

## Want to Avoid Procurement Missteps? Learn from Someone Else's Mistakes

Colin Wood | February 26, 2015

Clay Johnson made mistakes so others won't have to. Starting March 16, a free online [procurement workshop](#) run through the GovLab Academy will seek to inform government procurement officials of how to avoid critical failure. With a total time commitment of eight hours in four weeks, the course will move fast, avoid the traditional educational model and focus on helping governments achieve tangible results on their current projects, Johnson explained.

Johnson, a 2012 Presidential Innovation Fellow for the development of procurement platform RFP-EZ and the founder of the Department of Better Technology, said the purpose of the course — called Tech Procurement Projects: Making the Supply Chain Work — is to serve as a sort of insurance for those working in government procurement.

“The reason I'm doing it is because I've done a lot of stupid things inside of government, saw a lot of things, made a lot of presumptions inside of government and here's my opportunity to make sure that a group of people won't make the same kinds of mistakes around procurement innovation that I have in the past and lose precious time,” Johnson said.

The course specifics aren't yet settled, but Johnson expects that they will allow between 10 and 20 participants, who will be chosen based on personal qualifications and the type of projects they're involved with. The course will begin, he explained, by reviewing everyone's projects and examining barriers to success. Subsequent lessons will include things like “the culture of ‘no,’” misconceptions about what procurement is and effective solutions for overcoming a burdensome government culture.

There won't be tests or grades or even formal lectures, Johnson said. The class is more about looking at what people are facing, examining the bureaucracy and trying to get results.

“This isn't your typical college course. This is a course for people with a little bit of experience in the field who also may just need a little bit of outside advice for how to get that slam dunk,” he said, adding that the problems in the bureaucracy of government procurement aren't intractable, they're just slow, and what's needed is a new generation of bureaucrats who understand what's possible.

In just eight hours, they can't promise the moon, Johnson said, but they will get to meet a college dropout who is spurring innovation in government. “Who wouldn't want to spend eight hours with Clay Johnson?” Johnson joked. “But if there's one thing I know how to do, I know how to ship projects out at all costs.”

Registration is [available free online](#) at the GovLab Academy, and the application deadline is March 6.

<http://www.govtech.com/applications/Want-to-Avoid-Procurement-Missteps.html>