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Harris County Purchasing Agent

INFORMATION FOR VENDORS

This information is provided by the Office of the Purchasing Agent to assist suppliers and potential suppliers interested in doing business with Harris County.

The Harris County Purchasing Agent is responsible for purchases of goods and services for Harris County; Harris County Flood Control District; Harris County Hospital District; Community Health Choice, Inc.; Harris County Toll Road Authority; Community Supervision & Corrections; and Harris County Juvenile Probation.

Purchasing Organization:

The Office of the Purchasing Agent is divided into two major divisions: **Purchasing Operations** and **Purchasing Services**.

- **Purchasing Operations** consists of two groups:
 1. **Medical, Pharmaceutical, and Technology** – Responsible for procurement of medical equipment, supplies and services; pharmaceutical supplies and services; computer and telecommunication hardware, software systems and supplies; various personal and professional service contracts.
 2. **Industrial/Construction** – Responsible for procurement of rolling equipment and supplies, lumber, plumbing, hardware, tools, building services, engineering support, insurance, printing, furniture, service contracts, and construction.

Both groups are supported by specific personnel responsible for the general administrative, technology, and personnel requirements of the department.

- **Purchasing Services** has three major functions:
 1. **Warehousing** – Responsible for storage and disposal of surplus and confiscated items, including auction services. Most vehicles and heavy equipment are auctioned by an out-sourced auctioning company. The County does auction surplus and confiscated property online at <http://www.publicsurplus.com/sms/hctx,tx/browse/home>. Items can be viewed at the Purchasing Services warehouse at 601 Lockwood. For more information, call (713) 368-8800.

2. Recycling – Responsible for operation of the County recycling program, including the sale of recycled commodities such as paper, cardboard, plastic, metals, etc. The County recycling operation has been recognized statewide and nationwide as a leader in the recycling/reuse effort.

3. Inventory – Responsible for maintenance of personal property inventory with a defined unit value of generally \$500 or more. This includes tagging County assets of \$5,000, tracking other inventory items, and inspection of rolling equipment upon receipt. County surplus items are transferred to County departments as applicable.

The Purchasing Agent supervises the procurement of products and services necessary to support Harris County and other governmental entities. Most purchases are initiated by a request from one of the end users. The County has term contracts for items used on a regular basis. These contracts result from competitive bids and requests for proposals (RFP's) and generally are one year in length with one or more renewal options.

Informal Quotations

Purchases of goods and services for \$50,000 or less do not require use of the advertised bid/proposal process or to be published in a newspaper. These purchases are at the discretion of the Buyer and the requirements of the end user. It is the responsibility of the Buyer to determine that adequate information and pricing are available to evaluate the products or services requested as the time frame and workload allow. The buyer may request quotations by telephone, fax, or in writing. Quotation results may be obtained from the Buyer.

Advertised Bids and Requests for Proposals (RFP)

The County Purchasing Act (Texas Local Government Code, §262.021 *et seq.*), as amended, provides that notice of a proposed purchase exceeding \$50,000 must be published at least once a week in a newspaper of general circulation with the first day of publication being at least 14 days before the date of bid opening. Generally, projects exceeding \$50,000 are advertised in the Houston Chronicle, Friday edition, in the Classified Section under Bids and Proposals.

The advertisement contains a short description of the products or services desired, the job number, the time and date the bids are due and location where the bid packages may be picked up. Jobs that are advertised in the newspaper are also posted for public view at the Office of the Harris County Purchasing Agent. Due to staffing and funding restraints, Harris County maintains no formal bidders list.

A bid or RFP package may be obtained by one of the following methods:

1. Visit the Purchasing Office and pick up the bid/RFP package.
2. Register online at the Purchasing website at <http://www.hctx.net/purchasing>. Click on "Bid Listings," register and you will then be able to download the bid. The site has the ability to notify suppliers by commodity when an advertised bid/RFP has been

placed on the site. Once registered, a password will be assigned to the supplier and bid/RFP packages may be downloaded from the Purchasing website. Using this system enables a timely review and receipt of bid/proposal documents. Suppliers must keep their registration data current in order to receive timely updates concerning documents they have downloaded. Since more than 90 percent of purchasing jobs are downloaded utilizing the purchasing website, current supplier information is essential to receive timely addenda and other information concerning downloaded documents.

3. Bid packages may be mailed to a vendor when the vendor's address is outside the greater Houston area. The Purchasing Office assumes no responsibility as to timely delivery of mailed bid packages.
4. Some bid packages, generally for construction projects, must be picked up from another location such as the Engineer's office, Flood Control or Hospital District office.

Bid or RFP advertisement data may be conveyed to bonafide associations or agencies such as the Houston Business Council to notify their membership of business opportunities. Proper communication with any agency distributing Harris County bid/RFP information is important to assure timely communication of any addenda to the job specifications.

Harris County does not certify vendors for Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB) status. HUBs, however, are encouraged to participate in the County bid processes. Harris County recognizes the certifications of other governmental entities.

Vendors are encouraged to read bid or RFP information thoroughly before contacting a buyer with questions. Email is the preferred way of communication with this office regarding bid/proposal documentation.

Care should be taken when completing the bid/proposal response. Failure to comply with requirements may result in disqualification. Prior to submitting your response, **verify that it is signed** and all documentation has been completed. If you have picked up more than one job, make sure the correct job response is placed in the envelope marked with the correct job number.

Generally, bids and proposals are due by 2:00 p.m. local time in Houston, Texas, on Mondays and are opened shortly thereafter in the conference room behind the Commissioners Court room on the ninth floor of the County Administration Building, 1001 Preston. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL LATE BIDS/PROPOSALS BE ACCEPTED.**

Bids are presented to Commissioners Court when in session. Bids received on days when Commissioners Court does not meet are referred for future action. Bids may be awarded, rejected, carried over, or referred (referrals will be reviewed in more detail and placed back on the agenda at a later date). Copies of the bid tabulations are available in Commissioners Court or in the office of the Purchasing Agent. Bids are also available for viewing in the office of the County Clerk and bid tabulations may be viewed on the Purchasing website.

Responses to an RFP are confidential and are opened in the Purchasing Office without public participation. A request for proposal allows negotiation with those vendors who submit proposals that have a reasonable possibility of obtaining the award. The final negotiated contract become public upon award and issuance of the purchase order as described by state law.

It is the policy of the Purchasing Agent to consider total cost when making an evaluation to determine the lowest and best bid. Total cost evaluations may include items such as quality, durability, and user recommendation/experience with the product or service, past performance and other items as applicable.

The award recommendation letters submitted to Commissioners Court by this office are copied to all vendors responding to a bid. Award recommendations are available through the Commissioners Court Agenda published on the Friday preceding the Tuesday Commissioners Court meeting. The Commissioners Court Agenda is posted in various County buildings including the Administration Building and the Family Law Center. It is also available from the Harris County website at www.hctx.net.

County purchasing law allows for a low bidder meeting specifications and being bypassed for an award the opportunity to appear at Commissioners Court. It is a requirement of the bid/RFP General Requirements that the vendor notify the Purchasing Office prior to appearing in Commissioners Court.

The Purchase Order is the County's official means of procurement. Vendors are not authorized to deviate from the instructions set forth in the Purchase Order and invoices must always reference the applicable Purchase Order number.

Commissioners Court has implemented a policy requiring all suppliers to be current with the payment of Harris County taxes. Suppliers may check the tax status of their company by going to <http://www.hctx.net>. Suppliers owing taxes to the County may not be considered for bid award recommendations.

Purchasing Office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.