

# **ALLEGHENY COUNTY**

## **DIVISION OF PURCHASING & SUPPLIES**

### **SUPPLIER'S GUIDE TO DOING BUSINESS WITH ALLEGHENY COUNTY**

## 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 solicitation; bid and proposal 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 facilitates the preparation of the appropriate solicitation document for posting.

The Division of Purchasing and Supplies’ solicitations (Invitation for Bid, Request for Proposal and Request for Quotation) are posted on a central notification system, [Bonfire](#), as well as advertised in local newspapers. Sealed bids, proposals and quotes are received electronically and are opened at the place and time indicated on the posting. Bids are tabulated, evaluated by the Purchasing Agent and the end user, and then awarded to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder meeting the specifications. Proposals are reviewed by an evaluation committee and the contract is awarded to the proposer determined to be in the best interest of the county.

### C. Other Purchases in Allegheny County

1. The Department of Public Works, as stated in the Administrative Code, handles major construction projects in Allegheny County. The Division of Purchasing and Supplies is not directly involved in the solicitations or contract awards for these projects. These can be found at <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Projects-and-Initiatives/Doing-Business-with-Allegheny-County-Bids-and-Solicitations/Public-Works-Bids-and-Proposals>.
2. The Department of Human Services serves as the Issuing Office for projects administered by the Department of Human Services. The Division of Purchasing and Supplies is not directly involved in the solicitations or contract awards for these projects. These can be found at <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Projects-and-Initiatives/Doing-Business-with-Allegheny-County-Bids-and-Solicitations/Human-Services-DHS-Solicitations>.
3. The Department of Economic Development posts specifications for projects funded by the Department and administered by other local municipal governments. These can be found at <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Projects-and-Initiatives/Doing-Business-with-Allegheny-County-Bids-and-Solicitations/Economic-Development-Bid-Notices>.
4. Departments of Allegheny County are authorized 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.
5. Where the total cost of goods is *less than \$10,000* annually, 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 these small dollar requirements.

### **III. Bid Process**

#### **A. Registration with the Central Bid Notification Service**

The Division of Purchasing and Supplies uses [Bonfire](https://alleghenycounty.bonfirehub.com/portal/?tab=openOpportunities), an electronic centralized posting and notification system. The system offers two levels of registration, so suppliers may determine which option best suits their organizations needs and requirements. If you would like your company to be considered for future Invitations for Bid, Requests for Proposal and Request for Quotation, please complete the registration process. To review current registration options, please visit <https://alleghenycounty.bonfirehub.com/portal/?tab=openOpportunities>.

#### **B. Thresholds**

The procurement of goods and services with a projected annual cost of \$30,000 or more, require a competitive solicitation. The solicitation may be in the form of an Invitation for Bid (IFB) or a Request for Proposal (RFP)

Goods and services with a projected annual cost between \$10,000 and \$30,000 require an informal solicitation which is referred to as a Request for Quotation (RFQ). Whenever possible there should be at least three (3) written or electronic quotes solicited from qualified suppliers.

#### **C. Receipt of Bids and Proposals**

Solicitations will specify that the sealed competitive Bid or Proposal (IFB/RFP) must be received by a specific date and time. The solicitation will also specify the format and manner in which the Bid or Proposal must be submitted.

The County of Allegheny cannot accept Bids or Proposals after the date and time specified, or those submitted in a manner other than that required in the solicitation.

#### **D. Formal Bid Openings**

Sealed competitive bids are publicly opened at the time and date specified. Suppliers are invited to attend bid openings. Once the bid 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.

Responses to a Request for Proposal are not opened publicly and these responses (proposals) will not be made public until after a contract is awarded.

#### **E. Contract awards**

In response to an Invitation for Bid (IFB), 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-vendor" or "best-value" basis.

In response to a Request for Proposal (RFP), the successful proposer shall be determined by a committee approved by the County Manager. The evaluation committee will evaluate proposals based on criteria included in the solicitation. A contract will be awarded to the proposer submitting the proposal determined to be in the best interest of Allegheny County.

#### **F. Contract Execution**

Allegheny County utilizes the DocuSign system to electronically manage and execute contracts. Successful bidders and proposers will receive appropriate contract execution documents electronically for their approval. A completed copy of the contract will be forwarded to the supplier upon completion of the electronic approval process.

#### **IV. Minority, Women and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (M/W/DBE)**

In accordance with Section 911.03 of the Allegheny County Administrative Code, the County desires to contract with Minority-Owned Business Enterprises (MBE) and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (WBE). Professional service and material suppliers are encouraged to bid for contract services available through the various County agencies. Allegheny County's commitment to support small business and minority and women owned business enterprises is demonstrated in part through the County's commitment to reach and exceed fixed M/W/DBE contract goals.

Suppliers seeking assistance or additional information regarding the County's M/W/DBE program should contact the Allegheny County Department of Equity and Inclusion at 412-350-4309 or visit their web site at <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Projects-and-Initiatives/Equity-and-Inclusion>.

#### **V. Veteran Owned Small Business (VOSB)**

As required by Allegheny County Ordinance 18-12-OR, a 5% goal has been established for the purchase of materials, supplies, furnishings, equipment or other personal property and non-professional services from Veteran Owned Small Businesses. Information regarding the process established to pursue this goal will be available in the solicitation and in the Purchasing Manual.

Suppliers with questions or seeking additional information should contact the Division of Purchasing and Supplies at 412-350-4495.

#### **VI. Invoicing**

- A. For goods and services acquired via Purchase Orders, suppliers must send all original invoices to the Office of the County Controller, at [PO.Invoices@AlleghenyCounty.US](mailto:PO.Invoices@AlleghenyCounty.US), as shown on each Purchase Order. 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. The Division of Purchasing and Supplies can provide a formal tax exemption certificate upon request by the supplier.
- B. For services acquired without a Purchase Order, invoices shall be submitted as directed by the County at the time.

#### **VII. Supplier Visits**

The Purchasing staff welcomes and encourages visits by supplier representatives. In order that the staff and suppliers may schedule their time most productively, appointments should be scheduled with a Purchasing Agent at times that are mutually convenient. Purchasing Agent contact information is available on the Purchasing Division website: <https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Projects-and-Initiatives/Doing-Business-with-Allegheny-County-Bids-and-Solicitations/Purchasing-and-Supplies>.

## **VIII. Gifts/Gratuities**

Allegheny County is committed to the highest possible ethical standards and transparency within the procurement process. Therefore, Purchasing Agents shall not accept gratuities of any sort (excluding promotional materials of nominal value, such as 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 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 the Purchasing Division may accept the gratuity.

## **IX. Bid Protest**

The Allegheny County Bid Protest Form is used to protest all or a portion of an Invitation for Bid that has not been awarded. The form can be obtained by contacting the Purchasing Division at 412-350-4495. Completed forms should be submitted to the Purchasing Agent noted in the IFB documentation.

## **X. Award Protest**

Suppliers who disagree or question the award of a contract should contact the Purchasing Agent responsible for the solicitation. 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.

## **XI. Questions or Concerns**

Questions or concerns should be directed to: Division of Purchasing and Supplies, 542 Forbes Ave., Room 201, Pittsburgh, PA 15219, Phone: 412-350-4495, Fax: 412-350-5883.