



Australian Government
Department of Industry,
Science and Resources

Broader economic benefits in ICT sector procurement

Planning and engagement guidance

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Introduction

Commonwealth procurement is a major economic lever. The Australian Government's Buy Australian Plan recognises that our significant purchasing power can support businesses to:

- deliver better value for money
- grow the local economy
- strengthen our domestic industry.

This guidance will help procurement officials apply the government's purchasing power effectively and responsibly when procuring information and communications technology (ICT) services, consistent with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules (CPRs).

Under the CPRs, procurement officials have certain obligations. When determining value for money for procurements over \$1 million, officials must consider the economic benefits to the Australian economy.¹

Procuring officials should first refer to [the Department of Finance's \(Finance\) guidance on consideration of broader domestic economic benefits in procurement](#) to gain an understanding of what broader economic benefits are and how to consider them.

This guidance gives ICT sector-specific information and advice for officials considering economic benefits in their procurement planning. Procurement officials should use this sectoral guidance alongside Finance's guidance.

As a procuring official, you should engage with your entity's procurement specialists and delegate early in your procurement planning to set your priorities.

Procuring officials must, subject to the CPRs, treat all potential suppliers equitably when determining value for money and economic benefits.² They must not discriminate against suppliers because of their size, location, ownership, or the origins of their goods and services.³

When considering broader economic benefits as part of your value for money assessments of suppliers, you will need to look at how suppliers demonstrate and plan to deliver those benefits.

¹ This requirement only applies to procurements over \$7.5 million for construction services and excepts procurements covered by Appendix A of the CPRs and procurements from standing offers.

² Commonwealth Procurement Rules, paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4.

³ The CPRs include limited circumstances where specific characteristics of a supplier may be a relevant factor in a procurement. For examples, CPRs Appendix A: Exemption 16 provides for limited tendering from SMEs with at least 50% Indigenous ownership.

Quick reference guide: Finding economic benefits in a procurement process

Stage	Step	Details
1. Before you start	Determine requirements	<p>Is the procurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over \$1 million? • Not covered by Appendix A of the CPRs? • Not from a standing offer? <p>If so, you must consider broader economic benefits.</p>
2. Planning	Identify opportunities	<p>Consider with your delegate and procurement team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What opportunities there are to generate broader economic benefits? • Does your agency have a priority outcome it seeks?
3. Engaging the market	Craft your questions	<p>When going out to market, what questions should you ask to get the information you need to evaluate these benefits?</p>
4. Evaluating responses	Consider the answers	<p>Assess responses against the opportunities identified in planning, and against the Department of Finance's guidance on value for money.</p> <p>Record your evaluation process.</p>
5. Approval and contract entry	Consider your contract	<p>Ensure what you have assessed against is deliverable, measurable and embedded in contract deliverables.</p>

This guidance focuses on the 'Planning' and 'Engaging the market' steps of ICT procurements. The callout boxes throughout this guidance detail how to apply the steps from the quick reference checklist in practice – see the relevant boxes in each section. Visit [Finance's guidance](#) for more guidance on the other stages.

Using this guidance

This guidance is general and aims to help procuring officials consider the broader economic benefits presented in tenders. Each entity has its own process for planning, assessing and recording procurement decisions. Your entity's central procurement team may have more specific guidance. You can find some examples of broader economic benefit evaluation in Finance's guidance.

Procuring officials can choose the approach to the broader economic benefits that is most appropriate and effective for the context they are working in. Discuss your approach in the planning stage with your delegate. Your chosen approach will inform how you consider economic benefits throughout the rest of the procurement, from approaching the market to contract management.

Some potential approaches include:

- **Context-specific approach:** the good or service you are procuring may lend itself to generating certain economic benefits. For example, goods with complex supply chains might offer opportunities to engage small and medium enterprises (SMEs) along the value chain.
- **Aligning with entity priority outcomes or mandates:** your approach to seeking and generating economic benefits could align with your entity's broader policy goals.⁴
- **Supplier-led approach:** tenderers may highlight opportunities to generate economic benefits that you had not previously considered. Remain open to looking at the economic benefits that suppliers have cultivated and may specialise in generating.

Finance's guidance has more information on determining your approach.

Whatever procurement approach you choose, you must always record your decisions and the decision-making process.

⁴ Procuring entities may identify opportunities to align the economic benefits consideration to their mandates or priority outcomes. However, this should only be considered where it can be implemented in a manner that is consistent with the requirements in the CPRs, including the requirement to treat suppliers equitably and not discriminate against them on the basis of their size, degree of foreign affiliation or ownership, location, or the origin of their goods and services. See [Finance's guidance](#) for more information.

What is the ICT sector?

The ICT sector includes different types of communications networks and the technologies used in them. The sector combines manufacturing and services industries to fulfil or enable information processing and communication by electronic means, including transmission and display. (OECD n.da)

The Commonwealth Procurement Framework does not restrict ICT procurement to a single procurement category. For the purposes of this document, the ICT sector includes businesses that sell goods and services belonging to relevant United Nations Standard Products and Services Codes (UNSPSCs). See Appendix A for more information.

In 2023, ICT procurement accounted for around 15% of Commonwealth commitments reported on AusTender, including more than:

- \$4.9 billion on computing services
- \$2.8 billion on aerospace systems and components and equipment
- \$1.9 billion on components for information technology or broadcasting or telecommunications
- \$1.2 billion on software (Tech Council of Australia, 2022a).

Why consider broader economic benefits in the ICT sector?

The Australian Government is supporting the ongoing development of the technology sector as a critical pillar of the Australian economy. A strong ICT sector is critical to diversifying the Australian economy and creating the skilled jobs of the future. The sector is now Australia's 7th-largest employer with 1 in 16 Australians working in tech sector jobs (Tech Council of Australia, 2022b). These jobs are highly skilled and well-paid roles, with an industry average salary of \$132,000 (Tech Council of Australia, 2023a).

The ICT sector has grown significantly and now contributes 8.5% to our national GDP. In the past decade the sector has created around 100 new companies valued at \$100 million or more (Tech Council of Australia, 2022b).

The Australian ICT sector is operating in a changing and increasingly competitive global market. Australia performs well in technology adoption but lags behind other OECD countries in innovation and IP creation (Tech Council of Australia, 2021). Globally, innovative businesses face significant challenges to scale up and commercialise. This can result in lost opportunities for domestic skills development, exports, tax revenue and other contributions to Australia's economy.

The Australian Government's annual spend on ICT goods and services is significant. This buying power is an important lever that can help build the sector's capability and increase growth. Delivering a government contract can be transformative for businesses, giving them the opportunity to innovate, scale up and demonstrate their capability. This can create significant and wide-ranging economic benefits for Australia.

As outlined in the CPRs, value for money assessments for procurements over \$1 million must consider broader economic benefits. Assessment of broader economic benefits of ICT procurement, consistent with the CPRs, supports government aims to make sure that public spending benefits the Australian economy and community.

What are broader economic benefits?

Per Finance's guidance, economic benefits to the Australian economy result when the goods or services being procured:

- provide broader benefits that support the development and sustainment of industry capabilities
- otherwise increase productivity (for example by adopting new know-how or innovation, or enabling more people to acquire in-demand skills, or ensuring that resources are allocated to sectors in which Australia has a comparative advantage); or
- make better use of Australian resources that would otherwise be under-utilised (for example employing people who would otherwise be under or unemployed, using spare industrial capacity, or freeing government funds for other spending)
- increase productivity-enhancing technology development and adoption.

Where do you come in?

You are considering broader economic benefits as part of your assessment of value for money – a core principle of the CPRs. Procuring officials must ensure that each procurement outcome represents value for money.

There is no single way to do this. Articulating value for money in all industries is about identifying the factors that create a clear, shared understanding of what a quality outcome looks like. This might differ depending on the context of each entity's priorities and the outcomes it seeks.

It's important to have a clear understanding of what broader economic benefits look like in practice when you are going out to market. By taking this approach, procurement officials can clearly communicate this to tenderers and more easily assess benefits provided by a tender to the economy.

Digital Transformation Agency resources

When buying digital products and services for government you will need to follow some rules and understand when you must use a marketplace, panel or whole of Australian Government agreement.

The Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) provides clear and simple guidance on the digital sourcing process, along with helpful tools and a collection of policies.

Visit [Sourcing Guidance – BuyICT](#) for more information.

What broader benefits does the ICT sector offer to the Australian economy?

Remember to stay flexible!

This guidance outlines some approaches to asking suppliers to demonstrate broader economic benefits in ICT procurements. However, these are not the only ways a business might provide broader economic benefits. Inflexible requirements around proving economic benefit may inadvertently disadvantage SMEs who have fewer resources to demonstrate their ability.

Allowing tenderers flexibility and creativity in how they demonstrate value for money can lead to innovations and better outcomes for supplier and buyer.

Innovation and Intellectual Property (IP) development

Businesses report the most common barrier to investing in innovation is a lack of financial resources (ABS 2024). Meanwhile, those entities that do invest in research and development (R&D) often struggle to commercialise their innovations domestically. This can mean that they either stop operating entirely or send their activities offshore where they receive support and procurement opportunities with other governments.

Procuring innovative ICT products and solutions can benefit government, society, and the ICT sector. Businesses receive the investment they need to commercialise existing innovations or develop new ones. Meanwhile, Australia enjoys broader economic benefits such as increased productivity associated with adopting innovative technologies, business growth across relevant supply chains and new potential investment opportunities for Australians (Productivity Commission 2023).

How does innovation and IP development generate economic benefits?

Innovation is increasingly critical to national economic performance, job creation and standards of living (DISR 2017). Government procurement can help boost innovation and capitalise on these benefits.

The ICT sector is Australia's most innovative sector, with 63% of businesses reporting innovation activity across 2022–23 (ABS 2024). The ICT sector represents 18% of total business R&D expenditure, valued at \$3.73 billion in 2022, second only to manufacturing (ABS 2023). Business innovations can lead to better economic outcomes. Australian SMEs are 16% more likely to experience high employment growth after filing for an IP right, compared to their peers without recent filings (IP Australia 2024).

Planning: Identifying opportunities to generate broader economic benefits related to innovation and IP development

During the procurement planning phase, you should identify if there are opportunities to procure innovative solutions.

- Could the approach to market focus on functional requirements rather than specifications to encourage innovative solutions or IP development?
- Have you taken enough time to engage the market and gain an understanding of what innovative vendors exist?
- Are you only considering ‘off the shelf solutions’ or are the technical requirements of the approach to market so restrictive as to prevent creative solutions?
- Is there an opportunity to improve government productivity through this procurement by being open to creative tender responses?

Engaging the market: Craft your innovation and IP development related questions

When responding to an approach to market, sellers should provide information relevant to them about how their offering would demonstrate broader economic benefits to Australia.

When engaging with tenderers, consider prompting for details such as (though not limited to):

- IP that the project will create in Australia
- use of innovative products or services innovative compared to other solutions
- R&D expenditure in Australia compared to the vendor’s annual global expenditure.

Using SMEs to deliver goods or services, either directly or as a subcontractor or a supplier

Breaking up large projects into smaller work packages can improve access for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Large-scale projects may be difficult for businesses with high capability but less capacity to compete for. However, breaking procurements into smaller components can allow SMEs to deliver and provide ongoing sustainment for specialised, innovative solutions. Innovative solutions can promote competition, build capability and enable buyers to manage their supply chains effectively.⁵

SMEs were estimated to win 43.4% of all Australian Government Information Technology Broadcasting and Telecommunications contracts in the 2023–24 financial year (Department of Finance 2024). Procurement of more traditional ICT services, labour hire, and tested technology solutions remains the dominant area of government spend. Innovation and technology development services are underrepresented and missing out on the support that government procurement opportunities can afford (DISR, unpublished).

⁵ Commonwealth Procurement Rules Section 5.5 provides further advice on Disaggregation of Large Projects. Note that if the contract is broken down to elements with an estimated cost below \$1 million, the requirement to consider broader economic benefits will no longer apply. Per the CPRs, a procurement must not be divided into separate parts solely for the purpose of avoiding a relevant procurement threshold.

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How do SMEs generate economic benefits?

Australia's SMEs give significant value to the Australian economy. In 2021, SMEs accounted for over half of Australia's GDP and employed 66% of people working in the private sector (ASBFEO 2023). In the ICT sector, around 98% of businesses are SMEs (Tech Council of Australia 2021).

Delivering a government contract can help SMEs to scale up and attract capital investment. Capital investment is essential for economic growth in the Australian economy. It can increase productivity and lead to improved living standards through labour earnings growth (ABS 2021). The ICT sector is one of the most capital-intensive industries in the Australian economy (ABS 2018).

Planning: Identifying broader economic benefits to do with procuring from SMEs

During the procurement planning phase, you should identify if the contract deliverables might support SMEs.

- Could you procure the goods or services from an SME?
- Could you break down relevant work packages to allow SMEs to tender for elements of the procurement?
- Could this procurement support SMEs as subcontractors?
- Could this procurement allow a business to invest in assets that will allow them to grow?

Engaging the market: Craft your SME-related questions

When responding to an approach to market, sellers should give information relevant to them about how their offering would result in broader economic benefits to Australia.

When engaging with tenderers, consider prompting for details such as (though not limited to):

- estimated value of services/labour procured from SMEs (all costs to do with time spent by an employee or subcontractor in contract delivery)
- percentage of contract spend estimated to be with SMEs
- total value of new capital investment in buildings, plant and machinery, fleet etc. in Australia to be used as part of the contract delivery
- current Australian supply chain expenditures (how much the prospective tenderer procures from Australian industry outside the scope of the approach to market)
- sustainment (maintenance, contractor travel, etc.) costs associated with the product.

Link to Commonwealth Australian Industry Participation Policy

The [Australian Industry Participation Policy](#) may apply to Australian Government procurement contracts of \$20 million (GST inclusive) or more.

The Australian Government applies the key principles of the 2001 [Australian Industry Participation \(AIP\) National Framework](#) to ensure Australian industry is provided with full, fair and reasonable opportunity to participate in Commonwealth-funded projects. **AIP requirements do not impact a funding recipients' commercial decisions or mandate using Australian industry for project.**

Providing skills and training that benefit Australian communities

The Australian Government has committed to a goal of 1.2 million tech-related jobs by 2030. Achieving this goal includes training and upskilling workers.

Jobs and Skills Australia reported that in 2023, almost 7 in 10 ICT professions had a shortage of skilled professionals. Jobs and Skills Australia has published up to date information on in-demand occupations across all sectors (Jobs and Skills Australia 2024). This data points to in-demand skills such as cybersecurity analysis. Government procurement can incentivise developing these skills.

How do skills and training generate economic benefits?

As of February 2023, the tech workforce grew to 935,000 compared to 865,000 the year before. These highly skilled roles offer a significantly higher average salary of \$132,000 – 50% higher than other advertised jobs (Tech Council of Australia 2023). This robust growth and competitive pay underscores the strategic importance of ICT in fostering a thriving economy, particularly as demand for technical skills continues to outpace supply.

Planning: Identifying broader economic benefits to do with skills and training

During the procurement planning phase, you should identify which skills and training related to economic benefits your supplier could embed into the contract deliverables.

- What in-demand skills will be used throughout the contract delivery?
- Are there opportunities to develop new skilled workers or upskill existing workers?

Engaging the market: Craft your skills and training related questions

When responding to an approach to market, sellers should give information relevant to them about how their offering would provide broader economic benefits to Australia.

When engaging with tenderers, consider prompting for details such as (though not limited to):

- existing training and upskilling programs in their organisation and how they might use these throughout the contract delivery
- the number of labour hours that trainees or entry level employees will work
- the number of new entry level employees the supplier might engage and train throughout the contract delivery
- any new formal qualifications that employees could earn throughout the contract delivery
- formal training they could provide to align with priority occupations the Australian Government has identified.

Link to the Australian Skills Guarantee PCP

The [Australian Skills Guarantee PCP](#) may also apply for ICT contracts over \$10 million. [Read more information at DEWR's website.](#)

The policy helps address skills shortages and gender segregation in the building and construction and maintenance services and ICT sectors.

Creating export and investment opportunities for Australian goods and services

Australia performs well in technology adoption but lags behind other OECD countries in innovation and IP creation. We rank 36th out of 38 in the OECD for ICT trade balance (Tech Council of Australia 2021). Australia may be failing to capture potential economic gains by being overly focused on adopting technologies developed overseas, rather than developing and exporting technologies domestically. Using procurement to support export opportunities for Australian businesses could recapture these potential economic gains.

How do investment and export opportunities generate economic benefits?

Supporting businesses to export creates economic benefits that flow through to the economy through increased value-add, employment outcomes and productivity. The value added by exporters to the Australian economy was \$646.6 billion in 2020–21 (31% of GDP) (Austrade 2023). The ICT sector is also Australia's second-largest non-commodities exporter after education, generating \$16.8 billion in export revenue in 2023 (DFAT 2024).

The Australian Skills and Investment Commission reports that on average, exporting Australian businesses:

- generated 65% more value added than non-exporters
- generated 14% more employment than non-exporters
- were 64% more productive than non-exporters.

Planning: Identifying broader economic benefits related to export and investment opportunities

During the procurement planning phase, you should identify if the contract deliverables support export opportunities for Australian businesses.

- Does this procurement involve developing new or innovative products or services which the supplier could export?
- Could this contract impact the ability for the potential suppliers to target export markets?

Engaging the market: Craft your export and investment related questions

When responding to an approach to market, sellers should give information relevant to them about how their offering would provide broader economic benefits to Australia.

When engaging with tenderers, consider prompting for details such as (though not limited to):

- current exporting activity, or plans to target any export markets
- how delivering the contract would support expansion into export markets.

Improving diversity in the ICT sector workforce

In Australia, certain demographics are underrepresented in the ICT sector workforce, and the workforce at large.

While women account for 48% of the overall labour force, they only account for 28% of tech workers at November 2022 (Tech Council of Australia 2023b).

Workforce participation of people with a disability is almost 30% below those without a disability (Deloitte 2019).

Indigenous Australians are also underrepresented in the labour force generally as well as in the ICT sector. Though Indigenous Australians represent 3% of the labour force, only 1% of people working in ICT occupations identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in the 2021 Census (Tech Council of Australia 2023b).

Improving diversity in the ICT sector workforce will also be a component of reaching the Australian Government's goal of 1.2 million tech-related jobs by 2030.

How does improving diversity generate economic benefits?

Increasing the diversity of Australia's workforce gives broader benefits to the Australian economy by raising GDP and standards of living for all Australians.

Women

Women's workforce participation in Australia is at an all-time high, though a gender gap remains. If women's participation matched men's, Australia's GDP would increase by \$30.7 billion, or 8.7% to \$353 billion by 2050. It would also create an additional 1 million full-time equivalent workers with post-school qualifications (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2023).

People with a disability

Reducing the difference between labour market participation rates and unemployment rates for people with and without disabilities by one-third could result in a cumulative \$43 billion increase in Australia's GDP over the next decade in real dollar terms (Australian Human Rights Commission 2021).

Indigenous Australians

Closing the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' employment outcomes would likely result in a net fiscal improvement to the Australian Government of around \$12 billion (Deloitte 2019).

Planning: Identifying broader economic benefits related to diversity

During the procurement planning phase, you should identify if you can embed support for diversity in Australia's ICT sector into contract deliverables.

- Could this procurement result in employing or training women, people with a disability or Indigenous Australians in the ICT sector?
- Could procurement outcomes support a business owned by or employing women, people with a disability or Indigenous Australians?

Engaging the market: Craft your diversity related questions

When responding to an approach to market, sellers should provide information relevant to them about how their offering would provide broader economic benefits to Australia.

When engaging with tenderers, consider prompting for details such as (though not limited to):

- existing diversity initiatives within their firms and how they would work throughout the contract delivery
- ownership or part ownership by women, people with a disability or Indigenous Australians
- their plans to use businesses with diverse ownership throughout their supply chains
- the number of labour hours that women, people with a disability or Indigenous Australians will work
- their diversity plans within their organisation such as that set out by the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*
- their Reconciliation Action Plan
- their gender or other diversity levels in their Boards of Management or across executive leadership roles.

Link to the Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP)

The IPP applies to procurements made on behalf of non-corporate Commonwealth entities. If the procurement activity is subject to the Commonwealth Procurement Rules, it is likely subject to the IPP. [Read more about the IPP on the National Indigenous Australians Agency website.](#)

The primary purpose of the IPP is to stimulate Indigenous entrepreneurship, business and economic development, providing Indigenous Australians with more opportunities to participate in the economy.

Environmentally sustainable ICT procurement

The Australian Government is committed to the path to net zero. The APS Net Zero in Government Operations Strategy describes the plan to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions from government operations by the year 2030 (Department of Finance 2023). Globally, the ICT sector represents approximately 1.4% of global GHG emissions (Malodin et al 2024). In Australia, 21.7 kg of e-waste is generated per capita, while only 11.9 kg is recycled or re-used on average (OECD n.db).

How does environmentally sustainable ICT procurement generate economic benefits?

Sustainability outcomes can go hand in hand with delivering value for money and broader economic benefits. Energy efficient hardware can lower energy expenses and supporting businesses who offer innovative environmental solutions can help these businesses scale up and export their innovations. A strong Australian contribution to environmental sustainability also helps in the global effort to reduce economic risks from the dangerous effects of climate change.

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Link to the Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Connected Policy

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water's [Environmentally Sustainable Procurement \(ESP\) Policy](#) will reduce the environmental impacts associated with Australian Government procurements.

Currently the ESP applies to construction services at or above \$7.5 million. **From 1 July 2025, the policy applies to all procurements at or above \$1 million for furniture, fittings and equipment, ICT and textiles.**

Supporting the ESP Policy is the comprehensive [Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Guide](#) which steps through identifying opportunities for sustainable ICT procurements and approaching the market. **Procurement officials should defer to this guide for information on sustainable procurement and the associated environmental outcomes.**

Approval and contract entry: Considering your contract

The suggested questions throughout this guidance prompt suppliers to describe specific and measurable actions they will take which provide broader economic benefits. Gathering these kinds of responses assists when comparing tenders and when ensuring the successful tenderer follows through.

One way to ensure tenderers follow through on deliverables is to embed them into the procurement contract. The Department of Finance's Contract Management Guide covers the contract management process from planning to closure.

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Appendix A

Table 1. UNSPSC codes within scope of the ICT sector.⁶

UNSPSC	Description	UNSPSC	Description
43	Information Technology Broadcasting and Telecommunications	43190000	Communications Devices and Accessories
		43200000	Components for information technology or broadcasting or telecommunications
		43210000	Computer Equipment and Accessories
		43220000	Data Voice or Multimedia Network Equipment or Platforms and Accessories
		43230000	Software
46	Defence and Law and Security and safety equipment supplies	46170000	Security surveillance and detection
80	Management and Business Professionals and Administrative Services	80101507	Information technology consultation services
81	Engineering and Research and Technology Based Services	81110000	Computer services
		81111000	Forensic IT Services
		81111500	Software or hardware engineering
		81111508	Application implementation services
		81111600	Computer programmers
		81111700	Management information systems MIS
		81111800	System administrators
		81162200	Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS – Cloud)
		81111900	Information retrieval systems
		81112300	Computer hardware maintenance and support

⁶ This builds upon the definition for ICT projects in the Australian Skills Guarantee and encompasses ICT goods as set out by the Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy.

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		81112000	Data services
		81112002	Data processing or preparation services
		81112100	Internet services
		81112200	Software maintenance and support
		81162100	Platform as a Service (PaaS – Cloud)
		81162000	Software as a Service (SaaS – Cloud)
		81112201	Maintenance or support fees
		81141801	Safety or risk analysis
83	Public Utilities and Public Sector Related Services	83120000	Information services
		83121604	Online database information retrieval systems
		83100000	Utilities
		83110000	Telecommunications Media Services
86	Education and Training Services	86141704	Library or documentation services