Vendor Focus Group Summary

El Paso Procurement Assessment

September 30, 2026

Purpose and context. Four (4) vendor focus group meetings were held on September 30 at the El Paso Expo Center in two (2) rooms, covering Goods, Services, Professional Services, and Construction. This summary consolidates the major themes from all four (4) sessions for the weekly status meeting with the City. Detailed Professional Services and Construction summaries provide additional supporting detail.

Overall takeaway. Although the experience varied by procurement type, vendors consistently asked for **better visibility into upcoming opportunities, simpler navigation and registration, more responsive and practical communication, clearer and more consistent solicitation requirements, and greater transparency from evaluation through contract administration.** Participants also emphasized vendor education, local and small-business participation, and follow-through on the feedback provided.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Theme	Summary of feedback across sessions
Opportunity visibility and advance notice	Vendors want a clearer, more centralized way of identifying current and upcoming opportunities. Goods vendors emphasized limited visibility into smaller departmental purchases; services vendors said vague descriptions and scopes spread across many attachments make it hard to judge an opportunity before investing time; construction participants requested a 24-month to five-year forecast; and professional services firms described fragmented posting between CID and Purchasing.
Registration, systems, and navigation	Participants described a steep learning curve across IonWave, Marketplace, City webpages, cooperative purchasing arrangements, and related procurement channels. Goods participants specifically raised confusion about Punch Out, BuyBoard, and other cooperatives, while Services participants questioned how Marketplace and IonWave relate to one another. Posting CID solicitations to a separate website is a burden for professional services firms.
Communication and vendor assistance	Vendors asked for step-by-step guidance, clearly identified contacts, and more reliable responses. Goods vendors preferred direct communication with City departments. Services participants were especially concerned about unanswered questions and requested short, hands-on walkthroughs of City systems. Construction participants generally knew whom to contact but still supported clearer contact information and response expectations for newer firms.
Solicitation consistency and proportional requirements	Professional Services and Construction participants raised concerns about inconsistent templates, qualifications, and solicitation development. Construction firms also discussed late addenda and qualifications that may exceed the scale of the work. Services vendors described repetitive submission of insurance, bonding, and qualification information.
Evaluation, debriefing, and transparency	This was most prominent in the Professional Services and Construction sessions. Vendors requested clearer scoring criteria, better understanding of evaluation committees, timely access to scoring information, defined debriefing timelines, and better alignment between feedback and protest periods. Goods and Services vendors raised related concerns. Goods vendors perceived that departments select vendors without competition, and Services vendors said they are not always told the outcome of a solicitation and that questions to bid contacts often go unanswered.
Hire El Paso and local/small-business participation	Participants across sessions showed confusion or concern regarding awareness, fees, eligibility boundaries, benefits, and how local preference applies. Goods vendors had the lowest awareness of the program in the survey, and Services participants questioned the registration fee and the city-limits-

Theme	Summary of feedback across sessions
	only eligibility boundary, which excludes nearby businesses that perform substantial City work. Construction participants also requested help with statewide HUB certification and more structured opportunities for primes, subcontractors, and smaller firms to connect.
Post-award administration and follow-through	Vendors raised issues after award as well as during solicitation. Services participants described handoff and point-of-contact concerns. Construction firms described lengthy contract execution and notice-to-proceed timelines, plus administrative delay on federally funded work. Across the sessions, participants wanted clearer ownership, status visibility, and follow-through on feedback.

Session Highlights

Session	Key observations
Goods	Discussion focused on difficulty navigating procurement channels, limited visibility into departmental purchasing, and uncertainty about Marketplace, Punch Out, BuyBoard, and cooperative contracts. Vendors requested broader notification access within their companies, a list of cooperatives used by the City, step-by-step guidance, and more direct communication with departments. One participant said it took more than a year to learn the process.
Services	IonWave automatic opportunity notifications were viewed positively, but website navigation, vague scopes, responsiveness, and the contract award process remained concerns. Vendors asked for short practical system training, clearer recertification requirements, a consistent point of contact after award, and less repetitive documentation. Several participants also reported receiving very late notice of the focus group itself.
Professional Services	Key concerns included fragmented opportunity posting, solicitation quality, evaluator consistency, scoring transparency, delayed debriefings, restrictive qualification and reference requirements, local business participation, and perceived gaps in follow-through. Participants emphasized the importance of reporting back on actions taken.
Construction	Contractors generally described IonWave and formal bid instructions as workable once the process is understood. Concerns centered on future project visibility, construction-specific website navigation, template and qualification consistency, addendum timing, evaluation and debriefing transparency, contract execution timelines, federally funded change orders, and clearer Hire El Paso guidance. Participants also supported hands-on training and prime/subcontractor networking.