

Indonesia Corruption Watch Notes

Government Digital Activities:

Reviewing the ABPN's Social Media and Influencer Sector Spending Policy

Introduction

Government, Digital Activities, and Influencers

The use of influencers in the age of social media marketing for product engagement and promotion, is not something completely new. With the development of the internet, advertising through social media is increasingly being carried out, including by the Government through APBN or APBD spending. In the tourism sector, for instance, the Government is aggressively using the internet to increase the number of tourists through various kinds of socialization policy packages, both domestic and foreign. In this context, the internet has undoubtedly helped to disseminate information more quickly.

However, public policies that are socialized by the Government are often problematic, sensitive, controversial, and polemical. Social media does not have a fact-filtering mechanism like the more conventional mass media. Rampant controversies that are being promoted by the Government will become even more problematic if certain parties who want to roll out a public policy agenda bombard the public with inaccurate

information. Likewise, when the inaccurate information is resonated by “influencers”—a term for individuals who have many followers in the virtual world—they themselves also do not have sufficient knowledge of the issues raised. Influencers as trends can and will convey any information with great impact, whether it is accurate or not, as long as they get paid in return.

For example, the proximity of artists and musicians to the government and their involvement in supporting government policies, occurred at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government held a BPIP concert, which involved many Indonesian celebrities and musicians (as influencers). This concert drew a lot of criticism for its insensitivity to the public’s distress in the face of crisis. The concert was also notorious for normalizing crowds in closed rooms for a long period of time, even though they, the Government, had previously implored the public to obey health protocols to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The most recent example of this phenomenon is the blunder made by influencers, such as Ardhito Pramono (musician) and Gofar Hilman (public figure) who promoted the Work Creation Bill (Omnibus Law) through the hashtag #IndonesiaButuhKerja. Both of them finally apologized for “unknowingly” promoting the Omnibus Law, which was widely rejected by the public, through their social media accounts.

By looking at the development of the use of social media, internet and influencers in public policy contestation, and the increasing state budget allocation for socialization in the cyberspace, ICW felt the need to carry out an in-depth investigation towards government goods and service procurement (PBJ) activities related to digital activities and the

involvement of influencers in disseminating government programs. The goal is to monitor the use of the State Budget (APBN) in the new landscape of cyberspace—which is increasingly being used by the Government to disseminate information and shape public opinion—so that it can still be done in a transparent and accountable manner.

The PBJ information was obtained through searches on the Ministry's LPSE website, as well as Non-Ministry Government Institutions (LPNK), NK, and two law enforcement agencies namely, the Indonesian Attorney General's Office and the Indonesian Police, and was carried out on 14 August - 18 August 2020. The information obtained for the investigation is taken from the PBJ packages information through 2014-2018 period. The key words we use to identify PBJ packages are, "social media / social media", "influencer", "key opinion leader", "communication", and "Youtube".

There are, of course, various terms that can be used to describe an individual or group who can influence public opinion such as, *buzzer*, key opinion leader, etc. However, in this presentation, we use the term “influencer”, specifically to describe individuals or groups who have a very significant number of followers, big enough to influence public opinion.

Trillions of Rupiah for Digital Activities, Billions of Rupiah for Influencers

The search results found a large amount of budget related to digital activities in government programs. The total central government budget for digital activities reaches

Rp. 1.29 trillion. We divide the search results into several sections, namely: government budget by year, keywords, agencies, and influencer services.

Central government activities in the digital realm, especially related to public relations, have started and widely used since 2017. In 2014 to 2016, not many budgets were found on the goods and services procurement page. However, during that period, the budget disbursed was quite large, amounting to Rp. 6,515 billion. The new number increased in 2017 with the discovery of 24 number of procurement packages and 42 number of packages in 2018.

No	Year	Number of Procurement Packages	Procurement Package's Values
1	2014	2	Rp. 609 million
2	2015	3	Rp. 5,3 billion
3	2016	1	Rp. 606 million
4	2017	24	Rp. 535,9 billion
5	2018	42	Rp. 247,6 billion
6	2019	36	Rp. 183,6 billion
7	2020	25	Rp. 322,3 billion
TOTAL		133	Rp. 1,29 trillion.

Table 1. Government Expenditure Budget for Digital Activities by Year

Source: LPSE K / L, LPNK

Based on keywords, it was found that digital activities were mostly carried out through social media. We found 68 procurement packages with the keyword “social media” with a total budget of Rp. 1.16 trillion. Meanwhile, other activities are not known in detail in terms of the portal/location, with the exception of the two procurement packages which clearly state “Youtube”. A search with the keywords "online campaign", "digital campaign", and "online media" does not provide detailed information, although it does not rule out the activity being carried out on social media portals.

The keywords that are important to highlight are “Influencers” and “Key Opinion Leaders”. There were 40 procurement packages found within these two keywords. The total expenditure budget for influencers reaches Rp. 90.45 billion. The spending budget for “influencers” has been growing since 2017.

Some packages clearly state the names of the individuals whose services will be used as influencers. The Ministry of Education and Culture directly mentions several names such as Gritte Agatha, Ayushita W.N, Atta Halilintar, Citra Kirana, Zaskia Mecca, and others for the socialization of New Student Admissions (PPDB) activities.

No	Description	Number of Procurement Packages	Procurement Package’s Values
1	Social Media	68	Rp. 1,16 trillion
2	Influencer/KOL	40	Rp. 90,45 billion

3	Communication Consultant	7	Rp. 2,55 billion
4	Online Campaign	5	Rp. 9,64 billion
5	Media	5	Rp. 4,22 billion
6	Digital Campaign	3	Rp. 19,21 billion
7	Online Media	2	Rp. 4,18 billion
8	Youtube	2	Rp. 344,3 million
9	Branding	1	Rp. 2,5 billion
TOTAL		133	Rp. 1,29 trillion.

Table 2. Government Expenditure Budget for Digital Activities Based on Keywords

Source: LPSE K / L, LPNK

No	Year	Number of Procurement Packages	Procurement Package's Values
1	2014	-	-
2	2015	-	-
3	2016	-	-
4	2017	5	Rp. 17,68 billion
5	2018	15	Rp. 56,55 billion
6	2019	13	Rp. 6,67 billion
7	2020	7	Rp. 9,53 billion
Total		40	Rp. 90,45 billion

Table 3. Government Expenditure Budget for Influencers by Year

Source: LPSE K / L, LPNK

The Ministry of Tourism uses the most digital activities. There were 44 procurement packages with a value of Rp. 263.29 billion. The Ministry of Finance followed up with 17 procurement packages and a budget value of Rp. 21.25 billion. As for the record, there are other agencies in the agency's procurement portal. For example, SKK Migas' digital activities in the procurement portal owned by the Ministry of Finance.

No	Ministries/Institutions	Number of Procurement Packages	Procurement Package's Values
1	Ministry of Tourism	44	Rp. 263,29 billion
2	Ministry of Finance	17	Rp. 21,25 billion
3	Ministry of Education and Culture	14	Rp. 1,95 billion
4	Indonesian Police	12	Rp. 937 billion
5	Ministry of Transportation	11	Rp. 11 billion
6	Ministry of Communication and Informatics	9	Rp. 21,27 billion
7	Coordinating Ministry for	8	Rp. 2,7 billion

	Economic Affairs		
8	Capital Investment Coordinating Board	4	Rp. 2,15 billion
9	Minister For Public Works and Human Settlements	3	Rp. 3,47 billion
10	Ministry of Internal Affairs	2	Rp. 1,35 billion
11	Ministry of Health	2	Rp. 1,6 billion
12	Ministry of Manpower	2	Rp. 20,4 billion
13	Ministry of Village, PDT, and Transmigration	1	Rp. 4 billion
14	Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture	1	Rp. 1,35 billion
15	Ministry of Youth and Sports	1	Rp. 150 million
16	Ministry of Trade	1	Rp. 1,85 billion
17	Ministry of Defense	1	Rp. 1,2 billion
TOTAL		133	Rp. 1,29 trillion.

Table 4. Government Expenditure Budget for Digital Activities by Agency

Source: LPSE K / L, LPNK

The Ministry of Tourism is also known to use the most influencer services. There are 22 influencer service procurement packages with a package value of Rp. 77.66 billion. The Ministry of Education and Culture also uses an excessive amount of influencer services. There are 12 procurement packages with a value of Rp 1.6 billion rupiah.

No	Ministries/Institutions	Number of Influencer Service Procurement Packages	Procurement Package's Values
1	Ministry of Tourism	22	Rp. 77,66 billion
2	Ministry of Education and Culture	12	Rp. 1,6 billion
3	Ministry of Communication and Informatics	4	Rp. 10,83 billion
4	Ministry of Transportation	1	Rp. 195,8 million
5	Ministry of Youth and Sports	1	Rp. 150 million
TOTAL		40	Rp. 90,4 billion

Table 5. Government Expenditure Budget for Influencer Services by Agency

Source: LPSE K / L, LPNK

Crucial Points

Based on the presentation of data on social media and influencer spending in the APBN as described above, we can judge that the Government is increasingly spending public budgets for opinion building through cyberspace. From the results of the investigation through the LPSE portal for the 2014 - 2019 spending period, it was found out that the Government has budgeted at least Rp. 1.29 trillion, clearly an excessive public relations expenditure. If we want to explore other sources such as the APBN per K / L document or expand the scope of monitoring to local governments, it is possible that the number found is greater than Rp. 1.29 trillion.

The increasing activities of the Government in the digital realm, especially those related to the public relations function, need to be accounted for. First, the accountability and transparency of large public spending in the digital realm is to be demanded by the public as taxpayers. Accountability lies in the consideration of the use of social media, the mechanism for selecting the parties involved, budget standards for each item of social media spending, as well as the transparency of the process of appointing the parties involved. The disclosure of public information on the use of public spending for the social media sector and influencers is necessary, in order to distinguish and flag the use of influencers by certain people in government through informal splinter mechanisms, where the public were always made deeply unaware where the funds come from, who the donors are, and for whose interests do they disseminate information.

Second, the trend of using influencers for sensitive, controversial issues and topics that have the potential to inspire great resistance from certain groups of people can create new, unhealthy conditions for democracy. Public officials choose to take shortcuts to win the arduous battles of opinion, using public budgets and influencer services, instead of

building an open, argumentative, and healthy debate and discussion in the public policy making process. Unfortunately, social media has become the arena for banal discourse, because in the realm of cyberspace, reality or facts can be easily distorted, without an accountability mechanism.

Closing

This short report is a preliminary report presented to expose the trend of Government spending on the social media sector and influencer services. ICW is currently preparing the next series of reports to dissect the government procurement system for the social media and influencer sectors so that we can find out more about the accountability and transparency of PBJ in these two sectors.

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