

Increasing Understanding of Alabama's Procurement Laws



Celebrating Alabama's Progress
Certified Public Manager® Program
CPM Solutions Alabama 2025



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The research, findings, and recommendations presented in this white paper do not represent the views of any agency or organization, but rather the collective educational research and analysis from a diverse group of participants in the Certified Public Manager® Training Program.

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INTRODUCTION

ROLE OF THE STATE OF ALABAMA DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT

The State of Alabama is supported by a central procurement organization known as The Division of Procurement. The Division of Procurement is a key office in the Department of Finance and acts as the central procurement authority for Executive Branch agencies. This office plays a vital role in ensuring that all purchases are made professionally, legally, and transparently. These practices foster open and fair competition with the state's suppliers and maintain the integrity of the state's procurement process. By adhering to this level of professionalism in procurement, the Division can collaborate with all counterparts to achieve efficient and ethical acquisition of goods and services for the state. Their mission is to develop and implement sound procurement practices through effective teamwork and communication, which provides a commitment to excellence, integrity, and public service.

Agencies are encouraged to view the Division as a collaborative partner in navigating procurement laws and achieving operational efficiency in the purchasing process for all entities large and small alike, and not as a compliance authority that enforces intimidating boundaries. Agencies are encouraged to engage with the Division often, seek any available training, and take advantage of all available resources to better understand how they can conduct their procurements efficiently, avoid delays, and ultimately serve the public more effectively. By doing so, state agencies help create a procurement environment that is transparent, consistent, and focused on providing excellent public service to the customers of Alabama government.

Alabama made a significant effort to modernize the state's procurement law by passing Act 2021-296, which established the Alabama Procurement Code. The act was designed with input of procurement professionals and is aligned with the American Bar Association's Model Procurement Code. Through these collaborative efforts, the legislation represents a large shift in how public procurement is managed in state government.

The law creates the Division of Procurement within the Department of Finance, led by the Chief Procurement Officer (CPO). The creation of the CPO position aims to consolidate procurement authority and oversight for Executive Branch agencies, boards, and commissions. The purpose of

the CPO authority is to issue rules, provide training, maintain statewide contract databases, and offer strategic guidance to agencies that are conducting complex procurements.

Tasks Used to Accomplish

Our CPM Solutions Alabama team contacted the Department of Finance Legal team to discuss the tasks used to accomplish the Procurement law update. The Finance Legal team discussed several resources that were leaned upon to establish the procurement law update. The Legal team collaborated with the Alabama Law Institute to establish a committee to review the existing procurement law and recommend updates. During 2019, the committee met monthly to discuss their findings. The committee included twenty members from executive and legislative agencies, universities, county, and local governments. The committee recommended a complete overhaul of the current procurement code. The goal was to create a broad, encompassing baseline for an “effective, efficient, and transparent public procurement process across State agencies” (HB171/SB77 Government Procurement Committee Historical Background produced by the Alabama Department of Finance Legal Team). The need to update was apparent as the procurement laws had not been comprehensively reviewed in twenty years. The committee utilized the ABA’s Model Procurement code as its “best practice guide” (HB171/SB77 Government Procurement Committee Historical Background produced by the Alabama Department of Finance Legal Team).

The ABA Model Procurement Code was utilized to develop the procurement law update. The original Model Procurement Code was passed in 1979. The Model Procurement Code had three main points that it took into consideration to establish 1.) it provides the statutory principles and policy guidance for managing and controlling the procurement of supplies, services, and construction for public purposes 2.) the administrative and judicial remedies for the resolution of controversies relating to public contracts, and 3.) a set of ethical standards governing public and private participants in the procurement process (American Bar Association, 1979, p.vi). The underlying purposes and policies of the Model Procurement Code may be broken down into eight key points. They are:

1. To simplify, clarify, and modernize the law governing procurement by the governing State.
2. To permit the continued development of procurement policies and practices.
3. To make as consistent as possible the procurement laws among the various jurisdictions.

4. To provide for increased public confidence in the procedures followed in public procurement.
5. To ensure fair and equitable treatment of all persons who deal with the procurement system of the governing State.
6. To provide increased economy in [State] procurement activities and to maximize to the fullest extent practicable purchasing value of public funds of the State.
7. To foster effective broad-based competition within the free enterprise system, and
8. To provide safeguards for the maintenance of a procurement system of quality and integrity (ABA Model Procurement Code 1979, p. 1)

In 2000, the ABA issued an updated Model Procurement Code for State and Local Governments. The goals of the Revision Project (as it was coined in the 2000 update) can be broken into four main goals or bullet points: 1.) reduce transaction costs for all governmental entities at the state and local levels; 2.) reduce transaction costs to private sector suppliers of goods and services; 3.) substantially increase available levels and ranges of competition through modern methods of electronic communication; and 4.) encourage the competitive use of new technologies, new methods of performing, and new forms of project delivery in public procurement, particularly in the construction area. (American Bar Association, Section of State and Local Government Law, 2000, pp. iii). The update also included five important considerations as to why an update was even needed for the Model Procurement Code. The five considerations are briefly summarized below.

1. “Procurement Volume has increased rapidly”

Electronic procurement processes have made smaller purchases more affordable to governmental entities. The spending totals of states increased significantly from 1979 to 1997 when the 2000 procurement code update was initiated. The code required updating to “adapt the language for use in the electronic age” and to keep pace with the increase in purchases by state and local governments.

2. “Procurement changed significantly since 1979.”

The 1979 code had to be updated to inline itself with the technological nature of the goods and services that state and local governments are buying, and to offer uniform best practices to how technological oriented procurements should be handled.

3. “The Means by Which Procurement Transactions are Conducted Have Changed”

The 1979 code could not address technological advancements in how procurement needs can be “advertised, questions answered, bids received, and how awards are made.”

4. “Variability Among the State”

Many states and local governments were responding to changes in the “nature of equipment and services” purchased on a fix as needed basis. This caused great discrepancies and variation among states and local governments in how goods and services were procured. This created a great deal of negativity and confusion in purchasing processes. The costs to administer and create purchasing systems were high. “These costs are recovered in the prices offered by a smaller pool of competitors, resulting in unnecessarily high costs to state and local governments.”

5. “National Progress was Required”

The ABA acted as a neutral party and helped gather agreements among experts from all sectors – government, business, law, etc. concerning what makes or constitutes a well performing procurement system. A revision project was needed (with the ABA in a central coordinating role to update the code for the modern-day processes. (American Bar Association, Section of State and Local Government Law, 2000, v-vii)

Alabama’s new procurement code, based largely on the 2000 ABA Model Procurement Code, became law in 2024 with the passage of Act 2021-169 (the “Act”), and took effect on October 1, 2022.

New Laws Passed

Key changes in the Act include updated thresholds, terminology, and procedures, such as the use of Invitations to Bid (ITBs) for goods and nonprofessional services and Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for professional services. The Code establishes clearer rules around competitive bidding, award determinations, protests, and debarments. Agencies now operate under a standardized framework designed to reduce ambiguity and streamline processes.

For directors and procurement officers, the benefits can be summarized below:

- Consistent and clear procurement procedures across agencies.
- Reduced Risk and Increased Efficiency through a central, rule-based system.

- Improved Vendor Relationships via transparent, fair competition.
- Support and Training from the CPO to ensure compliance and capability.

Most importantly, this code reformation seeks to empower agencies to focus less on navigating outdated rules and more on achieving strategic results.

Agency leaders are strongly encouraged to engage with the Division of Procurement, participate in training, and adopt CPO-recommended practices and templates. Doing so will ensure that your team is equipped not only to comply with the new law, but to build a more accountable, transparent, and high-performing procurement environment for the State of Alabama.

Project Statement

Our mission is to enhance the understanding of Alabama’s procurement laws, rules, and policies across state agencies. Through focused research, we aim to raise awareness of these regulations and offer actionable recommendations to improve state agencies’ comprehension and effectiveness in procurement procedures. Our goal is to provide research-driven insights that equip procurement professionals with the knowledge and skills needed for success. Additionally, we strive to support agencies in achieving efficient procurement processes and reducing inefficiencies in state government.

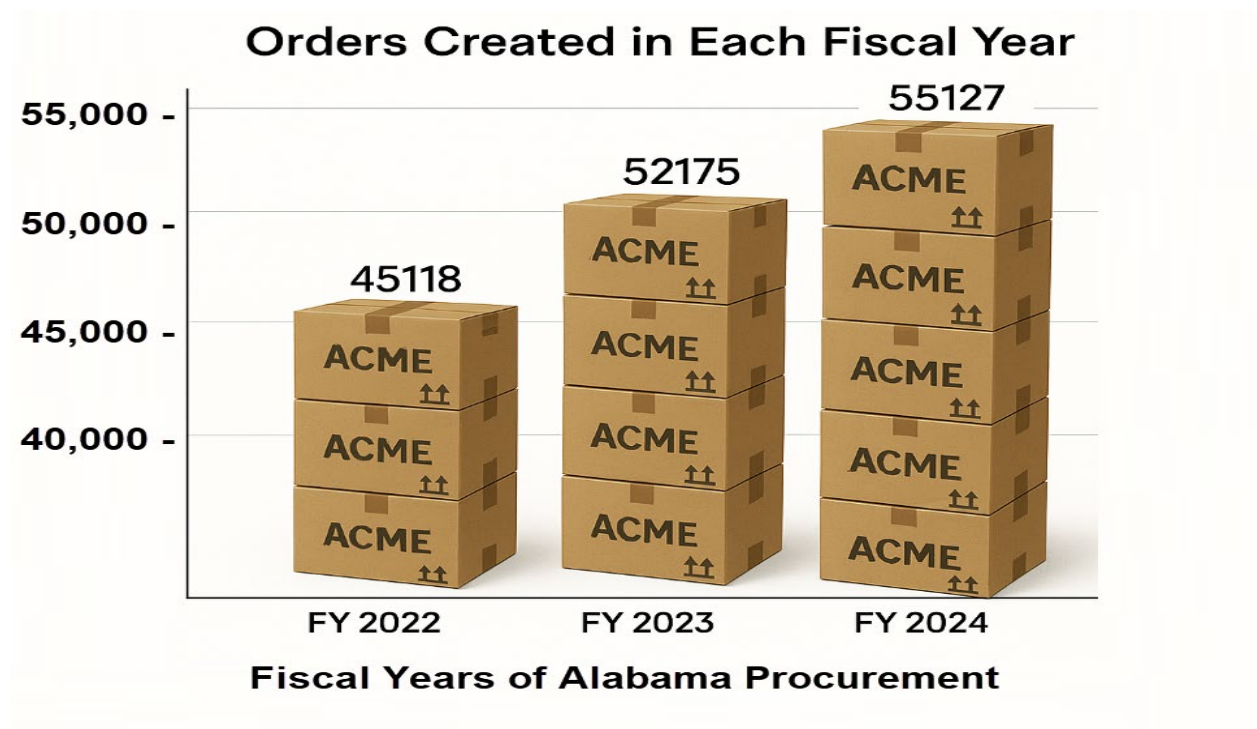
Procurement Data for FY2022-FY2025 (Number of Orders, Solicitations, Etc.)

Analysis of Procurement Trends Before and After Alabama’s Procurement Law Reform

As mentioned, the passage of Act 2021-296 in October 2022 marked a significant reorganization of Alabama’s procurement system. The result transition can be meaningfully analyzed through the procurement activity trends observed in fiscal year 2022 (pre-reform) compared to fiscal year 2023 and beyond (post-reform). The state’s fiscal year runs from October 1st to September 30th; therefore, any procurement activity from October 1, 2022 can be considered post-reform. Research was conducted using AlabamaBuys, the state’s central procurement system, to identify trends in procurement activity before and after the laws were passed. Utilizing the system’s database of procurement records, our research indicated that the procurement activity has increased each fiscal year after the new laws were enacted.

Increased Order Activity Reflects Greater Efficiency and Adoption

One of the clearest indicators of positive momentum post-reform is the steady increase in orders created. This upward trend, illustrated by the graph below, suggests that agencies are becoming more agile in their procurement processes, likely aided by the standardized procedures and clearer thresholds introduced in the new Code. The growth may also reflect increased confidence in the system, as users become more familiar with ITB and RFP frameworks and leverage streamlined templates and tools provided by the Division of Procurement.



Requisition Approvals Show Stability in Centralized Review

Requisitions approved through the Division of Procurement also increased immediately after the reform, rising from 34,742 in FY 2022 to 37,404 in FY 2023, and remaining relatively consistent in FY 2024 (37,091). FY 2025's total runs from October 2024 through June 24, 2025 (24,685) suggests this year will close at or near previous levels, indicating that the volume of reviewed and authorized transactions has stabilized under the new CPO oversight structure, without creating bottlenecks.

Decline in Contracts Reflects Strategic Consolidation and Policy Shift

While orders and requisitions increased, contracts approved declined each year:

- FY 2022: 1,126

- FY 2023: 852
- FY 2024: 653
- FY 2025 through June 24, 2025: 581

This trend may reflect a policy shift toward broader, more strategic master contracts and statewide agreements managed centrally. By consolidating purchasing under fewer but more comprehensive contracts, the state can reduce duplication, increase leverage with vendors, and minimize administrative overhead.

Fewer Solicitations, But Better Targeted

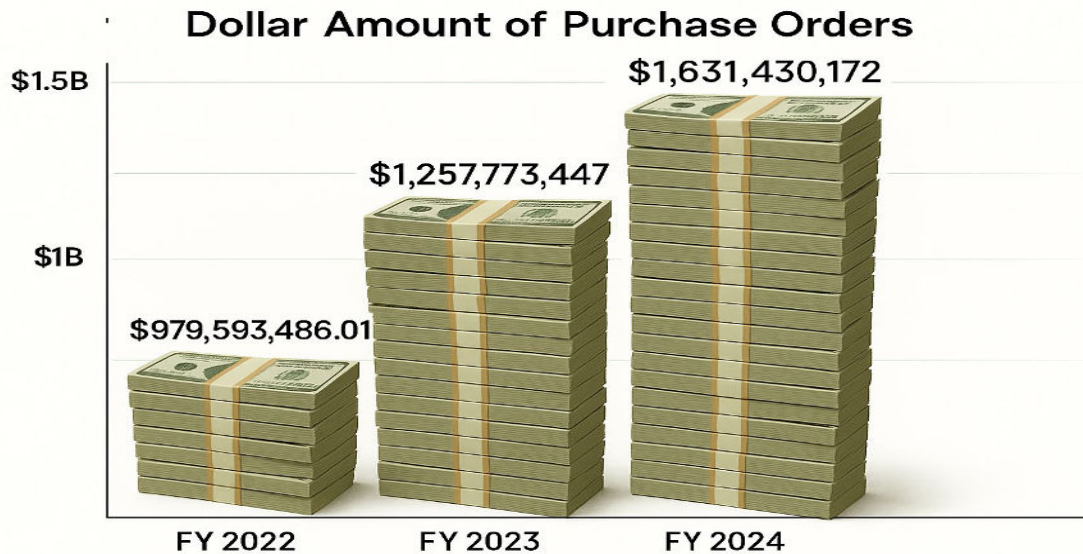
Solicitations created have also decreased over the period:

- FY 2022: 8,717
- FY 2023: 6,630
- FY 2024: 6,235
- FY 2025 through June 24, 2025: 3,421

The decline suggests that agencies are streamlining their solicitations in response to new rules issued by the CPO. With improved planning and use of existing contracts, agencies can avoid redundant solicitations and execute purchases more efficiently.

In summary, the post-reform procurement environment in Alabama shows measurable signs of progress. While the volume of procurement activity has increased, particularly in orders and requisitions, the structure and quality of that activity have evolved—with fewer, more strategic contracts and solicitations. These trends indicate that agencies are becoming more efficient, procurement professionals are adapting well to the reformed Code, and the central leadership of the CPO is delivering tangible operational benefits. As FY 2025 continues, ongoing training and support will be key to sustaining these gains and further advancing procurement excellence across state government.

The dollar value of purchase orders has steadily increased since the implementation of the Alabama Procurement Code, rising from \$979.6 million in FY 2022 to a peak of \$1.63 billion in FY 2024. This upward trend, illustrated by the graphic below, suggests that agencies are not only executing more orders but are also managing larger, more strategic procurements under the guidance of the reformed procurement framework:



This increase highlights improved planning, aggregation, and leveraging of purchasing power, likely driven by the centralized policies and support offered by the Division of Procurement. It also reflects a shift toward more efficient contract utilization and broader enterprise-level procurements that reduce fragmented spending across agencies.

As FY 2025 continues, total spending is on pace to align with or exceed FY 2023 levels, reinforcing the positive fiscal impact of Alabama’s modernized procurement practices and the law’s success in fostering value-driven purchasing across state government.

CHALLENGES FACED BY ALABAMA PROCUREMENT PROFESSIONALS

To evaluate the challenges in state procurement compliance, a survey was conducted in June 2025 targeting Alabama procurement professionals. Of the 83 individuals contacted, 62 responded. The findings reveal a widespread need for stronger training, clearer legal guidance, better system tools, and more strategic performance management.

Only 33% of respondents indicated their agency has a structured procurement certification or training program, while 60% reported no program at all, and 6% indicated one is in development. Of the agencies with training, only 24% found it very effective, while a majority rated it “somewhat effective” or “not effective.”

Many comments emphasized that current training focuses narrowly on AlabamaBuys, with little to no instruction on procurement law itself. One respondent noted, "the Alabama Buys training does not include procurement law training—only how to do things in the system". Others called for scenario-based training and legal interpretation guidance, while one just responded “HELP!”.

The top challenge cited in the survey was inconsistent interpretation of procurement laws (28%), followed by complexity of the laws (22%), and lack of training (20%). Narrative comments further described:

- Conflicts between statutory requirements (e.g., Titles 39 and 41),
- A disconnect between purchasing and finance divisions,
- Agency staff being uncertain about how to interpret overlapping policy rules.

Respondents indicated a lack of access to high-quality support tools:

- 40% rely on job aids, 32% use manuals, and only 16% access an online law library or knowledge base.
- Just 1.7% of agencies reported implementing automation tools for compliance, while 73% had no such tools in place.

Moreover, system usability was a common concern. Multiple comments described internal systems as outdated or difficult to navigate, with one user saying, "our system is not user friendly", and others noting that processes take longer than necessary.

While 55% of agencies use email to communicate procurement law changes, 18% indicated they have no formal process at all. Agencies also rely heavily on the Alabama Buys Help Desk, which was described as understaffed and slow to respond.

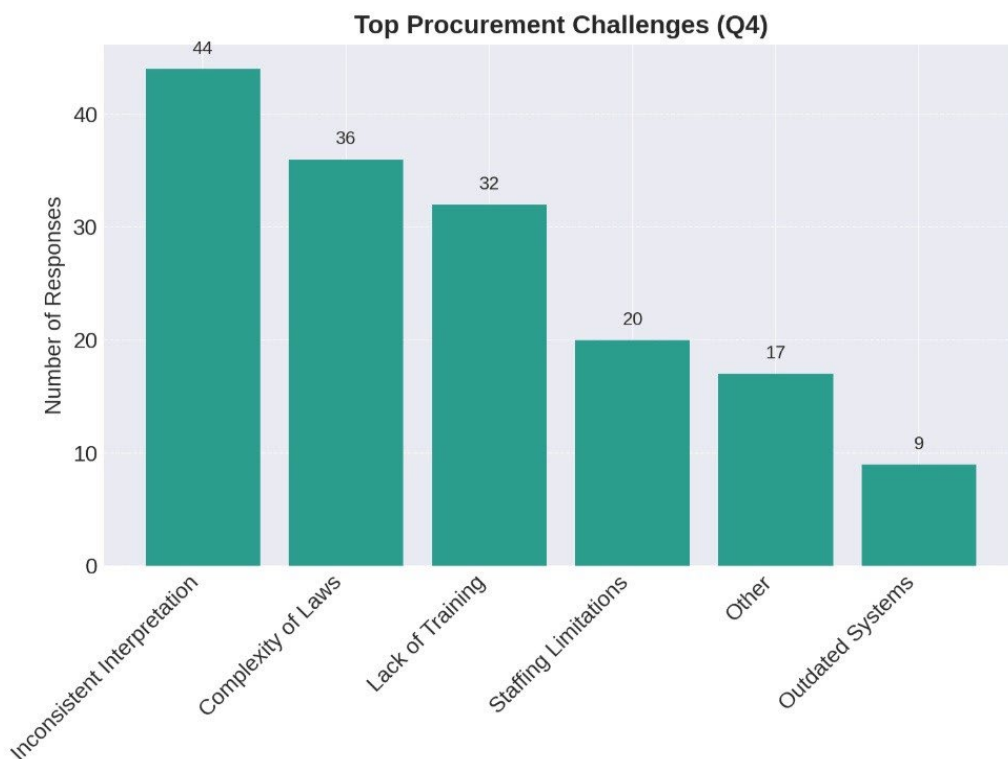
One respondent observed: "The importance of knowledgeable, technical support and timely response needs improvement. The Help Desk is a demand that requires adequate and well-trained, experienced talent to support all State users."

A surprising 33% of agencies do not track any procurement performance or compliance metrics. Among those that do, the top metrics were:

- Timeliness of procurements (21%)
- Contract processing times (20%)
- Audit or error rates (15%)

The absence of consistent tracking across agencies limits the state’s ability to identify patterns, assess risk, or measure improvement. Agencies with specialized functions, particularly labs and field divisions, reported that state contracts and centralized purchasing systems do not align with their needs, often causing delays and cost increases.

Respondents stated: "We overspend on essential items because we have to go through the Alabama Buys system for all of our purchasing", "there is a direct conflict with a good steward of resources...most contract lead to higher prices and reduced quality", and "I have seen markups as high as 5 times the supplier cost." Others called for procurement exemptions for specialized divisions or more flexible vendor evaluation policies.



PRACTICES IN PROCUREMENT LAW EDUCATION OBSERVED BY OTHER STATES

GEORGIA

This paper explores the strengths of Georgia's procurement laws and the Georgia Procurement Bootcamp, analyzing their effectiveness and identifying adaptable strategies for Alabama's procurement reform. Procurement plays a pivotal role in state governance, ensuring public funds are allocated transparently, competitively, and efficiently. Georgia has distinguished itself as a leader in this area through its comprehensive legal framework and commitment to professional development. By examining Georgia's structured approach to procurement, this research outlines strategies Alabama could employ to boost accountability and streamline its own purchasing processes.

Georgia's procurement policies are rooted in the State Purchasing Act (O.C.G.A. § 50-5-50 et seq.) and the Georgia Procurement Manual (GPM) (Georgia Department of Administrative Services. (n.d.), 2022). These two sources lay out the legal and procedural underpinnings of state purchasing, emphasizing three core tenets: transparency, competition, and professionalism. Transparency is promoted through public access to procurement information and strict ethical codes for procurement professionals. Competition is supported through active encouragement of minority and small business participation, ensuring that bidding remains open and diverse. Finally, professional standards are upheld through training requirements and conflict-of-interest guidelines, reinforcing accountability among procurement officers.

These principles are implemented through a highly collaborative system led by the Georgia Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) and its State Purchasing Division (SPD). These bodies work closely with local governments, educational institutions, and state agencies to ensure smooth, standardized practices. Georgia's procurement ecosystem also includes the Georgia Technology Authority (GTA), which oversees IT procurement and ensures technological assets are acquired securely. Legal support from the Attorney General's office reinforces compliance and provides clarity on complex procurement issues.

A key insight shared by Alabama's Chief Procurement Officer Christine Cook highlighted a recurring problem: breakdowns in communication often led to inefficiencies and errors in Alabama's system. In contrast, Georgia's cross-agency collaboration has helped close these gaps.

By consistently sharing accurate procurement information across departments and with vendors, Georgia has reduced miscommunication and improved execution. This strategic alignment ensures that procurement protocols are clearly understood and uniformly implemented across the state.

Central to Georgia's success is the Georgia Procurement Bootcamp, an initiative led by DOAS to build capacity among procurement professionals. This program delivers comprehensive training in contract management, supplier diversity, bidding processes, and procurement law. Participants can earn certifications such as the Georgia Certified Purchasing Manager (GCPM) and Georgia Certified Purchasing Associate (GCPA), validating their expertise and commitment to public service standards. The bootcamp is designed to be accessible through both in-person and online delivery formats, providing flexibility to meet the needs of state and local government staff. Its hands-on structure, incorporating workshops, case studies, and interactive exercises, reinforces practical learning and situational problem-solving.

Georgia's approach to procurement reform offers Alabama a valuable roadmap. By establishing clear expectations for transparency, formalizing cross-agency communication, and building professional capacity through structured training, Alabama can improve its procurement outcomes significantly. Implementing even basic changes, such as better information dissemination practices and establishing certification programs for procurement officials, could address persistent inefficiencies.

Ultimately, Georgia's procurement model represents a standard of excellence that other states can learn from. Alabama, by adapting these proven practices, has the potential to foster a more efficient, ethical, and collaborative procurement system that enhances public trust and delivers greater value to its citizens.

NORTH CAROLINA

In July 2023, North Carolina introduced its new electronic Vendor Portal (eVP), a significant modernization of its procurement operations. This system consolidated three previously separate procurement applications into a single, cloud-based platform that integrates vendor registration, bid submission, and Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) certification management (North Carolina Department of Administration [NC DOA], 2023). The reform was part of a broader

initiative to improve operational efficiency, reduce reliance on paper, and simplify vendor interactions with the state.

The motivations behind North Carolina's procurement reform included eliminating redundant data entry, enhancing transparency, and improving access for vendors of all sizes, especially small and minority-owned businesses (NC DOA, 2023). The new system allows vendors to manage their information in one place, automatically synchronizes bid postings, and archives bid tabulations and awards indefinitely, providing unprecedented transparency in the state's procurement processes.

To ensure widespread adoption and understanding of these changes, the NC DOA disseminated information through official press releases, webinars, newsletters, guidance documents, and updates to the procurement section of its website. The Department also hosted live and recorded training sessions for vendors and agency procurement staff to demonstrate navigating the new portal (NC DOA, 2023). Additionally, procurement employees received role-specific training modules covering solicitation creation, bid evaluation, contract management, and HUB compliance. These sessions were supplemented with a dedicated help desk and resource library to support ongoing learning (NC DOA, 2024).

Since its implementation, the eVP has produced measurable positive outcomes. The number of vendor purchase orders increased by 20%, and the pool of registered vendors grew by 50%, reflecting greater engagement from the business community (NC DOA, 2024). The system's success has also been recognized nationally: North Carolina received the 2024 Innovation in State Government: Modernization Award from the National Association of State Chief Administrators (NASCA, 2024). These outcomes demonstrate how technology can streamline government operations while supporting equitable access to public contracts.

SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina has approached procurement reform through an incremental process of aligning its Consolidated Procurement Code (S.C. Code Ann. § 11-35) with national best practices, particularly the American Bar Association's (ABA) Model Procurement Code. Major reforms began in 1981, were significantly updated in 2006, and continued with further refinement through 2024 (South

Carolina Budget and Control Board, 2024). The driving motivation for these changes has been to create a fair, competitive procurement system that delivers the best value for taxpayers.

Key reforms in South Carolina have focused on improving acquisition planning, ensuring thorough market research, requiring detailed risk assessments, and mandating complete documentation of procurement activities (South Carolina Division of Procurement Services, 2024). One crucial change was the formalization of best-value procurement, with cost required to account for at least 60% of evaluation scoring. This ensures that while technical merit is considered, cost remains a critical factor in public purchasing decisions.

These changes were disseminated through formal circulars from the Division of Procurement Services, detailed procurement manuals, mandatory policy memoranda, and presentations at statewide procurement conferences (South Carolina Division of Procurement Services, 2024). The Division also maintains an online portal where updates, guidelines, and FAQs are posted for agency and vendor access.

To equip procurement professionals with the knowledge required to implement reforms, South Carolina mandates certification and continuing education for all procurement officers (South Carolina Division of Procurement Services, 2024). The state offers structured training through the Certified South Carolina Procurement Officer (CPO) program, which includes procurement law, ethics, solicitation processes, and contract administration courses. Periodic workshops, refresher courses, and e-learning modules are provided to ensure employees remain current with regulatory updates.

The results of these reforms have included greater consistency across agencies, strengthened oversight mechanisms, and improved vendor confidence in the fairness of procurement decisions. Agencies must employ certified procurement officers, maintain procurement records for at least five years, and submit annual procurement reports to central oversight bodies (South Carolina Division of Procurement Services, 2024). Furthermore, the bid protest process has been strengthened, allowing vendors to challenge decisions within defined timelines, thus providing a structured accountability and dispute resolution mechanism.

VIRGINIA

Virginia undertook significant amendments to its Public Procurement Act (Va. Code Ann. § 2.2-4300), which became effective in July 2024 following legislative activity in the 2024 General Assembly session (Virginia General Assembly, 2024). The reforms came after public concerns about no-bid contracts awarded by the Virginia Tourism Corporation and similar agencies, which were previously exempt from the Act's requirements (Virginia Department of General Services [VA DGS], 2024).

The motivations for Virginia's reforms included promoting fairness for in-state businesses, modernizing procurement through technology, and closing loopholes that allowed certain agencies to avoid standard procurement rules. Notably, the new laws established preferences for Virginia-based vendors in tied bid situations, introduced mandatory electronic bidding (with a compliance deadline of January 1, 2025), and required agencies like the Virginia Tourism Corporation to comply fully with the Act (VA DGS, 2024). These changes ensured all state agencies operate under uniform, transparent, and accountable procurement practices.

Virginia disseminated these changes through formal policy bulletins issued by the Department of General Services, legislative summaries, instructional webinars, and regional meetings with procurement officers (VA DGS, 2024). The DGS Procurement Bulletin Board and eVA portal extensively provided real-time updates, resource documents, and implementation timelines.

Virginia's training efforts include mandatory eVA training workshops, hands-on labs for e-bidding, and VPPA compliance seminars tailored to agency procurement staff, contract officers, and legal advisors. Training programs also address ethical procurement practices, bid evaluation methodologies, and the proper application of preferences and exemptions (VA DGS, 2024). The state provides in-person and online training formats to accommodate staff across all regions.

Virginia's reforms have already begun to show impact. The in-state vendor tie-bid preference has been implemented and will remain in effect through July 2027, with a review scheduled for January 2025 to assess its effectiveness (VA DGS, 2024). The shift to electronic bidding is expected to reduce administrative costs, increase participation from small businesses, and enhance transparency. By extending procurement laws to previously exempt entities, Virginia has also closed gaps in oversight, ensuring all public funds are subject to the same level of accountability.

KENTUCKY

The Kentucky Office of Procurement Services (OPS) serves as the central procurement agency for the Executive Branch of Kentucky state government. OPS is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Kentucky Model Procurement Code (KRS Chapter 45A) and adherence to the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing Code of Ethics. In addition to procurement execution and oversight, OPS plays a key role in policy development and training (Kentucky Finance and Administration Cabinet, n.d.).

In 2007, The Kentucky Procurement Institute (KPI) Training and Certificate Program was established to offer a structured training and certificate program tailored to procurement employees in state agencies. The training and certificate program verifies that agency procurement employees have completed essential training and establishes a clear structure for granting small purchase authority to agencies (Kentucky Finance and Administration Cabinet, n.d.).

Kentucky delegates small purchase authority to state agencies. By default, agencies in Kentucky are authorized to make non-construction procurements up to \$1,000, as outlined in KRS Chapter 45A.100 (Kentucky Revised Statutes, n.d.). The KPI Training and Certificate Program's core curriculum is framed into delegation tiers of up to \$1,000, \$10,000, \$20,000 tying each tier to the completion of certain KPI and national coursework. To earn the small purchase authority certificate, procurement employees must complete the required KPI courses matching their delegation level and attend applicable national level courses from The National Institute for Governmental Procurement (NIGP) and/or the National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO). For instance, for the \$1,000 authority that all agencies are given, the agency procurement employees are required to complete the following mandatory classes:

- Foundations of Strategy & Policy Core Certificate (NIGP) *OR* Procurement 101: Foundations of Public Procurement (NASPO)
- Intro to Kentucky Public Procurement
- Intro to Professional Services

Agency procurement employees must complete the training required for their agency's small purchase authority within one year. For the State of Kentucky, the completion of these courses documents the fact that an agency has well-trained and knowledgeable staff.

ARKANSAS

The Arkansas Office of State Procurement (OSP) serves as the central procurement authority charged with managing, overseeing, and supporting the acquisition of commodities, technical services, and professional services across all state agencies, boards, commissions, colleges, and universities. OSP also develops and delivers procurement-related training, covering the law, policies, card programs, and contract drafting, for agency personnel to ensure statewide compliance and competency. Additionally, Arkansas OSP issues delegated procurement orders to agencies, requiring that staff complete baseline training and enabling OSP to provide oversight such as bid reviews, protest resolution, and vendor performance monitoring.

In July 2019, through Act 419 (House Bill 1178), Arkansas formally adopted a training and certification program as part of its procurement law, marking a significant alignment with the Model Procurement Code (Arkansas General Assembly, 2019). This legislation required the State Procurement Director to establish a tiered core curriculum, ensuring that all procurement employees receive standardized, competency-based training (Arkansas Office of State Procurement, n.d.). The Arkansas Procurement Code, closely following the ABA Model Procurement Code, informed the design of this curriculum and continues to guide the development of training materials (Public Procurement International, n.d.). By July 1, 2021, all state employees were required to complete the necessary initial certification before conducting procurement activities, and continuing education hours thereafter to maintain certification. This structured approach not only standardized procurement knowledge statewide but also fostered a more consistent and legally compliant procurement culture.

The Arkansas OSP offers a suite of free online courses tailored to different stages of the procurement process through the state's official Learning Management System, MyARLearning. Courses are self-paced and available online, making them readily accessible to procurement employees across the state. Completion of certain courses may be a prerequisite for accessing specific procurement systems or performing purchasing duties. Below is a list of the Arkansas OSP approved courses, with their awarded credit hours:

Course Title	Credit Hours
1.1 Introduction to Procurement and Certification	1.0
1.2 Procurement Overview	1.0
1.3 Creating a Purchase Requisition (PR)	3.0
1.3 Approving a Purchase Requisition	0.5
1.4 Basic Concepts for Buyers	2.5
1.5 Executing a Small Order Procurement	1.0
1.6 Executing a Competitive Bid Procurement	3.0
1.7 Negotiation	2.5
1.8 Using State & Cooperative Contracts	1.5

In addition to self-paced online learning, Arkansas OSP offers live virtual webinars that complement their online courses. These sessions allow procurement employees to (1) interact with instructors in real time, (2) receive updates on recent changes in procurement rules and best practices and (3) ask situational questions to clarify policy interpretations. Arkansas OSP regularly schedules these webinars and archives recordings through the Procurement Forum for future reference specific procurement systems or performing purchasing duties (Arkansas Office of State Procurement, n.d.).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Centralized Knowledge Hub for Procurement Resources

A centralized knowledge hub for the State of Alabama's procurement system would be a transformative asset in modernizing public procurement. The Chief Procurement Officer has expressed users' frustrations about fragmented communication, limited training, and limited access to knowledge, just to name a few. To address these challenges, Alabama should establish a *centralized procurement knowledge hub*, a digital platform that consolidates procurement laws, templates, training materials, bid opportunities, and vendor resources into a single, accessible location. This initiative would not only streamline operations but also foster a culture of transparency, consistency, and professional growth.

A centralized hub would serve as the state's procurement nerve center, ensuring that all agencies, regardless of size or location, operate from the same set of standards. It would accelerate onboarding for new procurement professionals, reduce redundant efforts, and improve inter-

agency collaboration. By offering real-time access to updated policies and best practices, the hub would also support compliance and ethical procurement behavior.

Other states have already demonstrated the power of this approach. One example includes Texas, which operates the Centralized Master Bidders List (CMBL), a statewide vendor registration system that connects suppliers with procurement opportunities across agencies. This platform not only streamlines vendor engagement but also ensures equitable access to public contracts. North Carolina improved efficiency with its electronic vendor portal, consolidating previously separate applications into a single platform. Similarly, Georgia's Procurement Manual and Bootcamp are housed within a centralized digital environment managed by the Department of Administrative Services, enabling consistent training and policy interpretation across the state.

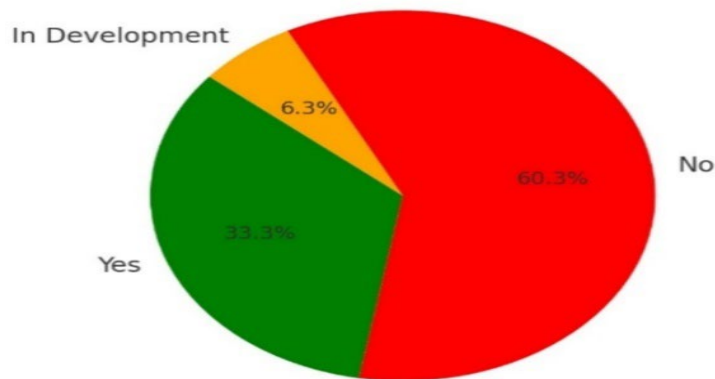
The benefits are clear: improved efficiency, reduced costs, stronger vendor relationships, and greater public trust. For Alabama, launching a centralized knowledge hub would be more than a technological upgrade, it would be a strategic leap toward procurement excellence. By learning from peer states and investing in shared infrastructure, Alabama can modernize its procurement culture and deliver better outcomes for its citizens.

Mandatory, Tiered, and Scenario-Based Training Program

Our research suggests that a statewide procurement training program must go beyond introductory overviews and establish a structured, enforceable, and adaptive model. According to the National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO, 2024) survey results, over 30 states now offer centralized procurement training and certification programs.

A mandatory, tiered, and scenario-based training framework can directly address gaps in understanding and application of Alabama's procurement laws. However, data collected from Alabama procurement professionals reveals that approximately two-thirds of procurement respondents lack access to structured training opportunities. Based on survey data and comparative analysis with other states such as Georgia, South Carolina, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Virginia, this proposal outlines a three-pronged solution: (1) tiered training levels, (2) scenario-based application modules, and (3) system-enforced compliance.

Availability of Structured Training Programs (Q6)



Tiered Training Framework

The tiered training approach should provide learning pathways based on role complexity and procurement type. Entry-level participants would begin with a core curriculum titled Procurement 101, which would introduce foundational knowledge such as procurement methods, applicable laws (e.g., Code of Alabama Title 41, Chapter 4), and roles of oversight entities like the Chief Procurement Officer (Alabama Administrative Code Chapter 355-4-1). Mid-level courses would include specialized modules for solicitation types: Invitation to Bid (ITB), Request for Proposals (RFP), and sole-source or emergency procurements. Advanced training would focus on complex acquisitions (e.g., IT contracts), vendor negotiations, and managing delegated authority.

Georgia's certification model, outlined in the Georgia Procurement Manual, Version 10 (2022), provides a viable framework. It includes credentials such as the Georgia Certified Purchasing Associate (GCPA) and Georgia Certified Purchasing Manager (GCPM), each with specific continuing education and re-certification requirements (Georgia Department of Administrative Services, 2022, pp. 215–221). Alabama can adopt a similar credentialing structure to validate procurement competency statewide and promote consistency in law application.

According to survey data collected from Alabama agency staff (Procurement Team Survey Results_Alabama, 2025), over 40% of respondents indicated that their agency either lacked a structured training program or was unsure if one existed. Furthermore, while some respondents rated their existing training as "somewhat effective," many identified key gaps, especially

regarding real-time application of procurement methods. These results further support the need for a scalable and differentiated training system tailored to the complexity of each role.

Scenario-Based Application Modules

Survey responses from Alabama procurement professionals (Procurement Team Survey Results_Alabama, 2025) revealed inconsistent understanding of how to apply procurement rules in practice, especially for RFPs and delegated authority processes. Scenario-based training can close this gap by presenting staff with interactive, role-specific cases that reflect real procurement situations. For instance, one module could walk users through developing a scope of work and evaluation criteria for a complex IT RFP. Another could simulate responding to emergency procurements with limited vendor options.

Scenario-based learning has been shown to increase knowledge retention, especially when learners are exposed to rule-based reasoning and consequences tied to real-world decisions (Mohungoo, Brown, & Kabanda, 2020). This approach is particularly effective for government staff who manage procurements infrequently or with limited supervision. Additional support for this approach is found in Alabama survey responses (Procurement Team Survey Results_Alabama, 2025), where respondents noted the importance of learning from real examples and frequently reported uncertainty in applying procurement law in unique or high-pressure situations. Multiple respondents suggested that training includes "mock scenarios," "hands-on walkthroughs," and "case studies" to reinforce learning outcomes.

Enforcement via System Integration

To ensure universal participation and maintain training relevance, the proposed training program should be integrated with Alabama Buys or an equivalent procurement system. Access to certain features, such as initiating an RFP or issuing a purchase order, could be restricted until relevant training modules are completed. This model of enforced training compliance is currently used in other states and sectors. For example, OpenGov (2022) reports that Milpitas, California, implemented an eProcurement system with built-in compliance checkpoints that led to a 95% productivity gain and 90% reduction in manual entry errors. To further support our research recommendations, North Carolina cited a 20% gain in vendor purchase orders, and a 50% growth in vendor registration following the implementation of their eVP system.

In addition, incorporating Learning Management System (LMS) notifications and dashboard progress tracking allows both individual staff and agency managers to monitor training completion and certification expiration dates. According to the Alabama survey (Procurement Team Survey Results_Alabama, 2025), nearly half of respondents reported no centralized way to track training completion or monitor regulatory updates, which suggests that LMS integration would fill a crucial management and compliance gap.

Based on our research, the implementation of a mandatory, tiered, and scenario-based training program is not only feasible but necessary to standardize procurement understanding across Alabama's state agencies. Such a program would enhance legal compliance, increase procurement efficiency, and reduce the risk of misapplication or audit findings. Research suggests this proposal meets a critical need identified by state employees and procurement leaders alike. Our recommendations are supported by comparative models from Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Arkansas, Kentucky, insights from Alabama procurement professional's surveys, and performance results from national research on procurement system integration.

Formalized Communication and Collaboration Framework

A key challenge in Alabama's state procurement process is the fragmentation of communication and collaboration among procurement stakeholders. Agencies, vendors, and end users often operate in silos, relying on informal or inconsistent channels to share information, provide feedback, and coordinate purchasing decisions. This lack of standardized communication framework introduces risks related to transparency, efficiency, and compliance.

Currently, procurement professionals across different state agencies may interpret rules differently and/or apply inconsistent evaluation criteria. Vendors often struggle to navigate procurement opportunities and several interviewed have spoken about difficulties due to opaque processes or unclear points of contact.

Formalizing a statewide communication and collaboration framework would address these shortcomings by establishing clear protocols, expectations, and platforms for engagement. Such a framework could include:

- Standardized communication protocols for agency procurement staff, ensuring uniform interpretation of statutes, administrative codes, and procurement guidelines.
- Collaborative planning forums where agencies can share upcoming procurement needs, identify joint purchasing opportunities and align on best practices.
- Designated vendor communication channels that provide consistent guidance, Q&A opportunities, and feedback mechanisms throughout the procurement lifecycle.

Implementing a formalized structure for communication and collaboration would not only promote consistency and accountability but also enhance trust in the procurement process. It would empower both public officials and private sector partners to engage more effectively.

CONCLUSION

Procurement in Alabama is more than a system. It is a shared responsibility that impacts every state department and agency. The work of hundreds of professionals has shown that success hinges not just on policy, but on the people who bring it to life every day. With ever-evolving policies and rising expectations, we must work together to elevate procurement from a set of rules to a source of strength.

This project challenges us to reimagine procurement as a bridge, not as a barrier. Through smarter education, centralized resources, and streamlined compliance, we can replace confusion with clarity and inefficiency with empowerment. Alabama's future in procurement is one we create together. The tools are here, the vision is clear, but it all depends on us.

Now is the time to buy into it. Buy into the belief that transparency and efficiency are not ideals, they are actionable goals. It is time to de-mystify the process and build a wagon every department can climb aboard, forging a united path toward more accountable, strategic, and effective public service. The bandwagon of procurement proficiency is gaining momentum, and forward-looking organizations are taking note. Now is the time for us all to pull forward together and buy into equipping procurement professionals with the tools for success!

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