

The Purchasing Post

Constructive Complaining

Award is made to the lowest bid meeting specifications from a responsible vendor. This is Purchasing's mantra; the crux of the competitive bid process. Everyone understands low bid. Good specifications have been discussed in past issues, too. But how is a vendor determined to be responsible?

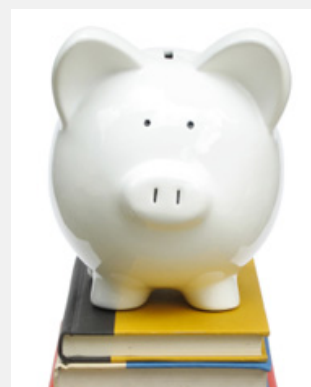
In public procurement, vendors are considered responsible until proven otherwise. As part of the open bid process and creating a level playing field, all vendors have an opportunity to compete and do business with public organizations. It isn't until a vendor fails to provide the product or service that they are deemed irresponsible. And even then there is a process to remove a vendor from consideration for award.

So what is this process?

1st Step – Contact the vendor as soon as the problem is discovered; don't wait. Hopefully the error is a one-time situation and easily resolved between the supplier and end-user. Most companies will make good on their product/service. They want a happy customer because a happy customer is a repeat customer. A timely phone call or e-mail will solve most problems. Do document what steps have been taken, just in case.

2nd Step – No response? Time to submit a formal written complaint. Attached is the newest version of the "Complaint to Vendor" form. Departments fill out the form, documenting the problem and what steps have been taken to correct it. Send it to Purchasing, who reviews and may ask for additional information. Purchasing forwards the formal complaint to the vendor asking for their comments &/or resolution. If the issue still remains unresolved after a specific amount of time, the vendor is deemed irresponsible and removed from consideration for any award. Depending on the type of the problem, the blacklisting may be for a year or it may be for five years.

Bear in mind that sometimes the vendor is correct or both parties may be in error. Restocking fees or shipping costs or splitting the difference in the items' cost may be ways of resolving a problem. Whatever the problem, remember: Timeliness is key. Don't wait to complain about a vendor when Purchasing is preparing to award a new contract to them. We have to give vendors an opportunity to correct an error or provide an explanation.



Welcome

Katie Evans is the new voice on the phone at Purchasing, our administrative specialist.

Katie hails from numerous places, most recently Omaha, NE, where she just wrapped up her bachelor of science degree in business from Bellevue University.

Her first day was Monday, August 15; just in time for all the hoopla of returning students and classes starting.

Please stop by to welcome Katie and introduce yourself.

