



Customer Success Story

# Centralizing purchasing and fostering collaboration with easy-to-use eProcurement

Bonfire eProcurement & California Mental Health Services Authority

The California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) helps fund, develop, and implement mental health services and educational programs at the state, regional, and local levels in California.

CalMHSA's purchasing decisions have a big impact on the individuals, families, and communities it serves. And with a mandate to comply with various procurement policies for the state of California, they knew their process of "patchwork" systems—which included email, shared drives, and physically shipped documents—would no longer suffice.

To fulfill their need for a more transparent and collaborative end-to-end procurement system, CalMHSA sought out an eProcurement solution. CalMHSA ultimately selected Bonfire because of how easy it was to use for buyers, evaluators, and vendors alike.

After one year of centralizing procurement on the Bonfire eProcurement platform, CalMHSA is seeing the benefits that a connected and transparent process has for their internal team, board members, and vendors.

## KEY CHALLENGES

- Disparate systems hindered collaboration and transparency
- RFP submission process was inconsistent and unclear for vendors
- Compliance to procurement policies meant that clear reporting and audit trails were essential

## KEY RESULTS

- All steps of the purchasing process are now streamlined, connected, and centralized in one place
- Automatic tracking and audit trails means compliance is built into all procurement activities
- Board members and other stakeholders get visibility into project statuses and reporting
- Vendors have access to a simple and consistent submission process
- Immediate adoption and sustained usage across administrators, evaluators, and vendors due to ease of use and time-saving tools

Challenge

## “Patchwork” procurement jeopardizes compliance and collaboration

California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) may have a small team, but the impact of their purchases is far-reaching.

After all, CalMHSA partners with the counties of California to improve mental health outcomes for the state’s individuals, families, and communities. To do that, they are consistently sourcing vendors to implement projects such as crisis support lines, mental health-related certification training, and social marketing strategies to maximize the reach of behavioral health initiatives.

According to Julia Byrd, Administrative Manager at CalMHSA, procurement for the association is “all hands on deck;” the programs staff write the RFPs, and the administrative staff oversee the process. For procurements to be successful, collaboration between these teams is vital.

CalMHSA’s “patchwork” procurement process—which leveraged a combination of email, online drives, and spreadsheets throughout the workflow—presented challenges to that cross-team collaboration. With no central location for documents, bid submissions, and evaluations, internal stakeholders and evaluators had little insight into the status of a project.

The patchwork process led to confusion for vendors, too. “Our vendors would submit questions to us in ten different ways,” said Julia. “Sometimes they would send us a hard letter, sometimes they would email us, sometimes they would email a contact at the company that they knew.”

As a public entity, CalMHSA needed to remain compliant to the Brown Act (intended to provide public access to meetings of California local government agencies) and other California county procurement policies. But since the association’s disparate systems made it difficult to track purchasing decisions, CalMHSA’s procurement process opened up the agency to the risk of not remaining compliant with state policies.

“

**“Ultimately, we chose Bonfire because of its user-friendliness for our team and our vendors.”**

## Solution

# Easy-to-use eProcurement makes the difference for buyers and vendors

The CalMHSA team knew that their “patchwork” system that involved email, drives, and sometimes even shipping physical documents needed to be re-evaluated. “We were looking for a system that allowed us to do the scoring internally, allowed us to collect the applications through one portal rather than having to sort them, put them on a drive, send them out, and hope that nothing gets missed if someone accidentally deletes an email,” said Julia.

**While exploring eProcurement options, CalMHSA needed a solution that would:**

- **Centralize all of their procurement activity**, including reviewing RFPs, accessing documents, and interfacing with vendors.
- **Foster collaboration and transparency across all parties**, including board members and stakeholders
- **Include built-in compliance** to various procurement policies for the state of California

Bonfire eProcurement checked all of CalMHSA’s boxes. When we asked Julia what made Bonfire stand out among other procurement solutions, she said, “Ultimately, we chose Bonfire because of its user-friendliness for our team and our vendors.”

In fact, CalMHSA is one of the 79% of Bonfire clients who rated the user-friendliness of the platform as one of the reasons why they would recommend Bonfire to a friend or colleague. Because Bonfire is so easy to use for buyers and vendors alike, CalMHSA was able to see game-changing results within just months of implementing the solution.

“

**“We were looking for a system that allowed us to do the scoring internally, allowed us to collect the applications through one portal rather than having to sort them, put them on a drive, send them out, and hope that nothing gets missed if someone accidentally deletes an email.”**



## Results

# Connected procurement means more visibility for team members, stakeholders, and vendors

With Bonfire, all of CalMHSA's procurement activities that were previously happening over email, online drives, and physical shipping are now centralized in one place. Julia can post bid solicitations, vendors can submit RFPs, and the CalMHSA team can evaluate submissions all in the Bonfire platform. The result has been better tracking and more complete audit trails, allowing Julia's team to rest easy knowing that there are no potential gaps in their compliance with various procurement policies.

That effortless tracking of purchasing decisions and project status saw results beyond checking compliance boxes. Internal clients at CalMHSA were impressed with the transparency they were now afforded. "Any of our staff can go into our portal and see where projects are at," said Julia. "As the administrator, I issue, close and set-up the RFPs, but there are so many other people working on them, too. So anybody on my team can look at an RFP and see how many submissions have been made or where we're at if we're extending a deadline. They don't have to come to me to be like, 'Hey what's the status Where are we at?' Everybody knows how to use the system and get in there to see for themselves."

Visibility into project status and reporting has also helped CalMHSA report to other stakeholders. "We can submit to our board a summary of the applications that have been submitted," said Julia. "For our partnering members, we can submit summaries of the applications and justification of why we're choosing the vendors that we're choosing."

Vendors interfacing with CalMHSA are also benefiting from a more clear, easy-to-use submission process. Julia's favorite Bonfire feature is the Q&A feature, which allows vendors to submit questions directly in the platform, making them feel supported when doing business with CalMHSA.

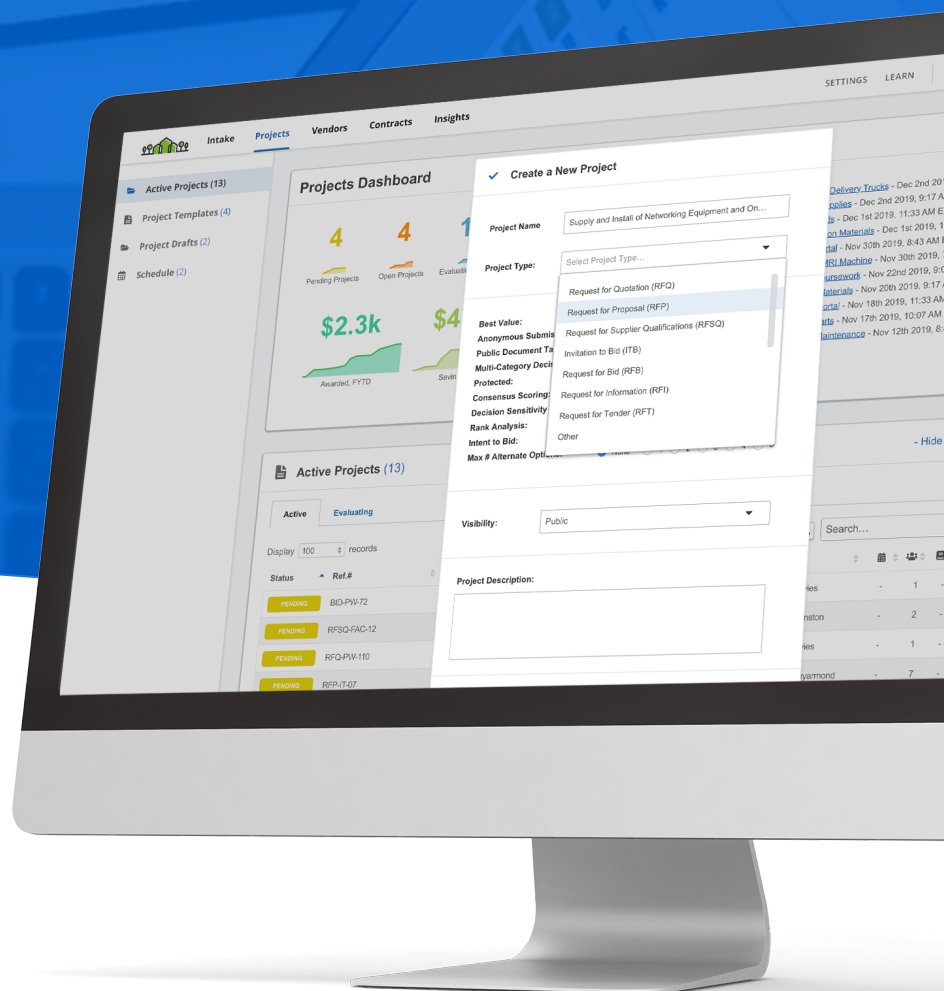
Besides using the Bonfire solution to receive and evaluate RFPs, CalMHSA has expanded their use of Bonfire to now evaluate grant applications. For their loan repayment grants, for instance, CalMHSA gets anywhere from 50 to 100 applications which they have to sort and review. Bonfire enables the CalMHSA team to score those grant applications right in the platform



# See **Bonfire** for yourself

Learn how our intuitive, powerful,  
and easy-to-use platform can help you  
**make better, faster sourcing decisions.**

[Request a Demo](#)



[GoBonfire.com](https://www.gobonfire.com)