

Circular Minds

Background

The EU Interreg Circular Mindset for Change (Circular Minds) project aims at improving the implementation of regional development policies in the field of governance of organisations for circular economy, in particular by scaling up positive impact of public circular economy practices in organisations. Public procurement, accounting for 14% of EU GDP, offers significant potential in this regard. However, many circular pilot projects struggle to scale up and therefore fail to achieve lasting impact. Circular Minds aims to bridge this gap by analyzing where organizations face challenges in terms of mindset, focusing on public institutions to:

- Stimulate new circular initiatives
- Improve policy through practical tools
- Shift ways of thinking by sharing insights
- Scale up successful approaches

Project Focus

A shift in circular mindset is not only required among procurement professionals, but also among other stakeholders involved throughout the procurement cycle (Figure 1). A mindset shift is also necessary within supply chains to realize circular ambitions. Procurement is more than just the tendering or contracting phase; it also involves the organizational structure surrounding it, ensuring that products or services are used in a circular way. As a result, ownership does not lie solely with the procurement function, but is shared across multiple departments within the organization.

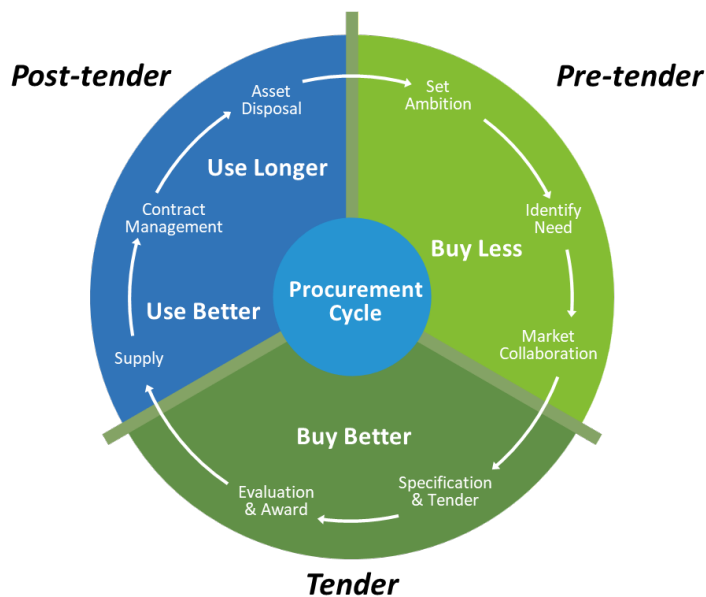


Figure 1. Procurement cycle (Source: [CFIT](#))

Project Definition

Mindset

Based on existing definitions, changing a mindset requires a fundamental shift in how organizations and individuals perceive, think about, and approach their vision, mission, objectives, and roles. This involves altering attitudes and perspectives, which in turn influence behavior, decision-making, and the overall approach to achieving goals.

Behavioral Change

Behavioral change refers to the process by which organizations and individuals adjust their actions, approaches, and procedures in response to internal or external stimuli. This involves deliberate efforts to adopt new behaviors, eliminate undesirable behaviors, or modify existing behaviors in order to achieve specific goals or desired outcomes.

Assessment Framework

To effectively address scaling challenges, an assessment framework is first needed to map the organization's current situation. This framework helps build an understanding of the organization's readiness for change in scaling up circular practices across the entire procurement cycle (see Figure 1), from organizational, regulatory, and cultural perspectives, and provides a foundation for developing an action plan for change..

The Mindset Indicators Assessment Framework consists of a set of indicators that describe the mindset of a unit (organization/department/project), based on the COM-B model. The COM-B model states that behavior is influenced by three essential factors: **Motivation, Capability, and Opportunity**, which together determine whether someone is able to perform a certain behavior.

Motivation, capability, and opportunity are interdependent: behavior occurs when individuals are sufficiently motivated, have the necessary capabilities, and are provided with the opportunity to act.

In addition, there are five levels of ambition and progress:

1. Basic
2. Secured
3. Applied
4. Expanded
5. Leadership

The assessment framework makes it possible to determine where the organization (or part of it) currently stands and where it aims to go within a selected timeframe. It thus provides insight into potential areas for improvement.

Mindset Indicators

The broad definitions of mindset and behavioral change help clarify indicators that can be used to assess shifts in mindset and levels of progress. For example:

1. **Deliberate efforts to adopt new behaviors** – such as evidence of new policies, increased awareness, and circular procurement actions across the entire procurement cycle.
2. **Eliminating undesirable behaviors** – such as barriers within the organizational structure, poor communication between procurement stakeholders, adherence to “business as usual,” or avoidance of new ideas.
3. **Adapting existing behaviors** – such as modifying procurement processes to ensure circularity is embedded proportionally in all procurement decisions, and improving the monitoring and reporting of procurement results and impacts.