

Stronger together

How the Microsoft ACTS and OCP Partnership empowers each other for mutually beneficial growth

When Microsoft ACTS (Advanced Cloud Transparency Services) and Open Contracting Partnership (OCP) partnered in May 2022, they shared a common goal: to increase transparency in government organizations worldwide. To achieve their aim, the two paired their complementary resources with a willingness to learn. The result is a partnership making remarkable strides toward its objective. As a major player in its industry, OCP provides ACTS with the data, networking opportunities, and insights needed to successfully implement its solutions. The partnership's evolution also yields a wealth of information on how to effectively collaborate. In recognition of these efforts, we're taking a moment to commemorate our shared journey and how we got to where we are today.

Complementary strengths and a shared vision

OCP is a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing efficiency, fairness, and visibility in the government procurement process. Their robust procurement data models help drive their mission—but require technology to leverage them. That's where ACTS enters. Our machine learning and AI capabilities harness the power of data-driven solutions to enable that crucial transparency.

The aligned missions and complementary strengths of ACTS and OCP make the companies intuitive and powerful partners. “We're both trying to achieve what the other one is trying to do,” says Norm Hodne, Program Director for Microsoft ACTS.

The partnership makes even more sense when considering the size of their shared vision. “Effecting change on a global scale is no easy feat. Working together makes the shared goal a realistic one.”

Working together to learn, build, and grow

The partnership undertook substantial legwork before hitting the ground. Public-private partnerships are notoriously complex, and the two teams worked hard to overcome those inherent hurdles. Patience, communication, and a willingness to learn from each other helped build a solid foundation of trust and understanding. As Hodne points out, “We needed to invest time and energy in understanding their ecosystem.”

This work entailed give-and-take playing out on both sides.

For instance, OCP made clear early on that all solutions need to be open-source—a decision that now reverberates through all of ACTS’ partnerships. At another point, ACTS educated OCP on the beneficial nature of hosting solutions on certain platforms. That process resulted in a better understanding of the work done together. Indeed, every lesson learned is its own reward, as the knowledge can be carried into other key partnerships and business strategies.

Measuring success one opportunity at a time

OCP’s strong relationships with government procurement agencies throughout the world open important doors for ACTS. Because ACTS works globally, we rely on organizations with on-the-ground connections and an in-depth understanding of a government’s local language, customs, and unique challenges to implement its technology. OCP’s standardized data model for over 60 countries provides that exact framework. This dynamic reinforces the interdependent nature of the partnership and how a win for one is a win for both parties.

OCP’s position as a global player also introduces ACTS to important networks that might otherwise remain untapped. “The work we’ve done with OCP gives us validity because OCP is known throughout the world’s governments. They’re everywhere,” Hodne says. As a result of the partnership, ACTS has received and accepted invitations to many important events, including a speaking panel at the United Nations and the International Anti-Corruption Conference hosted in Latvia.

OCP's data expertise makes it an equally valuable ally when creating new features and monitoring success. For instance, ACTS is currently in the process of creating a new feature for managing risk in the procurement process. Throughout the process, OCP has provided valuable input on the best data sources. The organization also measures the impact of solutions once they're deployed—another win-win.

Trusted partners in action

ACTS and OCP will continue to learn, work, and grow together. Their process is iterative by nature: a constant feedback loop of research, sharing, and expansion on pre-existing goals. While this method sets up a beneficial cycle of steady evolution, it also means that progress doesn't necessarily occur in a straight line. However, some exciting developments are worth mentioning. A successfully deployed proof of concept in the [Dominican Republic](#) has seen positive results. A similar use case in Ecuador is also bearing fruit.

ACTS is proud of its deepening partnership with OCP. "Overall, it's been very beneficial for us," Hodne says. And it will only grow stronger with time, as OCP continues to grant ACTS access to government organizations that already use Microsoft-based products to increase transparency and risk management options.