

ALLEGHENY COUNTY

SUPPLIER'S GUIDE TO DOING BUSINESS DIVISION OF PURCHASING AND SUPPLIES

I. INTRODUCTION TO ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Allegheny County is the second largest of 67 counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. As one of the largest employers in Allegheny County, the County contributes significantly to the economic base of the area, employing more than 6,000 full-time and part-time employees.

II. FUNCTIONS OF THE DIVISION

A. Authority

The Allegheny County Division of Purchasing and Supplies, (“Purchasing”) is responsible for contracting for the purchase or lease of all materials, supplies, furnishings, equipment, insurance and surety and fidelity bonds or other personal property and non-professional services as stated in the Allegheny County Administrative Code, Article IX.

B. Purchasing Process

The standard purchasing process for Allegheny County involves: requisitioning; public bid solicitation; bid receipt; evaluation and contract award. A purchase request is the initial document in which the specific purchase requirement(s) and award criteria are identified. Upon receipt of a purchase request, the Purchasing Agent then prepares the appropriate solicitation document for posting.

The Division of Purchasing and Supplies’ formal bids are posted on a central bid notification system, BIDNET, as well as advertised in The Tribune Review. Sealed bids received in response to the solicitation are publicly opened and read at the place and time indicated on the posting. The bids are tabulated; evaluated by the Purchasing Agent and the end user; and awarded to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder meeting the specifications.

C. Other Purchases in Allegheny County

1. The Allegheny County Department of Public Works, Engineering Division, as stated in the Administrative Code, handles major construction projects in Allegheny County. The phone number for the Engineering Division 412-350-4005.
2. Departments of Allegheny County are able to procure professional services through their own Request for Proposal process. The services of Architects, Engineers, Financial Consultants, Legal Services and Medical Consultants are to be reviewed and evaluated by the Professional Services Review Committee.
3. Where the total cost of goods is *less than \$10,000*, the Division of Purchasing and Supplies is authorized by the Allegheny County Administrative Code to issue a purchase order based on verbal or written quotations obtained through an informal process. Purchase orders issued by the Division of Purchasing and Supplies are generated from an internal County requisition submitted by one of the County's many departments and offices. These County departments and offices have discretion regarding the supplier from whom they wish to purchase for these small dollar requirements. Potential suppliers may wish to contact the [Purchasing Partners](http://www.county.allegheny.pa.us/purchasing/contact.asp) from other County departments and offices located at <http://www.county.allegheny.pa.us/purchasing/contact.asp>.

III. Bid Process

A. Registration with the Central Bid Notification Service

The Division of Purchasing and Supplies uses an electronic bid notification system. The system offers three methods of registration so you may find what option best suits your organization. Suppliers that register for automatic e-mail or fax notification are notified instantly as new bids, quotes and amendments are issued in their product line or service. If you would like your company to be considered for future Invitations for Bid, please register with the system at 800-677-1997 and identify what goods /commodities you sell through the NIGP code. The Supplier must then specify the desire to be registered under Southwest Pennsylvania Purchasing Group (SPPG). This will allow the supplier to access other entities in Allegheny County. To review registration options, please visit - [Supplier Registrations Options](http://www.govbids.com/scripts/sppg/public/info/regoptions.asp) at <http://www.govbids.com/scripts/sppg/public/info/regoptions.asp>.

B. Thresholds

Sealed competitive bids are issued as an Invitation for Bid (IFB) (also known as Request for Bid [RFB]), for goods and services with a projected cost of over \$30,000 annually.

Informal bids are issued as an Inquiry or a Request For Quotation (RFQ) which are used for goods and services with a projected cost between \$10,000 and \$30,000 annually. Goods and services meeting these criteria may be awarded without public advertisement. Whenever possible there should be at least three (3) verbal, written, or electronic quotes solicited from qualified suppliers. Suppliers should take particular care when quoting prices to assure accuracy.

C. Receipt Of Bids

Solicitations will specify that the sealed competitive bids are to be received by the specified date and hour in the Allegheny County Controller's Office. The County of Allegheny does not accept bids after the date and time specified, or those sent to any other location.

1. **Small Purchases**

The Division of Purchasing and Supplies will receive and accept fax bids prior to the time and date designated for bid submission for unsealed bids only, (Inquiries / Requests for Quotation [RFQ]).

2. **Sealed Competitive Bids**

The Division of Purchasing and Supplies *will not* receive or accept faxes for formal sealed bids (IFB/RFB).

D. Formal Bid Openings

Sealed Competitive bids are publicly opened and read aloud at the time and date specified. Suppliers are invited to attend bid openings. Once the bid/proposal opening session is concluded, committee evaluations and competitors' solicitation response will not be discussed with suppliers until after the award is made. Individual suppliers may be contacted for further clarification concerning their solicitation response.

E. Contract awards

In response to an IFB/RFB, the successful bidder shall be the lowest responsible, responsive bidder meeting specifications, with full consideration of cost, quality and performance. Such considerations may include, but not be limited to: superior product quality or functionality; demonstrated experience and whether the bidder can perform the contract or provide the service promptly or within the time specified without delay or interference; the quality of performance of previous contracts or services; the previous and existing compliance by the bidder with laws and ordinances relating to the contract or service; special skills; staff training and financial strength. The Chief Purchasing Officer reserves the right to award on a "multiple-criteria" or "best-value" basis. The County does invite suppliers to propose recycled materials. The supplier shall include in their response, the total percentage of recycled product content as well as that of post-consumer waste if applicable.

IV. Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (M/W/DBE)

In accordance with Section 911.03 of the Allegheny County Administrative Code, the County has made an intentional effort to contract with Minority Business Enterprises (MBE) and Women Business Enterprises (WBE). Professional service providers and material suppliers are encouraged to bid for contract services available through the various county agencies soliciting products and services. Allegheny County's commitment to support small business and minority and women owner business enterprises is demonstrated in part through the County's commitment to reach and exceed fixed M/W/DBE goals on professional, service and construction contracts issued by Allegheny County agencies.

Allegheny County remains open in exploring ways to increase participation of minority and women owned business by providing greater opportunities for doing business with certified M/W/DBE's through the Allegheny County Department of Minority, Women and Disadvantage Business Enterprises. M/W/DBE's that are certified through Allegheny County Department of Minority and Women Disadvantaged Business Enterprise meet the requirements of the Department of Federal Transportation guidelines under CFR 49. Part 26 and enjoy a special dual status of having that certification recognized in bidding solicitations offered by the Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAT), Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), Delaware River Port Authority, City of Pittsburgh, City of Philadelphia and the Allegheny County Airport Authority.

Minority and women owned businesses seeking certification should contact the Allegheny County Department of Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise at 412-350-4309 or visit us on the web site at www.county.allegheny.pa.us/mwdbe/index.asp for assistance in becoming a qualified MBE and WBE firm.

V. Invoicing

Suppliers must send all original invoices to the Purchasing address shown on each Purchase Order. Purchasing may not pay any invoice that is faxed or a copy. Invoices must have an invoice number to be processed for payment. Invoices that do not reference an authorized Purchase Order will be rejected. The County of Allegheny is exempt from federal and state taxes. Purchasing will provide a formal tax exemption certificate upon request by the supplier.

VI. Supplier Visits

Purchasing welcomes and encourages visits by suppliers or their representatives. In order that the staff and suppliers may schedule their time most productively, Purchasing Agents are generally available Monday through Friday from 8:30-4:30 for supplier visits. Appointments should be scheduled with a [Purchasing Agent](#) at times that are mutually convenient.

VII. Gifts/Gratuities

The County continues to attempt to purchase and act as a business in terms of efficiency and cost savings. Purchasing Agents shall not accept gratuities of any sort (excluding promotional materials of nominal value, for example - pens, pencils and calendars) from prospective suppliers, unless approval is specifically received from the Chief Purchasing Officer. Purchasing Agents shall not accept gratuities of greater than \$35.00 or any cash gratuities from current suppliers (unless the supplier's contract is to expire within 120 days, in which case only promotional items of nominal value may be accepted). On occasion, suppliers may offer a gratuity to Purchasing as a group. The Director of Administrative Services shall decide if Purchasing may accept the gratuity and how the gratuity will be given to individuals.

VIII. Bid Protest

The Allegheny County Bid Protest Form is used in conjunction with an IFB that is currently open. The form should be submitted to the Purchasing Agent as noted in the actual IFB documentation. The **Bid Protest Form** may be found at on the Purchasing Web site.

IX. Award Protest

Suppliers who disagree or question an award of a contract through Purchasing should contact the Purchasing Agent responsible for the IFB that generated the award. If the disagreement cannot be resolved through the Purchasing Agent, the supplier should in turn work with the Chief Purchasing Officer, Director of the Department of Administrative Services and then finally with the County Manager. If the supplier still does not agree with the County's award decision, the supplier may then pursue legal means through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania judicial system.

If there are any further questions or concerns, they may be directed to: Division of Purchasing and Supplies, 436 Grant St., Room 206 Courthouse, Pittsburgh, PA 15219, Phone; 412-350-4495, Fax; 412-350-5883