# Maritime Area Regulatory Authority

## Corporate Procurement Plan 2025-2027

## Contents

## Introduction

MARA’s mission is to act as a custodian and regulator of Ireland’s maritime area. We aim to ensure that Ireland’s marine environment is protected for the future through co-operation, compliance, enforcement and transparent decision making.

This Corporate Procurement Plan 2025 – 2027 (the “Plan”) will help MARA in managing its public procurement activities, thereby supporting good governance practices. This Plan sets out a range of strategic actions designed to enhance the Agency’s existing procurement function over the next three years.

Overall, this plan sets out the Agency’s strategic approach to procurement and identifies its procurement priorities. The below infographic describes some of the key benefits and purposes of a Corporate Procurement Plan:

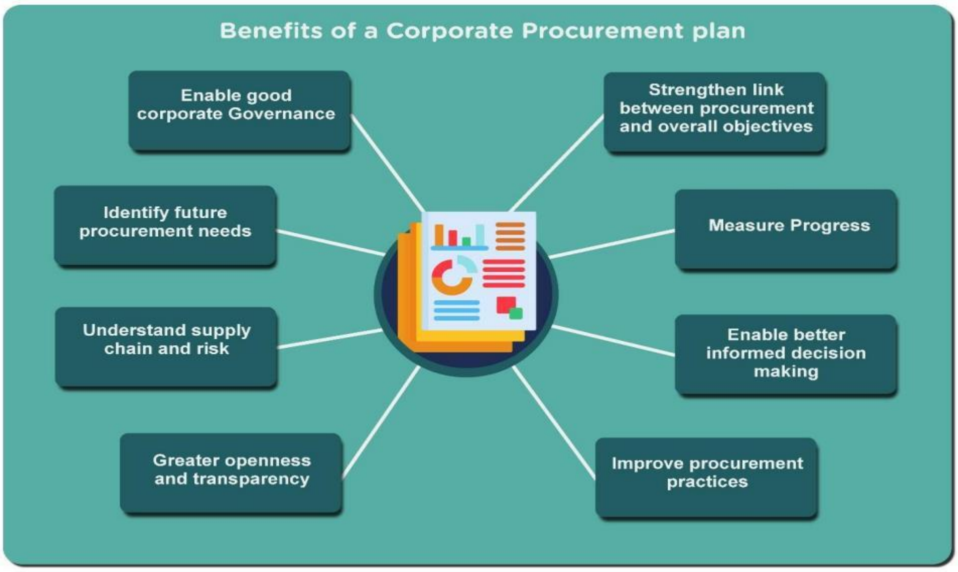



*Figure 1: OGP Corporate Procurement Plan Information Note, 2020*

## Purpose and Scope

This Corporate Procurement Plan has been prepared in accordance with national guidelines and policies including the recommendations in the *National Procurement Policy Framework* of 2019[1] and the *Office of Government Procurement's Information Note: Corporate Procurement Plan,* 2020[2].

In January 2025, an internal audit review, led by MARA internal auditors, delivered a report on our systems of internal financial controls. Key learnings that MARA wishes to see reflected as part of this plan include:

- Development of a procurement plan linking expenditure with strategic plan and initiatives.
- Analysis of prior year supplier expenditure.
- Outlining specific competitions to be carried out during the year.
- Actions for improvements where necessary.

The implementation of this plan will provide focus and structure, ensuring that the Agency will meet its corporate objectives while also fulfilling its legal and statutory procurement obligations.

## Public Procurement Statement

It is the Agency's policy to comply with public procurement guidelines, regulations and directives. The Agency as a contracting authority is accountable for all procurement it carries out.

[1] The National Public Procurement Policy Framework, 2019
[2] OGP Information Note: Corporate Procurement Plan, 2020

MARA operates under the national procurement model derived, in part from EU obligations, which has mechanisms in place to facilitate value for money and efficiencies. These mechanisms include but are not limited to framework agreements and dynamic purchasing systems. Government Policy is that public bodies, where possible, should make use of all available central arrangements[3]. Where the Agency procures outside of central procurement frameworks it will provide a value for money justification.

MARA is committed to efficient service delivery using compliant, equitable and transparent procurement processes that deliver value for money for works, goods, and services in line with the National Public Procurement Policy Framework (NPPPF), which consists of the following five strands:

1. Legislation (Directives, Regulations).
2. Government Policy (Circulars, etc.).
3. Capital Works Management Framework for Public Works.
4. General Procurement Guidelines for Goods and Services.
5. More detailed technical guidelines, template documentation and information notes as issued periodically by the Policy Unit of the Office of Government Procurement (OGP).

## Existing Structure of Procurement in MARA

MARA currently operates a hybrid procurement structure, with each divisional unit focusing on the delivery of its specialist service for all spend under the national threshold, while all spend over the national and EU threshold is managed by the Procurement Manager. This system works well for efficient service delivery, keeping procurement as close as possible to the user while also ensuring good governance practices.

The procedures to be followed by each divisional unit are summarised in the diagram below and explained in more detail in our Procurement Procedures Manual.

[3] DPER Circular 16/13: Revision of arrangements concerning the use of Central Contracts put in place by the National Procurement Service

1
- **Consultation with Procurement Office Prior to Finalising the Business Case**
- Divisional units must consult with Procurement Office for procurements over €5,000 (EX VAT) for advice on the correct procurement procedure to be used.

2
- **Business Case**
- For spend over €5000 divisional units must ensure that there is a clear business need for each procurement by way of an *approved* business case and budget.

3
- **OGP Centralised Arrangements (www.ogp.ie)**
- Divisional units *must* use centralised arrangements established by the Office of Government Procurement where available.

4
- **Competitive Tendering Procedures**
- Divisional units must ensure competitive tendering procedures are correctly followed for **all** procurements.

5
- **Non-Competitive Procurement**
- Where a competitive process cannot be used, divisional units must develop, and get approved, a 40/02 Business Case in advance of awarding a contract or making a purchase.

6
- **Green Public Procurement**
- Divisional units must incorporate green/sustainable criteria in all procurement and contracts above the national threshold.

7
- **Tender Documents**
- Divisional units must submit tender documents, for all procurements ≥ €25,000, to Procurement Manager for review prior to advertising.

8
- **Purchases Register**
- Divisional units are required to notify the Procurement Manager of all procurements ≥ €5,000 (ex VAT) for inclusion on the Agency's contracts register.

9
- **Procurement File**
- Divisional units must create an official file for each procurement to ensure a detailed audit trail of the process is maintained.

10
- **Making Changes to the Contract**
- Divisional units must consult with The Procurement Manager ***in advance*** of extending, amending or modifying any contractual arrangement.

## Procurement Systems within MARA

At present MARA uses Excel to manage procurement activity, including contract tracking and expenditure analysis.

To strengthen procurement governance and operational efficiency, the Agency is transitioning to the Sage finance platform. The adoption of Sage will:

- Improve data accuracy and reduce manual errors.
- Enable improved financial tracking and reporting.
- Enhance visibility and control over spend.
- Streamline approval workflows and compliance monitoring.

All procurement competitions exceeding the national threshold are conducted through the eTenders platform. This strengthens compliance with public procurement regulations, promotes transparency, and provides equal access to competitions for all eligible suppliers. The platform also supports audit trails and reporting obligations under public procurement law.

## Procurement Spend in MARA

### Expenditure Analysis

The budget of MARA is allocated through the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment. In 2024, the financial allocation to MARA was €7.8 million. To understand the scale and types of procurement within MARA, an overview of MARA's 2024 expenditure on goods and services has been provided.

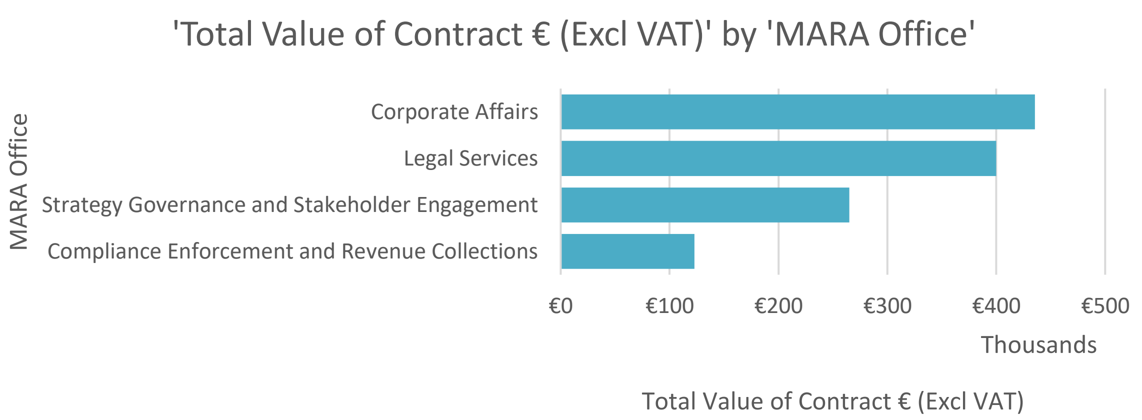
Over the course of 2024 MARA established 25 new contracts.

## Top 10 Suppliers by Contract Value Established in 2024

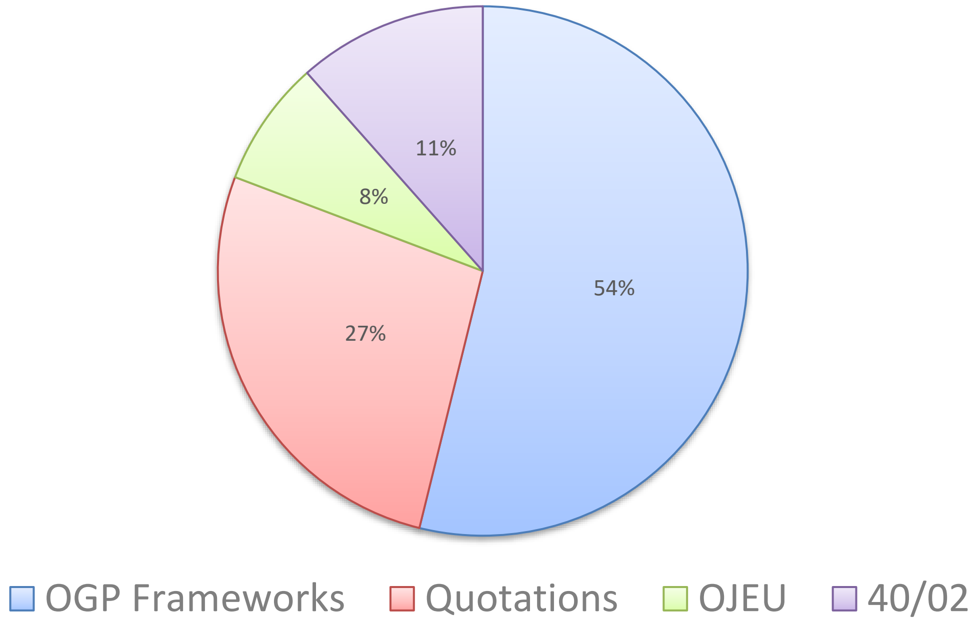
| Name of Supplier | Description | Total Value of Contracts € (Ex. VAT) |
|---|---|---|
| Beauchamps LLP and Fieldfisher Ireland LLP | Legal Services | 400,000 |
| Baringa Partners LLP | The Design of a Framework for Competitive Award of Maritime Area Consents | 150,000 |
| Osborne Recruitment | Recruitment Services | 150,000 |
| Inpute | Licensing Software | 78,654 |
| Club Travel | Foreign Travel | 60,000 |
| Translit | Translation Services | 55,000 |
| Three | Mobile Phones | 50,000 |
| Forvis Mazars | Internal Audit Services | 50,000 |
| Forvis Mazars | Consultancy Services to assist with the delivery of the Statement of Strategy. | 40,100 |
| Long O Donnell Technical Services Limited | Procurement Consultancy Services | 40,000 |
| **Grand Total** | | **1,073,754** |

## Overall value of Contracts per Office

Corporate Affairs and the Legal Unit have the highest value contracts established in 2024



## Procurement Processes Used for Contracts Established in 2024




## Actual Spend on Goods and Services per Category in 2024

| Expenditure Category | | Total 2024 € |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | CSSO | 347,000 |
| 2 | Financial Fees | 234,000 |
| 3 | Legal Fees | 156,000 |
| 4 | Office Rent | 145,000 |
| 5 | Consultancy | 99,000 |
| 6 | Service Charge | 99,000 |
| 7 | ICT Equipment | 94,000 |
| 8 | Licence and Subscriptions | 79,000 |
| 9 | Membership/ Subscriptions and Training | 77,000 |
| 10 | ICT Support and Development | 49,000 |
| 11 | Recruitment Fees | 39,000 |
| 12 | Audit Fees | 32,000 |
| 13 | Office Furniture | 23,000 |
| 14 | Phone and Internet | 21,000 |
| 15 | Electricity | 17,000 |
| 16 | Catering | 10,000 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 17 | Event Costs | 9,000 |
| 18 | Insurance | 9,000 |
| 19 | Protective Clothing | 8,000 |
| 20 | Post and Stationery | 7,000 |
| 21 | Facilities and General Maintenance | 7,000 |
| 22 | Conferences and Room Hire | 5,000 |
| 23 | Translation Services | 5,000 |
| 24 | Repairs and Cleaning | 5,000 |
| 25 | Other Office Costs | 2,000 |
| 26 | Equipment Hire | 1,000 |
| 27 | Waste | 1,000 |
| Total | | 1,580,000 |

## Top Ten Suppliers by Spend in 2024

| Name of Supplier | Description | Total Value of Spend € |
|---|---|---|
| CSSO | Legal Services | 347,073 |
| Vevay Management Ltd | Office Rent, Energy and Service Charges | 284,008 |
| Ernst & Young | Financial Capability Assessments | 195,649 |
| Oppermann & Assoc. | Architectural Services | 110,700 |
| Inpute Technologies Ltd | Metastorm | 68,775 |
| Forvis Mazars | Statement of Strategy | 57,164 |
| Margaret Gray | Legal Services | 43,757 |
| Philip Lee | Legal Services | 41,146 |
| Datapac | IT Equipment | 35,134 |
| JJ Devereux | Office Furniture and Stationery | 26,202 |
| **Grand Total** | | **1,209,608** |

## Key Projects Planned for 2025

| Goods/Services/Works | | Estimated Cost of Entire Project ex VAT € |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Office Refurbishment | 913,000 |
| 2 | Provision of Environmental, Engineering, and related Technical Expertise | 499,600 |
| 3 | The Supply and Installation of Office Furniture | 150,000 |
| 4 | ICT Roadmap | 139,000 |
| 5 | Consultancy Services for Organisational Optimisation and Workforce Planning | 87,500 |
| 6 | The Supply and Installation of IT Equipment for Office Fit Out | 50,300 |
| 7 | Provision of Admiralty Charts | 50,000 |
| 8 | Provision of a Sage Financial System Specialist to support the Agency with its transition from legacy financial systems to Sage | 41,800 |
| 9 | Review and revise MARA's MAC and MUL guidance documents and application forms. | 28,500 |
| 10 | Web Design Phase 1 | 19,000 |
| Total | | 1,883,700 |

## Green Public Procurement (GPP)

The public sector has a responsibility to promote green procurement, supporting Ireland's environmental and wider sustainable development objectives.

MARA will seek to source goods and services with a reduced environmental impact by including GPP criteria in all tenders over the national threshold, where possible, in accordance with the GPP Implementation Mandate set out below.

1

## Needs Assessment

- Avoid unnecessary purchases.
- Rethink how demand can be met (e.g., reuse or repair).
- Build flexibility into contracts to allow regular review of needs and to help avoid unnecessary consumption of resources.

2

## Decision to undertake public Procurement - Insert GPP Criteria

- Insert GPP criteria in published public procurement tender documentation for all individual procurement spend above the national threshold.
- Include GPP criteria from national GPP guidance and criteria in published public procurement tender documentation. Use https://gppcriteria.gov.ie/.
- Use GPP criteria from other sources (e.g., EU GPP criteria) where national GPP criteria is not available or where such criteria can augment national GPP criteria that is already being used.
- Use 'Minimum Environmental Criteria' where no suitable national, EU GPP criteria or other specific GPP guidance is available.
- Consider the use of an innovative procurement procedure or the innovation partnership to find goods, services, or works that meet your needs.

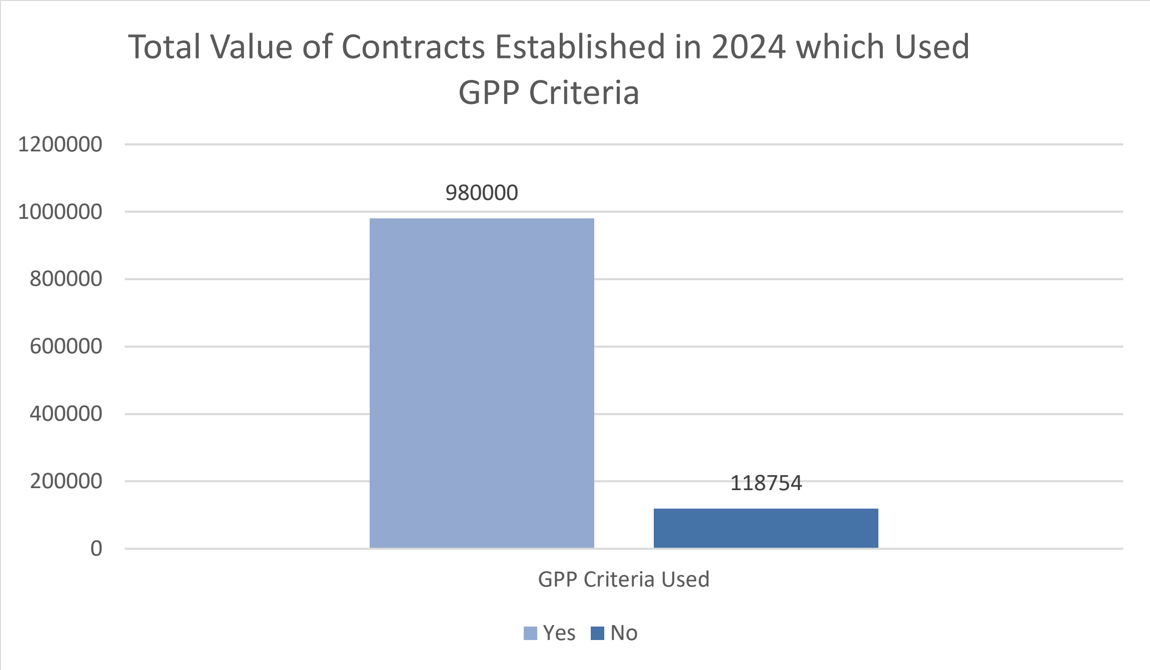
3

## Comply or Explain

- If GPP criteria are not included in procurement where National GPP criteria are available, reasons for not including green criteria must be provided.

### Use of Green Criteria

Just over 87% of contracts established in 2024 with a value over the national threshold had green criteria.




## Public Contracts between Entities within the Public Sector

There are specific circumstances in which contracts between public bodies are exempt from normal procurement rules. These are sometimes referred to as public-public contracts.

*Regulation 12 of the Statutory Instrument 284/2016*[4] sets out various tests to determine whether a public-public contract is excluded from normal procurement rules.

It is important to note that if goods or services do not meet the specific conditions of Regulation 12, then they must be tendered for on the open market in accordance with the statutory obligations as outlined in S.I. No.284/2016.

## Risk Management

Effective risk management is critical to the integrity and resilience of the procurement function within MARA.

4 S.I. No. 284/2016 - European Union (Award of Public Authority Contracts) Regulations 2016

Some key procurement risks include

- **Supplier Risk:** Over-reliance on single suppliers, supplier insolvency, or failure to meet service obligation or legal standards.
- **Compliance Risk:** Non-compliance with public procurement regulations, audit findings, or internal policy breaches.
- **Operational Risk**: Process inefficiencies, capacity limitations, or poor contract management practices.
- **Market and Economic Risk:** Price volatility, supply chain distributions, or reduced supplier competition in the market.
- **Reputational Risk:** Procurement decisions that could lead to public and media scrutiny, perceived conflicts of interest, or ethical concerns.

Risk mitigation in the public sector must align with the principles of transparency, fairness, and value for money. Mitigation strategies may include:

- **Supplier Vetting and Pre-Qualification:** Conducting rigorous due diligence including financial checks, capacity assessments, and suitability checks including the completion of a European Single Procurement Document (ESPD) by suppliers for all procurement above the EU threshold.
- **Diversification and Contingency Sourcing:** Avoiding sole source dependency in critical areas by developing panels or frameworks with multiple parties.
- **Robust Contract Management**: Ensuring that public contracts include service level agreements (SLA's), performance indicators, and termination clauses.
- **Procurement Planning and Forecasting:** Early engagement with the Procurement Manager to avoid rushed procurement and improve value outcomes.
- **Staff Training and Governance Controls:** Ensuring all procurement personnel are trained.
- **Use of eTenders:** Leveraging eTenders for transparency and audit trails.

Staff involved in procurement are required to identify risks in all procurement expenditure and develop mitigation solutions proportionate to the scale and complexity of the contract.

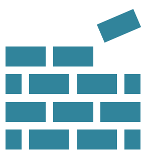
## Procurement Management Priorities 2025 – 2027

### Annual Procurement Planning

Actions to establish and embed an annual procurement plan, linked to MARA's Statement of Strategy, increasing the likelihood of securing an outcome more directly suited to requirements, with greater value for money, enhanced levels of compliance and transparency, and a timely selection process. In planning the procurement of goods and services, consideration should be first given as to whether the procurement can be made through existing OGP central procurement arrangements.

### Enhanced Compliance

Actions to ensure strong compliance and governance within procurement processes. This will include forming robust internal controls, clear procurement procedures, and ensuring that regular monitoring mechanisms are in place.



### Building a Strong Foundation

Actions to ensure that staff have the knowledge and tools to manage procurement effectively and in compliance with regulations. By empowering staff with the necessary expertise, MARA will not only enhance operational efficiency but also build a legacy of good practice.

# Implementation Plan for 2025 – 2027

## 1. Annual Procurement Plan

| No. | Objectives | Action | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1a | Establish and embed an Annual Procurement Plan. | Conduct an analysis of the Register of Contracts to capture and plan for any contract renewals and expiries.<br><br>Work with finance and senior management to discuss any planned procurement projects resulting from the Annual Business Plan. | Q3 Annually |
| 1b | Ensure procurement projects align to the Agency's strategic objectives. | Link procurement projects over the national threshold to strategic priorities outlined in the statement of strategy. | Q3 Annually |

## 2. Governance and Compliance

| No. | Objectives | Action | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2a | Strengthen existing policies and procedures. | Review and update the Procurement Procedural Manual based on lessons learned, audits and evolving regulations. | Ongoing |
| 2b | Maintain an effective procurement structure. | Reassess and adjust, if necessary, the procurement structure of the Agency based on organisational growth and spend trends. | Ongoing |
| 2c | Maintain audit readiness and mitigate risk. | Conduct compliance checks every quarter and integrate findings into processes and training. | Quarterly |
| 2d | Improve internal uptake of OGP contracts. | Develop and issue targeted internal communication to notify staff of current OGP contracts. | Quarterly |
| 2e | Establish system-based controls to support procurement compliance and transparency. | Work with the finance team to ensure that configuration of SAGE includes key procurement functionalities such as purchase order creation, approval workflows, budget tracking and supplier spend reporting. | Q 4 2025 |
| 2f | Optimise supplier interest. | Use eTenders for all advertisements over the national thresholds. | Ongoing |
| 2g | Automate low value procurement. | Pilot the use of Quick Quotes facility on eTenders. | Q2 2027 |

## 3. Building a Strong Foundation

| No. | Objectives | Action | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3a | Build Internal Capacity. | Deliver bespoke procurement training.<br><br>Maintain the procurement toolkit on SharePoint with all necessary templates and procurement information. | Annually |
| 3b | Establish contract management discipline. | Issue guidance on KPI's, variations and extensions to contract managers. | Annually |
| 3c | Improve contract lifecycle control. | Put system in place for early notification of approaching contract expiry dates and extensions. | Q4 2025 |
| 3d | Increase the use of environmental and sustainability clauses in procurement. | Track and promote the use of GPP for all spend over the national threshold. | Ongoing |
| 3e | Increase the effectiveness of the use of Green Public Procurement. | Provide guidance to staff on when and how to apply the OGP's GPP Criteria Search Tool effectively. Identify high impact categories for GPP and ensure green criteria is embedded into the process. | Ongoing |

# Measurement of Results

The Implementation Plan set out here is over a three-year period and will be monitored on an annual basis through a progress report prepared by the Procurement Manager for Senior Management, the Audit and Risk Committee as well as the Management Board, which will include metrics such as:

- Number of procurement activities compliant with internal policies and external regulations.
- Number of audit issues or non-compliance findings.
- Number and monetary value of procurement exceptions 40/02 procedure used and reason for use.
- Percentage of on-time contract renewals/extensions.
- Percentage of procurements using OGP frameworks.
- Percentage of tenders including GPP criteria.

The plan will be fully reviewed in three years and a new plan will be prepared for 2028-2030.

# Appendix I: Useful Links

| MARA's Procedures Manual |
|---|
| Mara's Procurement Procedures Manual (2025) - Link to Procurement Procedures Manual |
| **MARA's Statement of Strategy** |
| MARA's Statement of Strategy (2024) - MARA-Statement-of-Strategy_2024 |
| **Procurement Legislation** |
| Office of Government Procurement published collection of procurement legislation - Link to OGP Website |
| **National Guidance** |
| Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Public Spending Code - Link to the Public Spending Code |
| Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (2016) - Link to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies |
| State Claims Agency (2016) - Link to the General Indemnity Scheme (GIS), SIG 02: Determining Insurance Requirements |
| **Circulars** |
| Office of Government Procurement published collection of circulars relating to goods and services - Link to Circulars - Goods and General Services |
| Office of Government Procurement published collection of circulars relating to Capital Works and Related Services - Link to Circulars - Works and Works Related Services |
| **OGP Guidance** |
| Office of Government Procurement (2019) - Link to the National Public Procurement Policy Framework |
| Office of Government Procurement (2019) - Link to the Public Procurement Guidelines for Goods and Services |
| Office of Government Procurement - Link to Model Letters for Below and Above Threshold |
| Office of Government Procurement - Link to Information Notes |
| **Green Public Procurement** |
| The Environmental Protection Agency - Link to Green Public Procurement section on the EPA Website |
| Office of Public Procurement - Link to the GPP Criteria Search |

## Appendix II: OGP Details

**Website:** https://www.etenders.gov.ie/aboutus_npppu_en-GB

**Email:** support@ogp.gov.ie

**Technical Support:** etenders@eu-supply.com

**Phone:** 021-2439277

**Address:** The Office of Government Procurement, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 3A Mayor Street Upper, Dublin 1.