



Edward J. Bloustein School  
of Planning and Public Policy

**An Evaluation of the  
“Introduction to Procurement” Course  
Offered by the National Transit Institute**

**Final Report**

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**December 2014**

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## **ABSTRACT**

An evaluation was conducted of the National Transit Institute's course "Orientation to Transit Procurement." This course is designed to provide Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grantees an overview of regulations and best-practices related to the procurement process. The evaluation was composed of two primary components. First, an email survey of individuals who have taken the course over the past 5 years was conducted. The objective was to understand how agency staff have made changes in procurement practices in response to knowledge learned from the course. In addition, respondents were given the opportunity to answer a variety of open-ended questions on various features of the course and suggestions for improvements. A small group of respondents were contacted for follow up telephone interviews in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of any negative and positive issues associated with the course, as well as additional insights into changes in procurement practices. Finally, this initial course evaluation serves as a template for future evaluations and recommendations are made for how to proceed with these.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The National Transit Institute (NTI) was established at Rutgers University in 1991 and has been delivering workforce training courses to the transit industry for over 20 years. These courses are generally highly regarded by the transit industry and those who take them and serve a real need for training across a wide variety of subject areas. NTI conducts evaluations of each course offered with an in-class survey at the end of the course. These surveys measure the immediate reaction of participants to the course and are essentially a measure of ‘customer satisfaction’ (Kirkpatrick, 1998). However, these do not measure longer-term changes and outcomes as a result of participants taking the course. That is the primary objective of this evaluation.

Procurement procedures required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are one of the critical elements of federal oversight of the many transit agencies throughout the country. The aim of these is to maintain adequate competition among bidders and to provide a framework for the best selection of goods and services acquired by transit agencies. FTA performs triennial reviews of transit agency performance, and this includes an analysis of procurement procedures and compliance with regulatory requirements (USDOT, 2014). These frequently find that some transit agencies are having difficulties complying with procurement rules, thus, the procurement course offered by NTI is seen as critical to the mission of FTA, in their oversight of transit agencies.

Our evaluation of the procurement course therefore is focused on how transit agency staff achieve any needed change at their agencies. While most transit agencies comply with procurement regulations they do need to make sure the new staff are fully trained, and existing staff need occasional retraining as regulations change. In addition, we evaluate knowledge retention of those taking the course. While course materials are taken home with participants and can serve as a reference manual, we evaluate how effective the course is at conveying key concepts. We also evaluate overall satisfaction with the course from the view of participants. Satisfied customers will want to take additional courses and this will help transit agencies maintain an informed workforce. Participant suggestions for improving the course or identification of any deficiencies are also examined.

The methods used are discussed in the next section, followed by our findings. As this is the first comprehensive evaluation of an NTI course, we summarize how the methods developed can also serve as a template for future course evaluations.

## **METHODOLOGY**

We conducted an online survey and follow-up interviews with participants in the NTI “Orientation to Transit Procurement” course. We included only participants who attended the NTI course between December 2011 and June 2014 and NTI provided contact details for all participants during this time period which covered 25 sessions of the course. In total, we received contact information for 627 individuals including when they took the course, their contact information (email and telephone), and employer name (agency).

In consultation with NTI staff we developed a questionnaire that was implemented as an on-line survey instrument. We also consulted another survey developed for procurement training

(not specific to transit) (Canada School of Public Service, 2014). The areas in which questions were developed included the following:

- Respondents' current and past employment experience in the transit industry and experience conducting procurement
- Employer's procurement staffing
- Respondents' satisfaction with the course and instructors
- Changes made at their agency or in their job as a result of the course
- Knowledge questions on procurement regulations
- Selected background information about the respondent

In addition, we included an open ended question at the end of the survey so that respondents could provide additional comments about the course. Various questions throughout the survey also provided an opportunity for open-ended responses. The full survey instrument is available as Appendix A.

Our initial contact with potential respondents consisted of a mailed letter from the Director of NTI describing the survey and the purpose of the evaluation. Approximately one week later, we emailed invitations to participate in the survey. We subsequently emailed reminders after one, three and four weeks (see full schedule below, the text of each contact letter or email is in Appendix B).

- Hard Copy Endorsement Letter from NTI Director (July 8, 2014)
- Pre-Invitation Email (July 16, 2014)
- Invitation Email (July 22, 2014)
- One Week Reminder Email (July 30, 2014)
- Three Week Reminder Email (August 13, 2014)
- Final Reminder Email (August 21, 2014)
- Survey closed (August 25, 2010).

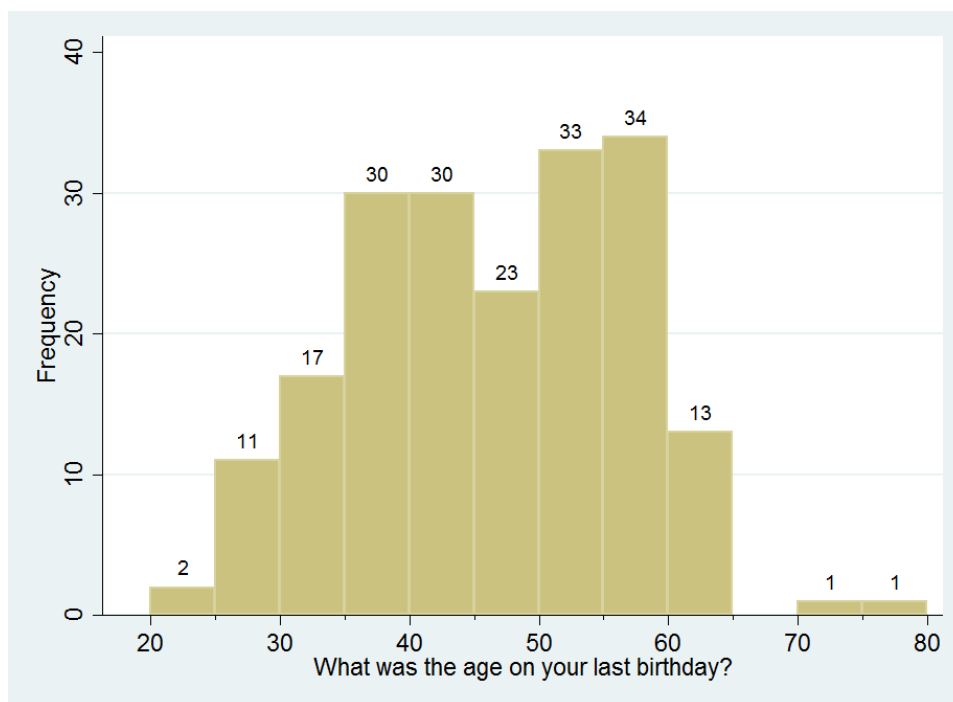
The sample included every ostensible participant of the "Orientation to Transit Procurement" course over a five-year window, i.e., from December 2011 through June 2014. The original sample file, sourced from NTI records, presented 627 participants, from which a survey sample frame of 604 was distilled. Twenty-three purported sample members were determined ineligible to participate in the evaluation due either to their failure to follow through on their registration and attend the course, or to the fact that they are no longer at a transit agency. Verification was conducted through survey eligibility screening, as well as direct email exchanges with putative respondents.

The survey yielded 268 "responses" (i.e., of the sample frame of 604, there were 268 individuals who, in some way, were observed to have interacted with the online survey). Of those, 230 constituted "completed interviews," with an additional 38 considered "partial responses." In addition, there were 36 eligible participants who actively refused to participate in the evaluation, who are not counted in the "responses" enumeration. Thus, under the AAPOR4 formulae, the response rate for the survey is 46.0%, and the cooperation rate is 88.2%. In plain terms, almost half of every person who completed the course in the past five years responded to the survey, and of those, nearly 90% completed the survey.



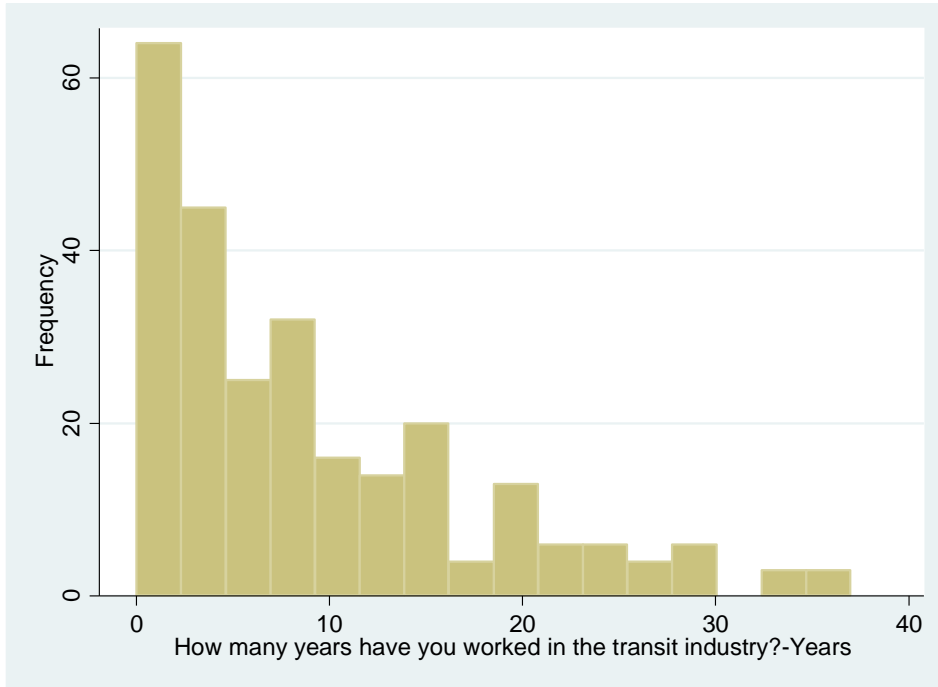
The response rate was higher among participants who took the course more recently. About 52 percent of respondents who took the course in 2014 and 54 percent of those who took the course in 2013 responded to the survey compared with only 33 percent of respondents who took the course in 2011 or 2012. This higher response rate could be caused by more accurate contact information among the more recent participants or a greater interest in responding among more recent course attendees. For future evaluations, this would suggest conducting post-course surveys within 18 months to maximize response rates.

Some 56 percent of respondents were female. The median age for respondents was 46 though there was a large variation in ages (see Figure 1). About 72 percent of the respondents identified as white, 18 percent as black, 10 percent as Asian and 9 percent Hispanic. 74 percent of respondents had a college or graduate degree, 25 percent had some education and only one percent had only a high school degree or GED. As we do not have information on the demographics of the procurement workforce we cannot comment on whether this is representative.

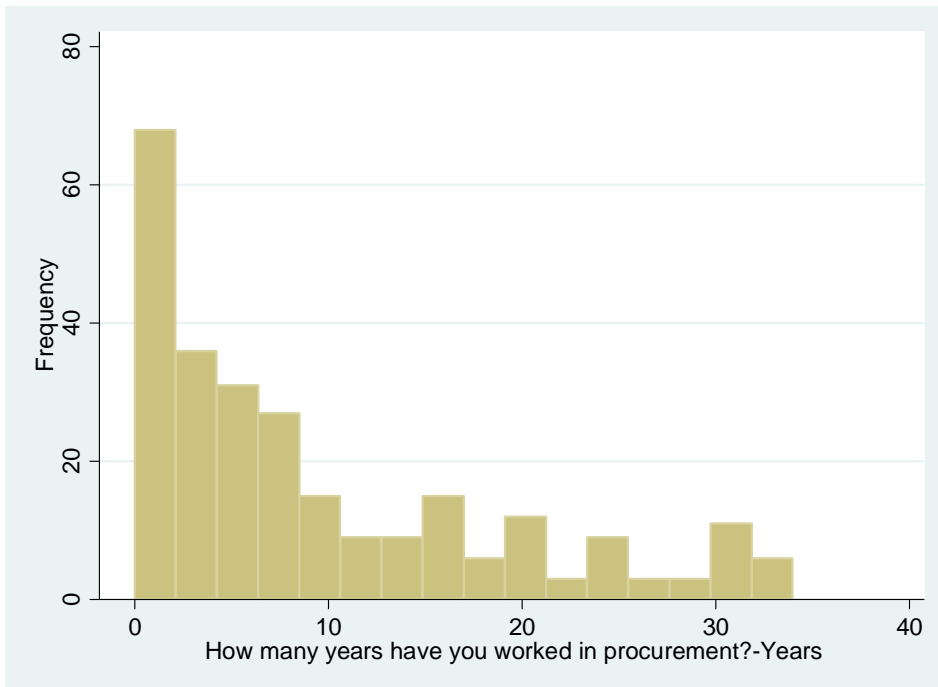


**Figure 1 Age of respondents**

Respondents had a wide range of experience working in the transit industry and in procurement at the time of the survey. Some participants were very new to the industry, and for them the course provides an introduction, while others have many years of experience working in transit and procurement. One participant reported having 37 years of experience working in the transit industry and another individual had 34 years of experience working in procurement. Figures 2 and 3 show the variation among participants experience working on transit and procurement.



**Figure 2 Years working in the transit industry**



**Figure 3 Years working in procurement**

Following the survey, we conducted a series of telephone interviews with selected survey respondents to gather more in-depth information about the course and how they have used the knowledge they gained during the course to make changes at their agency. We reached out to

respondents who indicated on the survey that they would be willing to talk with us further about the NTI course. In September and October of 2014, we conducted ten telephone interviews with participants. The interviews lasted between 15 and 45 minutes.

We used an interview protocol as a guide for the conversations but followed the participants lead based on what they thought was most important and asked follow-up questions when appropriate. The interview protocol (see Appendix C) included questions on the participant's motivations for taking the course, the changes they made following the course, what aspects of the course they found most helpful, changes they would like to make to the course, feedback on instructors, and feedback on the "knowledge questions" we included in the survey.

Following each interview, the interviewer drafted a brief summary of the conversation and emailed this to the interviewee. The purpose of this was to confirm that the conversation accurately reflected the participant's views and to provide an opportunity for the respondent to include additional information.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Satisfaction with the course**

Overall, survey respondents were very satisfied and found the course very useful. There was universal praise for NTI and, generally, for the instructors. Respondents indicated their satisfaction in both their responses to open ended questions and to multiple choice questions about their learning and the instructors.

When we asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement "I learned a great deal in the course," 86 percent of respondents indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed. Only 5 of the 257 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they learned a great deal in the course.

**Table 1 "I learned a great deal in the course"**

	Freq.	Percent
Strongly Agree	98	38.13
Agree	123	47.86
Neither Agree nor Disagree	31	12.06
Disagree	4	1.56
Strongly Disagree	1	0.39

Similarly, when asked how they would rate the overall quality of the course, 94 percent of respondents to the survey reported good or very good. Only 6 percent (15 respondents) felt that the quality of the course was fair or poor.

**Table 2 “How would you rate the overall quality of the ‘Orientation to Transit Procurement’ course?”**

	Freq.	Percent
Very Good	126	49.03
Good	116	45.14
Fair	14	5.45
Poor	1	0.39

In the interviews, participants told us how they really enjoyed the discussions with other practitioners, and hearing the experiences of the instructors. One participant noted that the particular benefit of the course is that it is specific to transit. Other procurement trainings, she noted, were too broad and might apply only to “public purchasing,” but the NTI courses are specific to FTA requirements. Others praised the classroom dynamic and discussions where she could hear from other participants and instructors about their experiences doing real world procurement. For example, one participant relayed how she appreciated the classroom discussions about “how the instructors dealt with similar issues [to the students in the class] or how they would deal with them.”

Responding to the open ended questions, respondents were very enthusiastic: “It was a very effective training course. Thank you for hiring those excellent instructors!!!” Others wrote that “The instructors were engaging and excellent. This course covered a lot of information and provided a very useable resource with guidance.” Another respondent said,

*“The instructors were fantastic and were able to give pertinent situational examples from their own professional experience. The course materials were less valuable than the instructors' commentary.”*

An overwhelming majority of the survey respondents also reported that the course materials were useful. As shown in Table 3, 91 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the “course materials are useful.” Only 5 respondents (2.2 percent), disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Table 3 “How strongly would you agree or disagree that the course materials are useful?”**

	Freq.	Percent
Strongly Agree	100	43.67
Agree	109	47.6
Neither Agree nor Disagree	15	6.55
Disagree	3	1.31
Strongly Disagree	2	0.87

An even higher share of respondents, 88 percent, rated the “teaching effectiveness of the instructor” as very good or good. Only 6 of 256 responding gave negative feedback about the instructors (Table 4).

**Table 4 “How would you rate the teaching effectiveness of the instructor?”**

	Freq.	Percent
Very Good	122	47.66
Good	103	40.23
Fair	25	9.77
Poor	4	1.56
Very Poor	2	0.78

In the interviews and opened ended responses to the survey, respondents praised the course instructors but also offered several suggestions for improving the instruction of the course. Interviewees noted that the instructors were very knowledgeable and helpful. Participants really appreciated their ability to relate their real life experiences to procurement processes. The following responses typify this praise:

*I thought the course and the instructors were very good. The instructors make a difference especially using their transit experience or best practices noted in other transits.*

*I particularly enjoyed the instructors of this course. They had real life experience that they were able to relate to most of the situations in our books and they took the time to explain when we had questions. They really kept the class moving along.*

Further, interviewees appreciated the different background and experiences of the instructors, and that they were complementary. Their ability to integrate their experiences into the classroom discussions was viewed as very positive. They appreciated the many tips and tricks which created a “good base of knowledge to get started in procurement.” A few interviewees noted that following the course, they have contacted the instructors with specific questions that have come up in their work. They noted that the instructors have been very responsive and helpful even over a year after they took the class.

Despite this praise for the instructors, a sizable minority offered substantive criticisms. Some said they liked one instructor but not the other. Some felt that the instructors created an uncomfortable learning environment for some students. Responding to an open ended question where we asked for further comments about the course, not about the instructors specifically, some survey respondents reported that they were troubled by rude, inappropriate and belittling demeanor towards some students. These comments are included below.

*The instructors acted more like a bickering couple rather than instructors and often times contradicted each other. At certain points during the training, I felt as though they belittled attendees and even made harsh comments about the persons*

*working in FTA as having "probably as little experience in procurement as you all do"*

*The instructors were, I suspect, very knowledgeable on the topic but spent their time and energy trying to "one-up" each other and spent a significant amount of time making negative comments about each other which was very uncomfortable and inappropriate. The comments were mean-spirited, ageist and made for a very tense atmosphere.*

*[Instructor's name omitted] was cocky, not approachable, not receptive of comments/thoughts/ideas and otherwise very unpleasant.*

*The [gender omitted] was extremely rude to one of the participants (a young woman working for the MBTA at the time). I thought [the] comments, and attitude, were way out of line (comments after she asked a question about micro purchases). I would NOT attend another course [with the same] instructor. The other instructor was very good.*

One interviewee felt that the classroom instruction dragged on too long. The same interviewee suggested that the teaching style be switched from a lecture to a discussion. In her class, the instructors stood at the front of the classroom and, more or less, read from the projected slides. Further, the more junior or novice classmates monopolized the questions and teachers' time and slowed down the class. Together, "the course ended up taking four days," adding, "Let's face it, procurement is a dry subject, you don't want to drag this stuff out." This interviewee suggested emphasizing participatory discussion among the participants. Finally, the interviewee felt that the instructors' experiences were primarily in bus purchasing. As a result, they had a limited perspective on other types of purchasing.

Another criticism of the instruction was that the instructors seemed to have a bias against smaller agencies since their experiences were largely from larger agencies. As one of the commenters put it, "since both instructors were from very large properties they were not able to relate to some of the issues that small urban transits must deal with." An interviewee suggested that NTI may want to consider including instructors from smaller agencies, in addition to those from larger agencies. This interviewee mentioned that instructors' suggestions for how to negotiate with vendors were not always useful for representatives from smaller agencies in the class. For example, the instructors suggested that "You can always find competition if you try hard enough" but that may not be true in smaller geographically isolated areas, especially with service contracts where you need it in a certain time. As the interviewee noted, there may be two possible vendors but if one chooses not to bid, "I can't force them."

Another interviewee suggested that the agency sponsoring the procurement course could be more involved in the training. The interviewee thought that course participants might enjoy learning more about how the sponsoring agency operates. She suggested devoting a half-day tour of their operations or that agency staff come to the class to talk about various projects.

In any course evaluation, some students will have negative views of the material and the course instructors. Some of these criticisms reflect this; most participants were very satisfied

with both the course material and the instructor and they have an opportunity to provide feedback on the instructors at the end of the course. NTI already evaluates satisfaction with the instructors and makes adjustments as needed, including occasionally finding new instructors if there are persistent problems.

One issue is that some attendees feel the course material is not what they expected. That is, it is either geared towards beginners or for large agencies. The course is an introductory course and NTI offers different courses in procurement, including one aimed at smaller agencies. The difficulty is that these are often hard to fill and occur less frequently and may not be offered in a convenient location for some agencies.

### **Applicability of course skills and knowledge**

One of our objectives in this evaluation was to determine if and how transit professionals who take the course are able to use the skills they learned and whether they make any needed changes in their own agency's procurement procedures following the course. Overwhelmingly, respondents used the skills and knowledge they learned in the course when they returned to their agency. Ninety percent of respondents (210) indicated affirmatively and only 10 percent (24 respondents) said they did not use the skills and knowledge from the course when they returned. Further, 76 percent of participants have very or somewhat frequently been able to apply the knowledge and or skills they learned in the course to their work (Table 5).

**Table 5 “How frequently have you been able to apply your newly learned skills/knowledge”**

	Freq	Percent
Very frequently	73	35.61
Somewhat frequently	83	40.49
Sometimes	46	22.44
Almost never	3	1.46

Among those who do not use their skills, the primary reason was that they changed position or felt the knowledge did not apply to their job. Only a handful of respondents (3) did not learn new skills or knowledge.

Those who did apply their new knowledge told us in some detail about this. Some offered specific examples. For example, one person replied that they gained a “better understanding of the Buy America process. I had to apply the principle to a potential document production purchase.” Another provided a more detailed example:

*“I served on the committee that reviewed and recommended a firm to provide bus service for a 3-5 year service contract. At the first meeting, the RFP had already been released. I asked if an independent cost analysis had been performed and it had not. The RFP was cancelled and reissued after an ICE was performed. Additionally, much of the information was related to best practices and federal*

*standards and requirements. I have been able to draw on this knowledge for non-FTA services we procure.”*

Others described how it improved their supervision of other staff; several developed or amended their agency policies and procedures; and others improved their understanding of rules and regulations. One respondent addressed something that their agency had been doing wrongly, noting:

*“First, I learned what we have been doing WRONG, then went back to work and attempted to fix it. Created a few forms for users to utilize in our procurement process, gained some valuable connections to other procurement folks in other agencies and a basic knowledge of the whole process. I now know enough to speak and explain how the process works to other employees in my agency that don't understand it, AND don't understand why THEY need to write a good scope, and WHY the process takes as long as it does. I went back to work armed with knowledge!”*

The course materials provided are also useful to attendees. Most interviewees refer to the course materials on a regular basis. One interviewee described using the course materials on a daily basis and keeping them on his shelf at arm’s length. Another said that she “refers back to the binder (course material) all the time.” Interviewees described the materials as a great resource and noted that the multiple examples at the end of each section are particular helpful.

However, interviewees were very frustrated that they often had difficulty locating specific topics in the course materials because it lacks an index and is not searchable. One described the course material as having “great potential” but was exasperated by the fact that she could not find what she needed in the books. The interviewee noted that “I know it is in there but I don’t know where to find it.” These interviewees suggested that NTI add a detailed index to the course materials so they can find specific topics or that NTI provide a digital version of the course materials so they could easily search within it.

### **Changes in procurement procedures**

We also asked respondents whether, as a result of the course, whether any changes to procurement procedures and practices had been made at their agency or firm. Just under half of the respondents, 110 out of 229 who responded to this question, indicated that they made changes. Among those who made changes, the four most common changes were to procurement procedures (80 respondents), use of standardized forms (76 respondents), modifications to existing procurement manuals (58 respondents) and development of procedures to determine the proper contract type (44 respondents). The full list of changes are summarized in Table 6.



**Table 6 “As a result of the procurement course did you make any of the following changes at your transit agency?”**

Changed procurement procedures	80
Standardized procurement forms to be used on future procurements	76
Modified an existing procurement manual	58
Developed procedures to determine proper contract types	44
Modified written procedures for selection of vendors	39
Modified written procedures to protest the selection of a vendor	22
Implemented an annual planning review of procurement practices	20
Increased procurement resources (e.g. increased staff or office equipment)	18
Reorganized structure of procurement teams	17
Produced a procurement manual	15
Produced written procedures for selection of vendors	14
Produced written procedures to protest the selection of a vendor	11
Other (please specify)	9

According to respondents who reported making no changes, the primarily reason was that none were needed (see Table 7). Most who selected “Other” also indicated that they did not need to make changes since existing practices were already in place and adequate. One reason why respondents may have reported that changes were not needed is that these respondents could be working closely at their agency with other procurement officers who already took the course or who have been working in procurement for many years.

Interviewees described a wide variety of changes that they made to their procurement processes following the course. The changes that interviewees made were largely idiosyncratic to the needs and practices at each agency but almost all the interviewees outlined multiple changes. These changes included updating the protest procedures to ensure that they were up to date, clear and that they were included in the bid documents, changing how their agency obtains independent cost estimates, modifying the language of “evaluating options at the time of a contract award” and adding a section about options to the cost evaluation portion of their memo on the topic. Finally, one interviewee created a library of resource materials based on materials she already gathered and materials from the class. For example, this includes sample RFPs.

One interview described how she incorporated aspects of the course into an annual internal procurement training program she runs at her agency. She described incorporating the “common pitfalls” described in the class.

Interviewees described correcting practices that were not in compliance with FTA requirements. For example, one interviewee described updating the their agency deals with expired contracts. Now, when a contract is expired it is considered “dead, done, closed” and cannot be continued. Another corrected a time limit which prevented bidders from withdrawing except within two days of the bid close date. However, knowledge gained in the class conflicted with this and this time limit stipulation for bids was removed.

Not all the interviewees made changes. One interviewee made very few changes after the course. This was because the interviewee's boss had previously taken the course and already implemented many changes due to the course. As a result, many of the standard practices had already been put in place and few changes to the procurement processes were made following the interviewees' return to work.

**Table 7 “Why were no changes implemented at your agency or firm?”**

	Freq.	Percent
No changes needed	60	53.57
It wasn't practical	3	2.68
Actively discouraged	2	1.79
Time constraints	6	5.36
Tried to implement	5	4.46
Other	36	32.14

Overall, the fact that those taking the course implemented changes at their agencies suggests that the training is having the desired effect. The changes that occurred either brought the agency into better (or full) compliance with FTA regulations or improved the efficiency of their procurement process. And this success is multiplied by the fact that other employees who received training may have already put necessary changes into place.

### **Retention of course material**

An important element of evaluating any training program is to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning. To this end, we included various questions aimed at measuring knowledge retention. We developed four multiple choice questions focused on specific topics that were covered during the course. We expected that those working in this area should not have difficulty answering these questions. We also assumed that they would have resources at hand, such as the course manual, to look up any answers to questions that they may have more difficulty with.

Surprisingly, respondents had significant difficulty correctly answering the knowledge questions. Only 6 (2.5 percent) out of 236 respondents answered all four questions correctly. And only 14 percent (33 respondents) answered three of the questions correctly (Table 8).

**Table 8 Percent of knowledge questions answered correctly**

	Freq.	Percent
0%	45	19.07
25%	79	33.47
50%	73	30.93
75%	33	13.98
100%	6	2.54

The actual questions asked are shown in Table 9, along with the percent answering each question. The majority answered questions 2 and 3 correctly, but we expected a far larger percentage to get all the questions correct. These questions may have been too challenging for respondents to answer when they did not expect them. We did not suggest that they consult their resources when answering, and this is something that should probably be done in the future.

### Table 9 Knowledge questions

*Correct answer is in bold, percent selecting each is in parentheses*

1. Consider a procurement action involving federal funds. When would a cost analysis not be required in connection with the action?

- A. **When the procurement method being used is an invitation for bids rather than a request for proposals and there is adequate competition. (20.4%)**
- B. When the procurement action is sole source (5.1%)
- C. When the purchase is a micro purchase and you have multiple sources. (30.6%)
- D. The procurement action merely modifies a preexisting contract (3.2%)
- E. A cost analysis must be included in connection with each of the above actions. (40.7%)

2. Suppose you are conducting procurement for new equipment using federal funds. When would cost not generally be a determining factor in your decision making?

- A. When the dollar amount of a purchase is below both state and federal thresholds for micropurchases (22.7%)
- B. When the procurement method is an invitation for bids (6.5%)
- C. **When the procurement method is a request for proposals (55.6%)**
- D. When a price analysis is conducted rather than a cost analysis (13.9%)
- E. Cost is not a determining factor for any procurement action (1.4%)

3. Transit agencies that purchase equipment and services using grants from the Federal Transit Administration must operate in accordance with certain rules. Which of the below is one such rule?

- A. Personnel performing procurement for equipment or services must not be involved in the requisition process (4.2%)
- B. **An independent cost estimate is required in connection with every procurement (62.2%)**
- C. Every procurement action, regardless of dollar amounts involved, must have a system for project management oversight (10.3%)
- D. A price analysis is required in connection with every procurement (17.8%)
- E. All procurements must use sealed competitive bids to ensure fairness (5.6%)

4. Imagine that you are using FTA funds to procure several new buses. Which of the below clauses would FTA require you to include in your proposal document and contract?

- A. Laborer and mechanics must receive prevailing wages, in accordance with the Davis-Bacon Act (6.4%)
- B. **Any materials transported by ocean-going vessels must be shipped aboard a U.S.-based carrier (23.3%)**
- C. The proposer must submit a DBE goal to you for your approval (5.9%)
- D. Both (B) and (C), above (29.5%)
- E. All of the above (37.9%)

When we asked interviewees why they thought survey respondents might have had difficulty answering the questions, they offered a variety of explanations. One interviewee suggested that perhaps participants to the online questionnaire had difficulty answering the knowledge questions because some of them did not pay attention in class and because the subject matter can be “boring as hell.” Others suggested that some of the answers were open to interpretation and not as clear cut as they seemed on a test.

We also examined whether certain experiential factors might have influenced respondents’ ability to answer these questions. We tested whether respondents who took the course in earlier years might do worse than respondents who took the course more recently. We also tested whether the number of years the respondents worked in procurement was related to their ability to answer these questions. Neither the year they took the course or their experience had any effect on their likelihood of answering these knowledge questions correctly.

### **Suggested course improvements**

Interviewees suggested several topics which could be included in future courses. Participants all agreed that the current NTI course provided insufficient training for dealing with IT procurement issues. Interviewees talked about how IT procurement issues are particularly tricky and including more on this topic would be helpful. An interviewee remarked that software licensing is the number one issue she faces and yet the both the FTA and the course instructors seem to be out of touch with the issues that procurement officers face dealing with software vendors. Another commented that issues are particularly important because of the high costs of contracts and the challenge of negotiating with software vendors who have far greater knowledge about the area than many procurement officers. In the absence of training, interviewees described how they have had to “learn as we go along.” Though as one added, “if you do not deal with it every day, IT issues are difficult.”

Interviewees also suggested several other topics that NTI may want to consider including in future courses. Multiple interviewees suggested that future courses should consider including a more substantive discussion of price and cost analysis since many procurement officers are confused about this topic. Others suggested addressing the challenging issue of “brand name specification,” particularly with a real world example for this topic. Additionally, one interviewee had come up against challenges dealing with the “buy American” requirements for small parts, like an oil filter, which are often “just not made in America anymore.”

### **Enabling professional networks**

Another finding from the interviews is that almost all of the interviewees developed an informal professional network of transit procurement professions as a result of taking the course. Interviewees used the contact information provided by NTI for the course attendees to ask their peers about how they dealt with new or challenging issues. Typically, interviewees described this informal networking as occurring every month or so, someone from the course will correspond about specific procurement issues they are facing.

One interviewee described how following the course, she emailed with other students to swap some materials and checklists based on what others were doing. This networking aspect

was something that she found particularly helpful when dealing with new issues in her work to see how others area dealing with the same issues or concerns. In one example, she described an “in-house checklist of their files” so that when reviewers come they can look at their files “in order of how we have it, by the tabs.” The interviewee passed that around to others in the course.

While these networks have developed spontaneously, NTI may want to provide resources to help support and sustain these networks.

## **FUTURE COURSE EVALUATIONS**

The processes and methods developed for this evaluation were largely successful and can be easily replicated for the evaluation of other courses. These should occur within 18 months of course completion to maximize response rates from course attendees.

In addition to evaluating different courses, NTI may want to consider implementing a formal rolling evaluation of the existing “Orientation to Transit Procurement” course; our recommendation would be that this occur about one year after the course is attended, providing sufficient time for attendees to apply the knowledge they take home but soon enough that they can provide useful feedback. While our interviews provided useful information, they are less necessary for a rolling evaluation; additional questions can be added to address some of the issues we learned in our interviews.

There may be limited value in conducting interviews in future course evaluations. Most respondents provided valuable written responses to our open ended questions, and much of this information was similar to what we learned in the interviews. The need for interviews may vary depending on the course being evaluated, but it most likely is not needed in most evaluations.

The knowledge questions were particularly challenging for respondents to answer. The complexity of procurement regulations may have been one reason for this. At a minimum we need to suggest to respondents that they look up the answers in the course materials and emphasize that this is not a “closed-book exam.” This would have the added benefit of better replicating their real-life work situation and the ease or difficulty of accessing the correct information. At this point we would recommend keeping the knowledge questions in future evaluations but revising the wording and perhaps pre-testing the questions with a small sample, if possible.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Transit professionals who take NTI’s “Orientation to Transit Procurement” course are overwhelmingly satisfied with the course. The course provides a useful introduction to the work they do and they use the skills they learned when they return to their offices. For transit agencies, there is a real tangible benefit when employees attend the NTI procurement courses. Almost half of the survey respondents reported that after the course, they made changes to the procurement processes. We heard from interviewees who corrected processes that were in violation of FTA guidelines and others who streamlined their processes. Among those who did not make changes,

it appears that this is often because sufficient processes are already in place at their transit agencies. FTA benefits from better compliance with procurement regulations.

Through this evaluation, we identified several areas where NTI should consider making changes to the course.

1. Include more instruction on the procurement of IT

The lack of instruction on issues of IT procurement was a noticeable omission. This is an issue that interviewees said they face frequently and yet these issues were not addressed in the course. We recognize that FTA regulations are not ideally suited for IT procurement and this may be an issue that FTA needs to clarify.

2. Include an index in the course material

Survey respondents and interviewees expressed frustration with the course materials. While they kept this material at their desk, they struggled to find what they were looking for because the materials lack an index. Electronic access would also be desirable as then the materials can be easily searched with keywords. NTI policy is not to distribute materials electronically as then many agencies may opt not to send staff to courses. However, there are ways to limit electronic access and any future restructuring of NTI's website should include password restricted access to materials for course attendees.

3. Improve instruction environment

The instructors' attitude and demeanor in the classroom upset a vocal minority. These respondents, unprompted, specifically referred to one of the instructors as "belittling" and "rude." While we recognize that there will always be attendees who may not like the style or demeanor of instructors, NTI should work with them to minimize these issues.

4. Teach to both large and small transit agencies

Some respondents to the survey and interviews suggested that the instructors' experience working for large transit agencies made it difficult for them to understand the challenges that smaller agencies face.

Although our survey achieved a high response rate, we recommend that NTI conduct surveys earlier, perhaps within 18 months following the respondents' completion of the course. A number of interviewees and respondents told us that they had trouble recalling the specifics of the course and thus it was difficult for them to evaluate the course. As one noted in their response to the survey when we asked for general comments, "it's pretty tough to remember the specifics of a course taken two years ago, especially when I've taken two very similar courses since then."

## **APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **Intro    NTI Course Evaluation**

The Bloustein Center for Survey Research is evaluating the effectiveness of the National Transit Institute's (NTI) workforce training course titled "Orientation to Transit Procurement." The goal of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of that course, and make recommendations to NTI for improvement. To that end, this project is studying the opinions and experience of individuals who have taken this course over the past 5 years.

This questionnaire will only take about 15 minutes to complete. However, if you are unable to complete it in one sitting, you may return later. Answering any or all of these questions is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any of the questions, and you may stop the survey at any time. There are no known risks to participating in this study and you will get no direct benefit from being a part of this study however, your participation will help NTI improve future training courses.

This research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about you. The only parties that will be allowed to see the data are the research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published only group results will be stated.

If you have any questions about how the study works, you can contact Prof. Marc Weiner, Associate Director of the Bloustein Center for Survey Research at (848) 932-2765 or email him at [mdw@ejb.rutgers.edu](mailto:mdw@ejb.rutgers.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact the Rutgers Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (848) 932-0150, or email them at [humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu](mailto:humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu).

Please indicate your consent to participate in this survey by checking the consent box, and click the "next page" button below and begin the survey. If you do not consent, please close your browser window. This Informed Consent was approved by the Rutgers Institutional Review Board on May 20, 2014.

IC2 Do you agree to participate?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Do you agree to participate? No Is Selected

ICCO Thank you for your willingness to participate in this evaluation, but to be eligible for this evaluation you must consent to participate. If you wish to consent, please click the "back" button, and answer "yes" to the consent question. If you wish not to consent, please click the "Next" button to end the evaluation.

If Thank you for your willingn... Is Displayed, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q1 Are you involved in procurement for \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataC}?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- No longer work there (3)

Answer If Are you involved in procurement for the [insert transit agency name]No longer work here Is Selected

Q2 Do you currently work in the transit industry?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Do you currently work in the transit industry? No Is Selected

E11 Thank you for your willingness to participate in this evaluation, but to be eligible for this evaluation you must currently work in the transit industry. Please click the "Next" button to end the evaluation.

If Thank you for your willingn... Is Displayed, Then Skip To End of Survey



Answer If Are you involved in procurement for the [insert transit agency name] No longer work here Is Selected

Q3 What year did you leave \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataC}?

Year (1)

Answer If 1. Are you involved in procurement for the [insert transit agency name] No longer work here Is Selected

Q4 Who do you now work for?

Answer If Where you previously involved in procurement at [insert transit agency name] No Is Selected

Q5 Were you previously involved in procurement at \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataC}?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Were you previously involved in procurement at \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataA}? No Is Selected

EL2 Thank you for your willingness to participate in this evaluation, but to be eligible for this study you must have been involved with procurement. Please click the "Next" button to end the evaluation.

If Thank you for your willingn... Is Displayed, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q6a How many years have you worked in the transit industry?

Years (1)

Q6b How many years have you worked in procurement?

Years (1)

Answer If Are you involved in procurement for \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataA}? Yes Is Selected Or Are you involved in procurement for \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataA}? No Is Selected

Q7a What is your level of involvement with procurement at \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataC}? (please check all that apply)

- Sole person in-charge of procurement (1)
- Part of a procurement team or department (2)
- Procurement is an occasional part of my job (3)
- Other (please specify) (4) \_\_\_\_\_

If Sole person in-charge of pr... Is Selected, Then Skip To What is your current job title?...

Answer If Are you involved in procurement for \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataA}? No longer work there Is Selected

Q7b What was your level of involvement with procurement at \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataC}? (please check all that apply)

- Sole person in-charge of procurement (1)
- Part of a procurement team or department (2)
- Procurement is an occasional part of my job (3)
- Other (please specify) (4) \_\_\_\_\_

If Sole person in-charge of pr... Is Selected, Then Skip To What is your current job title?

Q8 How many people, including you, work on procurement at \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataC}? Please answer in terms of Full-Time-Equivalents (FTEs) (e.g., if an employee spends half of their time of procurement, you would enter .5 FTEs).

FTEs (1)

Q9 What is your current job title?

Q10 Why did you take the "Orientation to Transit Procurement" course in \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataB}? (please check all that apply)

- Required by employer (1)
- As a result of FTA review (2)
- Other (please specify) (3) \_\_\_\_\_

Answer If Are you involved in procurement for the [insert transit agency name]Yes Is Selected Or Are you involved in procurement for the [insert transit agency name]No Is Selected

Q11 Have you worked for any other transit related agencies or firms?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q12 How many years have you worked at \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataC}?

Years (1)

Q14 How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the “Orientation to Transit Procurement” course you took in \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataB}?

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
I learned a great deal in the course. (1)	•	•	•	•	•
I had a strong interest in procurement before taking the course (2)	•	•	•	•	•

Q15 How would you rate the teaching effectiveness of the instructor of the “Orientation to Transit Procurement” course you took in \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataB}?

- Very Good (1)
- Good (2)
- Fair (3)
- Poor (4)
- Very Poor (5)

Q16 How would you rate the overall quality of the “Orientation to Transit Procurement” course you took in \${e://Field/EmbeddedDataB}?

- Very Good (1)
- Good (2)
- Fair (3)
- Poor (4)
- Very Poor (5)

TT1 Now we are going ask a few questions about the procurement process at your agency or firm.

Q17a When you returned to your agency or firm, did you use the skills/ knowledge that you learned in the course?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If When you returned to your agency or firm, did you use the skills/ knowledge that you learned? Yes Is Selected

Q17b.1 Please briefly tell us how you used the skills/knowledge that you learned. Answer If When you returned to your agency or firm, did you use the skills/ knowledge that you learned? Yes Is Selected

Q17b.2 How frequently have you been able to apply your newly learned skills/ knowledge?

- Very frequently (1)
- Somewhat frequently (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Almost never (4)
- Never (5)

Answer If When you returned to your agency or firm, did you use the skills/ knowledge that you learned? No Is Selected

Q17c Why didn't you use the skills/knowledge that you learned from the course?

- Did not learn any new skills/knowledge (1)
- It wasn't practical (2)
- Time constraints (3)
- Discouraged from using new skills/knowledge (4)
- Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_

Q18 Did you and your supervisor discuss your objectives for taking the course? (please check all that apply)

- Yes, before the course (1)
- Yes, during the course (2)
- Yes, after the course (3)
- No (4)

Q19 How strongly would you agree or disagree that the course materials are useful?

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly Disagree (5)

Q21 As a result of the "Orientation to Transit Procurement" course, did you implement any changes to procurement at your agency or firm?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If As a result of the “Orientation to Transit Procurement” course, did you implement any changes to procurement at your transit agencyNo Is Selected

Q22 Why were no changes implemented at your agency or firm? (please check all that apply)

- No changes needed: Agency or firm was in full compliance with FTA rules and regulations (1)
- It wasn't practical (2)
- Actively discouraged from making changes (3)
- Was not encouraged to make changes (7)
- Time constraints (4)
- Tried to implement change, but was unsuccessful. (5)
- Other (please specify) (6) \_\_\_\_\_

Answer If As a result of the “Orientation to Transit Procurement” course, did you implement any changes to procurement at your transit agencyYes Is Selected

Q24 As a result of the procurement course did you make any of the following changes at your agency or firm?

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Produced a procurement manual (1)	•	•
Modified an existing procurement manual (2)	•	•
Changed procurement procedures (3)	•	•
Increased procurement resources (e.g. increased staff or office equipment) (4)	•	•
Reorganized structure of procurement teams (5)	•	•
Developed procedures to determine proper contract types (6)	•	•
Standardized procurement forms to be used on future procurements (7)	•	•
Implemented an annual planning review of procurement practices (8)	•	•
Produced written procedures for selection of vendors (9)	•	•
Modified written procedures for selection of vendors (10)	•	•
Produced written procedures to protest the selection of a vendor (11)	•	•
Modified written procedures to protest the selection of a vendor	•	•

(12)		
Other (please specify) (13)	•	•

Answer If As a result of the procurement course did you make any of the following changes at your transit agency Produced a procurement manual - Yes Is Selected

Q25 Was this your agency's or firm's first procurement manual?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If As a result of the procurement course did you make any of the following changes at your transit agency Modified an existing procurement manual - Yes Is Selected

Q26 In what ways was the procurement manual modified?

Answer If As a result of the procurement course did you make any of the following changes at your transit agency Produced a procurement manual - No Is Selected And As a result of the procurement course did you make any of the following changes at your transit agency Modified an existing procurement manual - No Is Selected

Q27 Does your agency or firm have a procurement manual?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If As a result of the procurement course did you make any of the following changes at your transit agency Changed procurement procedures - Yes Is Selected

Q28 What procurement procedures were changed?

Answer If As a result of the procurement course did you make any of the following changes at your transit agency Increased procurement resources (e.g. increased staff or office equipment) - Yes Is Selected

Q29 What types of procurement resources were increased? (please check all that apply)

- Staff (1)
- Office equipment (2)
- Software (3)
- Reference Manuals (4)
- Other (please specify) (5) \_\_\_\_\_

Answer If As a result of the procurement course did you make any of the following changes at your transit agency Reorganized structure of procurement teams - Yes Is Selected

Q30 How was procurement staffing reorganized?

Answer If As a result of the procurement course did you make any of the following changes at your transit agency Implemented an annual planning review of procurement practices - Yes Is Selected

Q31 Has your agency or firm ever completed a planning review of procurement practices?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

TT Now we would like to ask you a few questions about what you learned in the course.

Q32 Consider a procurement action involving federal funds. When would a cost analysis not be required in connection with the action?

- (A) When the procurement method being used is an invitation for bids rather than a request for proposals and there is adequate competition. (1)
- (B) When the procurement action is sole source (2)
- (C) When the purchase is a micro purchase and you have multiple sources. (3)
- (D) The procurement action merely modifies a preexisting contract (4)
- (E) A cost analysis must be included in connection with each of the above actions. (5)

Q33 Suppose you are conducting procurement for new equipment using federal funds. When would cost not generally be a determining factor in your decision making?

- (A) When the dollar amount of a purchase is below both state and federal thresholds for micropurchases (1)
- (B) When the procurement method is an invitation for bids (2)
- (C) When the procurement method is a request for proposals (3)
- (D) When a price analysis is conducted rather than a cost analysis (4)
- (E) Cost is not a determining factor for any procurement action (5)

Q34 Transit agencies that purchase equipment and services using grants from the Federal Transit Administration must operate in accordance with certain rules. Which of the below is one such rule?

- (A) Personnel performing procurement for equipment or services must not be involved in the requisition process (1)



- (B) An independent cost estimate is required in connection with every procurement (2)
- (C) Every procurement action, regardless of dollar amounts involved, must have a system for project management oversight (3)
- (D) A price analysis is required in connection with every procurement (4)
- (E) All procurements must use sealed competitive bids to ensure fairness (5)

Q35 Imagine that you are using FTA funds to procure several new buses. Which of the below clauses would FTA require you to include in your proposal document and contract?

- (A) Laborer and mechanics must receive prevailing wages, in accordance with the Davis-Bacon Act. (1)
- (B) Any materials transported by ocean-going vessels must be shipped aboard a U.S.-based carrier (2)
- (C) The proposer must submit a DBE goal to you for your approval. (3)
- (D) Both (B) and (C), above (4)
- (E) All of the above (5)

Q37 Have you had other procurement training other than the NTI "Orientation to Transit Procurement" course?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Have you had other procurement training other than the NTI "Orientation to Transit Procurement" course Yes Is Selected

Q38 Did you take any of the following other NTI procurement courses? (check all that apply)

- Procurement for Small and Medium Transit Systems (1)
- Risk Assessment and Basic Cost or Price Analysis (2)
- RFP's and Competitive Contract Negotiations (3)
- Contract Administration (4)
- Other (please specify) (5) \_\_\_\_\_

D1 Are you:

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

D2 What was the age on your last birthday?

Answer If What was the age on your last birthday? Text Response Is Empty

D2b Is it between...

- 18 to 24 (1)
- 25 to 34 (2)
- 35 to 44 (3)
- 45 to 54 (4)
- 55 to 64 (5)
- 65 to 74 (6)
- 75 and over (7)

D3 What is the highest grade you completed in school?

- Up to 8th grade (1)
- Some high school (2)
- High school graduate or GED (3)
- Vocational/technical school, or some college (4)
- Junior college graduate (Associates' Degree) (5)
- College graduate (Bachelor's Degree) (6)
- Graduate work (7)

D4 What is your race? (please check all that apply)

- White (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- Asian (3)
- Other (4)

D5 Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

C1 Would you be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Answer If Would you be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview Yes Is Selected

C2 Kindly provide your phone number and email so that we may contact you for follow-up.

Phone (1)

Email (2)

Q39 Please provide any additional comments you would like about the “Orientation to Transit Procurement” course you took in  $\{e://Field/EmbeddedDataB\}$ ?

Q63 Thank you for participating in this evaluation. We appreciate your time and effort. Please click the "submit" button to end the evaluation.

## **APPENDIX B: CONTACT LETTERS**

### **Hard Copy Endorsement Letter from NTI Director - July 8, 2014**

Dear [Frist Name [Last Name]:

In the next few days researchers from the Bloustein Center for Survey Research at Rutgers University, will contact you and your staff to request participation in an evaluation of the National Transit Institute's procurement course, "Orientation to Transit Procurement."

The goal is to assess the effectiveness of that course and make recommendations to NTI for improvement based on the outcomes of the evaluation. To that end, I am writing to you to encourage the members of your office who having taken the course to participate in the study. The online questionnaire will only take about 15 minutes to complete.

I would be grateful if you would kindly advise your staff that they will be receiving an email with a link to the evaluation questionnaire within the next few days.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 732-932-1700 x 257 or at [plarrousse@nti.rutgers.edu](mailto:plarrousse@nti.rutgers.edu).

Sincerely,

Paul Larousse

## Pre-notification Email – July 16, 2014

Dear \${m://FirstName} \${m://LastName}:

As mentioned in previous correspondence, a few days from now you will receive an email from the Bloustein Center for Survey Research at Rutgers University requesting your participation in an evaluation of the National Transit Institute's procurement course, "Orientation to Transit Procurement."

I am writing in advance because we have found that many people like to know ahead of time when they will be contacted.

The goal of this study is to assess the effectiveness of that course and to make recommendations to NTI for improvements. I am hopeful, especially given your personal experience with that course, that you will assist us in this effort.

The online questionnaire will only take about 15 minutes to complete, and is completely confidential; the results of the study will be presented in aggregate format only and no individual participant will ever be identified in any report.

Thank you for your time and consideration. It's only with the help of people like you that this important research can be successful.

Sincerely,

Marc D. Weiner  
Associate Director  
Bloustein Center for Survey Research  
Rutgers University

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:  
\${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}

\${l://SurveyLink?d=%20}

## Invite Email - July 22, 2014

Dear \${m://FirstName} \${m://LastName},

I am writing to kindly request your participation in an evaluation of the "Orientation to Transit Procurement" course offered by the National Transit Institute (NTI).

The goal of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of that course, and to make recommendations to NTI on how best to improve future training courses. Since you completed the course within the past five years, your experience is particularly relevant and we are hopeful that you would be willing to take a few minutes to help make this study a success and, in turn, improve future NTI courses.

The study is completely confidential and your answers will not be associated with your name or your agency or employer when the results are reviewed.

This on-line questionnaire will only take about 15 minutes to complete. However, if you are unable to complete it in one sitting, you may return later to complete it; the study will save your answers and when you log-in, it will pick up right where you left off.

To participate, please click here:

[\\${l://SurveyLink?d=Start the Evaluation}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${l://SurveyURL}](#)

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at [mdw@ejb.rutgers.edu](mailto:mdw@ejb.rutgers.edu).

Thank you again for participating in this important effort. We are very grateful for your willingness to share your time and experience.

Sincerely,

Marc Weiner

Associate Director  
Bloustein Center for Survey Research  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

## One Week Reminder Email – July 30, 2014

Dear \${m://FirstName} \${m://LastName},

I am writing to follow up on my recent email in which I asked for your help in an evaluation of the “Orientation to Transit Procurement” course offered by the National Transit Institute (NTI). We've received a substantial number of responses so far and if you have already participated, please accept my sincere thanks.

Your input is important to us, and if you have not yet had the chance to participate in the short, confidential study, I am hopeful that you could take a few moments to do so now.

To complete the questionnaire, please follow this link: \${l://SurveyLink?d=Start the Evaluation}

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

\${l://SurveyURL}

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at mdw@ejb.rutgers.edu.

Thank you again for participating in this important effort. We are very grateful for your willingness to share your time and experience.

Sincerely,

Marc Weiner

Associate Director  
Bloustein Center for Survey Research  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:  
\${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}

## Three Week Reminder Email – August 13, 2014

Dear \${m://FirstName} \${m://LastName},

About three weeks ago, I wrote to ask for your kind participation in an evaluation of NTI's "Orientation to Transit Procurement" course. Almost 40% of the over 600 people to whom we sent the questionnaire have responded in full. In addition, several have started but not yet finished the questionnaire. If you have already completed the questionnaire, please accept our sincere thanks.

If you have not yet had time, or like me, have been on vacation, I would be very grateful if you could take a few moments to complete the questionnaire now. The study is completely confidential and only takes about 15 minutes. And, if you are restarting an already-begun questionnaire, all your earlier answers are saved, so it will pick up right where you left off.

To participate, please click here:

[\\${l://SurveyLink?d=Start the Evaluation}](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${l://SurveyURL}](#)

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at [mdw@ejb.rutgers.edu](mailto:mdw@ejb.rutgers.edu).

Thank you again for participating in this important effort. We are very grateful for your willingness to share your time and experience.

Sincerely,

Marc Weiner

Associate Director  
Bloustein Center for Survey Research  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)



## Final Reminder – August 21, 2004

Dear \${m://FirstName} \${m://LastName},

I am writing one last time in the hope that you will be able to participate in an evaluation of NTI's "Orientation to Transit Procurement" course. We've received a significant number of responses to the study, and are hopeful that your input will be included in the final results we will use to make recommendations for course improvement to NTI.

The study will close at midnight on Sunday, August 24th and so if you've not yet had the opportunity to complete the questionnaire, I ask that you take a few minutes to do so now. To complete the questionnaire, please follow this link:

[\\${l://SurveyLink?d=Start%20the%20Evaluation}](#)

or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[\\${l://SurveyURL}](#)

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me by reply email.

We are very hopeful that you will have a few moments to include your voice in this important evaluation. Please know that we appreciate your help.

Sincerely,

Marc Weiner

Associate Director  
Bloustein Center for Survey Research  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[\\${l://OptOutLink?d=Click here to unsubscribe}](#)

## **APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

### **NTI interview protocol:**

#### **Background:**

Interviewees filled out the survey and agreed to a follow-up interview. We will have information about when they took the course, their thoughts on the course, their employer and work experience.

#### **Email to potential interviewees**

SUBJECT: NTI follow-up interview request for Orientation to Transit Procurement course

Dear [INSERT NAME],

I am writing on behalf of the Bloustein Center for Survey Research at Rutgers University. You recently completed an online questionnaire evaluating the effectiveness of the National Transit Institute's (NTI) workforce training course titled "Orientation to Transit Procurement" and indicated that you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

I am currently scheduling follow-up interviews and would very much like to find a convenient time to talk with you about your experience with the course. The purpose of the interview is to hear from you, in your own words and in greater detail than the questionnaire can provide, about the effectiveness of that course, and your suggestions and thoughts about recommendations to make to NTI for improvement.

Please let me know if you would be willing to participate in a brief follow-up conversation. I am scheduling talks for the next few weeks and my schedule is very flexible.

Sincerely,

---

Nick Klein, PhD  
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#### **Intro script:**

Hello [INSERT NAME].

My name is Nick Klein and I'm calling on behalf of The Bloustein Center for Survey Research at Rutgers University. Thank you very much for taking the time to talk with me today and for agreeing to help with our in-depth evaluation of the NTI procurement course.

As background, you may recall that we were retained by the Federal Transit Administration to evaluate the NTI procurement course. The purpose of this evaluation is to help NTI improve the course and ensure that it is achieving its own objectives and meeting the needs of participants in the course.

Participation will last no longer than 30 minutes. Your participation is completely voluntary; and if at any time during our conversation you wish to stop participating, you are completely free to do so and you may, of course, decline to answer any particular question.

This research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about you, such as your name, the agency where you work and your contact information. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated.

*[IF ASKED or IF Necessary]*

*If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact Robert Noland at (848) 932-2859 or by email at (rnoland@rutgers.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at: 848-932-0150*

May I proceed?

Great, thanks. Before we get going, do you have any questions for me about this interview process?

**Interview questions:**

1. To get us started, I would love to hear from you a bit about yourself, the work you do and also why you took the NTI procurement course.
  - a. *Prompt with their reasons from the survey responses*
2. What aspect or aspects of the course did you find most helpful to your work in procurement?
3. In the questionnaire you, we asked if and how your procurement processes changed after taking the NTI course. You mentioned that you **[INSERT THEIR RESPONSES TO Q21-24]**. Can you tell me a little more about how your processes changed or, if nothing changed, why they did not change?
4. After you returned to your office following the course, have you found the course materials helpful for your day-to-day work?
  - a. In what ways have you used them?

- b. How do you think they could be improved?
5. Some of the respondents to the survey told us that they wished the course were different. With that in mind, if you could change aspects of the course, what would you change?
    - a. *Prompt if needed:* For example, some of the respondents wished the course were tailored more towards smaller or larger agencies or to early or mid-career professionals.
  6. Were there any topics that were not included in the course but you wish were?
    - a. *Prompt if needed:* For example, some of the respondents said they hoped the course would have covered IT procurement issues.
  7. Do you have any feedback for the course instructors – or feedback for us about them?
  8. Following the course, have you or other course participants contacted each other with questions about procurement?
  9. In the online course survey you filled out a few weeks back, we asked respondents a number of knowledge questions about topics that were covered in the NTI procurement course. By and large, respondents had difficulty with these questions. Do you remember these questions from the survey and do you have any insights about why this might be?
  10. Is there anything that we should have asked about in regards to the NTI course? Do you have any additional comments?

## **APPENDIX D: REFERENCES**

Canada School of Public Service, Evaluation of Training Provided to the Procurement, Materiel Management and Real Property (PMMRP) Functional Community, Evaluation Division, August 2010, [http://www.csps-efpc.gc.ca/about\\_us/currentreport/etppmmrp-eng.aspx#ann2](http://www.csps-efpc.gc.ca/about_us/currentreport/etppmmrp-eng.aspx#ann2), accessed 11/21/14.

Kirkpatrick, Donald L., 1998, Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc: San Francisco.

US Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Transit Administration, Triennial Reviews, <http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/12897.html>, accessed 11/21/2014.