

Toronto Zoo Social Procurement Policy – First-Year Update

Date: April 14, 2026

To: Board of Management of the Toronto Zoo

From: Chief Transformation Officer

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the first year of implementation of the Toronto Zoo's Social Procurement Policy following its adoption in 2025. It outlines implementation steps undertaken, diverse supplier engagement, procurement outcomes to date, workforce development progress, and planned next steps to strengthen policy outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Transformation Officer recommends that:

1. The Board of Management of the Toronto Zoo receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendations in this report.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on February 28, 2025, the Board of Management of the Toronto Zoo adopted updates to the Toronto Zoo Procurement Policy, including establishment of a new Social Procurement Policy.

The Social Procurement Policy established requirements to:

Increase participation of diverse suppliers in Zoo procurement processes; and Embed workforce development outcomes in large-scale procurements exceeding \$5 million in value.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.ZB 14.4>

COMMENTS

The following is a summary of the progress made in the first year since Board approval of the Zoo's Social Procurement Policy.

Implementation of the Social Procurement Policy

Since adoption, several key steps have been undertaken to adopt the policy supporting consistent application of the policy across Zoo divisions:

1. Developed and implemented a standardized Three-Quote Form for procurements between \$7,500 and \$133,800 to ensure compliance with invitational bidding requirements and inclusion of diverse suppliers where possible;
2. Conducted staff training sessions and presentations to support awareness and consistent application of social procurement requirements, including:
 - i. When Informal Requests for Quotations (IRFQs) are required;
 - ii. How to identify and engage diverse suppliers; and
 - iii. Completion and documentation requirements.
3. Established processes to support tracking and reporting of diverse supplier participation and spend.

Diverse Supplier Certification Organizations

To support supplier diversity, the Zoo has engaged with Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council (CAMSC), Canadian Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC) and Women Business Enterprises (WBE). In 2025 the Zoo onboarded CGLCC and CAMSC. WBE has subsequently been onboarded in Spring 2026.

These partnerships provide access to certified diverse supplier directories and support outreach to equity-deserving business communities.

First Year Results

Beginning May 2025, 11 IRFQs were initiated across various categories where potential diverse suppliers could be identified (e.g., technology supplies, janitorial products, operational goods).

Of the 11 IRFQs issued:

- 3 were awarded to diverse suppliers;
- 2 were awarded to non-diverse suppliers (lower-cost bids);
- 3 did not result in a suitable diverse supplier being identified;

- 2 were cancelled due to budget constraints;
- 1 remains in progress and to be completed in the second quarter of 2026

In total, 39 purchases made from diverse suppliers through all procurement channels since May 1, 2025. The total spend of these 39 purchases was \$557,894.03 representing approximately 4.4% of total spend being made through diverse suppliers. This included procurements that did not directly solicit a bid from a diverse supplier but resulted in a diverse supplier being contracted. Diverse suppliers are still eligible to bid on open tenders.

Workforce Development

Implementation of workforce development requirements is underway for major capital and strategic projects.

- Prior to implementation of the Social Procurement Policy, the Zoo established workforce development requirements as part of the construction management contract for the Community Conservation Centre. These efforts included: Early-stage discussions on workforce participation opportunities;
- Exploration of partnerships to support training and employment pathways;
- Alignment with broader equity-deserving community engagement objectives.

To date, workforce development requirements for the Community Conservation Centre have resulted in an average of 35% of construction contractor positions being filled by individuals from equity deserving groups exceeding the initial target of 15%.

Further updates to the Board will be provided as additional major projects advance (e.g. TZNet0 Transition Plan, Indoor Savanna Winter Holding and Viewing), workforce development targets are established and measurable outcomes become available.

Challenges and Observations

A number of challenges and observations emerged through the first year of implementation of the Social Procurement Policy, including:

1. Limited supplier availability in certain categories, resulting in instances where no suitable diverse suppliers could be identified;
2. Competitiveness challenges, where diverse suppliers participated but were not the lowest cost bidders;
3. Engagement variability, particularly with certain certification bodies, impacting response rates and procurement timelines;
4. Increased efforts to engage a broader number of diverse suppliers.

Next Steps

To strengthen implementation and outcomes in the months ahead, the following actions are planned:

1. Expand Supplier Base

Continue onboarding additional certification organizations, including expanded engagement with Women Business Enterprises (WBE) and broaden outreach to increase the pool and competitiveness of diverse suppliers.

2. Improve Access to Opportunities

Review alternative approaches to posting Zoo procurement opportunities to ensure that access fees or platform limitations do not create barriers for diverse suppliers; Explore more accessible and inclusive procurement channels.

3. Enhance Workforce Development Integration

Advance workforce development requirements in upcoming major procurements, including the TZNet0 Transition Plan and the Indoor Savanna Winter Holding and Viewing Project, in order to achieve measurable outcomes related to employment, training, and community benefits.

4. Ongoing Monitoring and Reporting

Continue annual reporting to the Board on:

- Diverse supplier participation;
- Spend and outcomes under the Social Procurement Policy;
- Workforce development impacts;
- Opportunities for continuous improvement to the policy framework.

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