

Enhancing Probity, Accountability and Transparency in Public Procurement Processes, being a welcome address by the Executive Secretary of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund Arch Sonny T. Echono at the capacity Building workshop Organized for TETFund Beneficiary Institutions in conjunction with The Bureau for Public Procurement.

Protocols

It is with pleasure that I welcome you all to this very significant engagement, particularly when we consider the continuous interaction and synergy that exists between the Fund's beneficiary institutions and the Bureau for Public Procurement on the one hand and the TETFund on the other. The workshop is conceived and intended to build the capacity of our beneficiary institutions on public procurement processes, with a view to promoting accountability, transparency, and efficiency for effective and timely delivery of TETFund projects across beneficiary institutions in the country.

Let me begin by expressing the deep appreciation of the Fund to the Director General and staff of the Bureau for Public Procurement, for the warm partnership and cooperation it has always extended to the TETFund over the years, whenever we seek for it both in our internal procurement processes and when required for our beneficiary institution procurement processes. Another area of cooperation for which we are grateful is the coordination of this all-important workshop for our 246 number enlisted public tertiary institutions across the country defined in the act as public Universities Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. Workshops of this nature have always served as platforms for the exchange of knowledge and ideas, which foster understanding, cooperation, and excellence in delivery of our services.

The Tertiary Education Trust Fund since establishment has continued to support and intervened in Public Tertiary Institutions in various areas that include Infrastructure, Academic Staff training and development, Library development, Research and Manuscript developments as well as ICT development. Several aspects of these interventions involve the procurement of equipment, furniture, and educational materials, to the construction of buildings and civil works which are prioritized by the beneficiary institutions to meet their critical needs. By the mandate of the TETFund and in line with its guidelines for accessing the funds, beneficiaries are required to conceive, develop, and put together all necessary documentation and processes for the award of the contracts by the institutions who are the procuring entities. It is therefore very necessary as public institutions to be properly acquainted with the Public Procurement Act of 2007.

It is significant to understand that the federal government introduced Public Procurement reforms in 1999 after a World Bank report established links between poor or weak public procurement procedures and corruption and its negative impact on the nation's development. And since then, government have come up with new policies and processes that are aimed at minimizing open abuses to standard rules, processes and procedures as well as standards in the award and execution of public sector contracts in Nigeria. These culminated in the passage of the public procurement Bill by the National assembly on the 30th of May 2007 that was signed into law by the President on 4th of June 2007. Our beneficiaries as public institutions are therefore required by law to comply with the provisions of this act in their procurement process.

While TETFund is fully conscious and aware of the enormous task and responsibilities of the Bureau in respect of this act, several officials of our public Tertiary Institutions are not fully conversant with laid down procedures, standards, and processes with regards to the award and execution of public contracts in line with the act. Such ignorance many times have led to avoidable problems that hinder the smooth and timely execution of TETFund intervention projects in tertiary institutions across the country. Familiarity with the public procurement laws remains a national priority and is tied to the achievement of the national interest and objective of development through the eradication of irregular practices in awards and execution of public contracts. According to a World Bank report, an average of 10 billion dollars is lost yearly to fraudulent practices in the award and execution of public contracts through inflation of cost, lack of procurement plans, poor project prioritization, poor budgeting process, lack of competition and value for money and other methods that influence procurement and contract award process.

As encapsulated in the vision and mission of the Tertiary Education Fund to be a world class interventionist agency, the Fund is dedicated to the provision of quality intervention projects that generations of Nigerians will benefit from and is therefore committed to ensuring that best practices are deployed in the execution of its various intervention projects nationwide. To achieve this, the Fund considers as priority, the adherence to the public procurement reforms established by the government of Nigeria. It is only by doing so that our intervention projects and programs will outlive us, and history will remember us as those entrusted with the power to determine the future of this country, and as people that put forth the nation's interest above personal interest. We are at a critical stage in the process of nation building and must not relent or compromise in the discharge of our duties and responsibilities.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, this workshop is being organized to familiarize heads of our beneficiary public tertiary institutions with the operations, standards, and benchmarks which will enable them attain transparency, competitiveness, professionalism and cost effectiveness in the procurement system of their TETFund interventions. It is my sincere hope that at the end of the workshop the various Heads of our public tertiary institutions will be equipped with the knowledge of the relevant laws, procedures and processes of contract award and procurement which will no doubt aid the Fund in achieving its mandate. It is also hoped that our heads of institutions will appreciate the objectives of the public procurement reforms undertaken by the federal government of Nigeria as an economic policy that is intended to improve the economy and prevent leakages, corruption and poor infrastructural development in the country. I wish participants fruitful engagement.

Thank You and God Bless Nigeria.