

‘WAGGING THE DOG’ Supply chain management and service delivery

Abstract

Supply chain management (SCM) regulations for public sector procurement of goods and services have greatly improved the transparency of procurement procedures, increased the opportunities for alternative suppliers and reduced the potential for corrupt procurement practices. There is evidence, however, that these regulations are often not implemented to best effect. In particular, it would seem that the SCM process, if allowed to be, is often the primary cause of extended delays in the appointment of contractors, leading to delays in the delivery of services. The SCM “tail” would appear on those occasions to be “wagging the dog”, namely service delivery. The paper does not suggest the watering down of SCM regulations. On the contrary, it argues that municipalities’ top management should set clear time frames for each part of the service delivery process, the SCM process included, and hold the respective officials accountable should they take longer without good reason. Because of the need to reduce service delivery delays, but also in order to improve the functionality of infrastructure services, a very good argument can be made for the procurement of capital works and professional services, which are generally very situation- and site-specific (and could also be community-specific), to be treated differently from the procurement of other types of goods and services.