada, including in the context of government procurement."

1. Reprinted with permission, ITC Procurement Map – Results for Canada, [https://procurementmap.intracen.org/Data/Results?countryID=124&sort\\_by=Deadline&order\\_by=asc&section=sme](https://procurementmap.intracen.org/Data/Results?countryID=124&sort_by=Deadline&order_by=asc&section=sme).

The Time Is Now To Accelerate Women's Public Procurement is a 23-part toolbox and call to action series created by USAID.



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# There are also many not-for-profit organizations at the national and provincial levels that promote the participation of women-owned businesses in government procurement.

- » The **Business Women in International Trade Program (BWIT)**, which is part of the Trade Commissioner Service of Global Affairs Canada, helps women entrepreneurs grow their small businesses. It is the only national federal program that provides targeted products and services to help women entrepreneurs globalize. Through its vast reach of trade commissioners in offices in 161 cities worldwide, as well as in offices across Canada, BWIT's mandate is to link Canadian women entrepreneurs with international business opportunities to help spur their company's growth. For example:
  - BWIT organizes women-focused trade missions aimed at connecting Canadian women-owned businesses with international opportunities so that they can bid on and secure large procurements.
  - The [Businesswomenintrade.gc.ca](http://Businesswomenintrade.gc.ca) website provides information on events and trade missions; other valuable information and resources; funding opportunities such as the new CanExport Program; tips from experienced business women; supplier diversity; an “export readiness quiz”; success stories; and other resources.
- » In partnership with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, **Canadian Company Capabilities** maintains a specialized directory of women-owned businesses as a means for women entrepreneurs to promote their products and services with potential partners, procurement professionals and distributors from around the world.

## In-Depth Women's Public Procurement Case Studies

The Canada case study is one of five case studies demonstrating how five countries have worked on gender-inclusive public procurement—either on their own or in conjunction with international development and financial agencies. Case studies can serve as models of good and best practices, while providing important lessons learned and pointing to challenges to be identified and overcome.



ISTOCK

- » There are also many not-for-profit organizations at the national and provincial levels that promote the participation of women-owned businesses in government procurement. For example, **WBE Canada** reviews applications and provides “Women’s Business Enterprise” (WBE) certification to businesses that are at least 51 percent owned, managed and controlled by one or more women. Once certified, these businesses have increased access to contract opportunities with corporations and governments in Canada and globally. WBE Canada also provides networking and learning opportunities which can open doors for women-owned businesses to partner with each other and increase their companies’ strength and clout in tendering for large corporate contracts.
- » Several Canadian provinces also have in place publicly-funded not-for-profit organizations aimed at promoting the participation of women entrepreneurs in government procurement. For example, organizations such as the **Alberta Women Entrepreneurs** and **British Columbia’s Women’s Enterprise Centre** offer a variety of programs and services aimed at encouraging the involvement of women-owned businesses in knowledge-based industries and in expanding their businesses to international markets. In addition, the “Procurement & Supplier Diversity Training” program, offered by Nova Scotia’s **Centre for Women in Business** in Halifax, provides women entrepreneurs access to procurement specialists from the government of Nova Scotia.
- » Further details can be found at these websites:
  - [The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service](#)
  - [Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada](#)
  - [Women Business Enterprise Canada](#)
  - [Alberta Women Entrepreneurs](#)
  - [Women’s Enterprise Centre](#)
  - [Centre for Women in Business](#)

2. Barbara Orser, Allan Riding, and Diane Liao, “Benchmarking SMEs as Suppliers to the Government of Canada: Inclusion, Innovation and International Trade” (University of Ottawa: Telfer School of Management, 2018), [http://www.sice.oas.org/sme\\_ch/publications/uo\\_telfer\\_Benchmarking-SME-report\\_03\\_e.pdf](http://www.sice.oas.org/sme_ch/publications/uo_telfer_Benchmarking-SME-report_03_e.pdf).

## Action Strategies To Increase The Diversity Of Small And Medium Enterprise (SME) Suppliers To The Government Of Canada<sup>2</sup>

A number of action strategies created by top Canadian researchers Dr. Barbara Orser and Dr. Allan Riding (both at the University of Ottawa) were developed for a Canadian report called *Benchmarking SMEs as Suppliers to the Government of Canada: Inclusion, Innovation and International Trade*.

Most of their recommendations for action have been included in the Checklist section of the Toolbox. Those recommendations have been used, importantly, by the government of Canada, as a basis for evidence-based policymaking.

The authors note that, in the last several years, the Canadian national government has been heavily focused on:

**“[increasing] the diversity of SME suppliers on government contracts, including under-represented groups such as women business owners. The findings in the Benchmarking report were also instructive with respect to metrics and benchmarks to measure the performance of public procurement, especially as related to socio-economic objectives.”**

An action plan was developed to: identify and implement reliable data collection and analysis; expand outreach to and engage with women and entrepreneurs; identify and reduce barriers faced by women; and sensitize and influence government buyers' behaviors. The initiative is also in full compliance with Canada's international trade obligations.

For years, Canada has been in the forefront of evidence-based policymaking with regard to virtually all aspects of women's entrepreneurship, and the country has an outstanding network of researchers in this field of practice. Based on research conducted at the University of Ottawa, Canada's FY2018



**For years, Canada has been in the forefront of evidence-based policymaking with regard to virtually all aspects of women's entrepreneurship.**

federal budget, for example, specified that the government of Canada “intends to introduce measures to increase the participation rate of women-owned businesses by 50 percent” (i.e., from 10 percent to at least 15 percent), in order to “reflect the current proportion of SMEs [that are] majority-led by women entrepreneurs in the broader population.”

Dr. Orser and Dr. Riding are professors at the Telfer School of Management at the University of Ottawa. Barbara Orser was also head of the W20 Canadian delegation in 2020. She notes that the empirical findings and action strategies contained in their report informed Canada’s commitment to increase procurement with women-owned businesses, based on evidence of successful outcomes:

**“Drawing on a representative sample of Canadian SMEs, the report provides new insights about the extent to which being a SME supplier to the federal government is associated with innovation, international trade, and firm performance.”**

Further, she anticipated that the report and action strategies that they outlined would be of interest to “public policymakers, small business support services, advocates, industry associations, and corporations that support supplier diversity.”

Other findings included:

- » the importance of adopting **sector-specific action strategies** and SME supplier targets
- » significant **variation in the gender balance** of SME federal contractors, by industry sector
- » a **sector-specific strategy** that could help achieve the government’s commitment to increase the overall participation of women business owners from 10 percent to 15 percent in federal contracting
- » the issues of **quotas and set-asides** for majority women-owned SME suppliers, and the adjustment of assessment weights within category bids in the Wholesale & Retail and Other Services sectors
- » the **size of enterprise and industry sector** as a relevant factor in constructing all federal contract requirements

Dr. Orser also emphasized the **extreme importance of conducting future research on “subcontractors —a topic about which little is known due to a lack of data.”**



**The TIME IS NOW for Women’s Public Procurement. Read how the stage is set for action!**