

How to do Business with Cobb County

The Purchasing Department contracts for more than \$400 million in goods, services and construction each year.

It is easy to do business with Cobb County. All purchases are made through a comprehensive system of specifications and competitive bidding. This assures that contracts go to the lowest bidders who comply with specifications, terms and conditions and have the capacity to deliver.

An overview of information needed to bid for Cobb County Government contracts follows. For more detailed information, contact:

Cobb County Purchasing Department
1772 County Services Parkway
Marietta, GA 30008
(770) 528-8400

Receiving Bids

Bidders List. The Purchasing Division maintains a bid mailing list for most products and services purchased by the County. If you wish to be included, contact:

Cobb County Purchasing Department
1772 County Services Parkway
Marietta, GA 30008
(770) 528-8400

Cobb County will use reasonable efforts to include your firm on the Bid List, but it has no legal duty to do so. No guarantee or warranty is made that you will be included in the Bid List.

Cobb County Purchasing Department launched "Vendor Self Service" (VSS), a new and convenient way for vendors to register with Cobb County and to search for current business opportunities.

Vendors currently registered with Cobb County must activate their accounts in the new system in order to receive Email notification of current business opportunities.

All current and potential vendors will be able to go online at cobbpurchasing.org and register by creating their own user name and password. Once a Vendor Self Service account has been established, vendors will be able to access current business opportunities and other pertinent procurement-related information twenty four hours a day.

Advantages to vendors using Vendor Self Service (VSS) include:

- Ability to list all business locations under one account
- Accurate use of standardized commodity codes issued by the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, Inc. (NIGP)
- Easily update vendor profile information
- 24-hour access to current business opportunities

Vendors who do not have computer access may register at any Cobb County Public Library or at a kiosk set up in the Cobb County Purchasing Department.

The Purchasing Department is enthusiastic about this new service to assist vendors in doing business with Cobb County.

For additional information about Vendor Self-Service (VSS) call 770-528-8400 or email purchasing@cobbcounty.org.

Solicitation of Bids and Quotations. After your name is placed on a Bid List you may receive solicitations for Bids/Proposals on formal solicitations (\$30,000 or more) or a Quotation Request (under \$30,000). However, this does not ensure your firm's response to a bid, proposal, quotation or qualification request will be automatically "responsive"; this is evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Qualification of Bidders. Qualification of Bidders are not reviewed prior to placement on a mailing list, and placement on a mailing list does not imply that the Purchasing Division considers your firm to be a "responsible" Bidder.

How to Obtain Bids if you are not on the Mailing List. You may learn of a Bid Request from the Friday Legal Advertisements in the Marietta Daily Journal, TV23, Trade Associations, The Dodge Report, this Web site, or other publications. If you become aware of a Bid in any manner other than receiving a Request for Quotation* or Invitation to Bid, you may obtain an Invitation for Bid or Quotation Form from the Cobb County Purchasing Department. When you request your Bid Form, ask for it by Bid Number, Title and Opening Date - this information should appear in all advertisements, solicitations and notices.

* Formal published advertisements are NOT required for Quotation Requests (amounts less than \$30,000). However, these solicitations are automatically mailed to a reasonable number of Vendors on our Bidders List and may be acquired in the same manner as Bid Requests. Purchasing determines the number of mailings warranted for each quotation.

All vendors are advised that the county is under No Obligation to mail bid packages, RFP's, RFQ's, etc. to any vendor and the county disclaims any liability/responsibility for doing so/or not doing so. All vendors must check public notices to determine when the bids responses are to be submitted.

Types of Purchases

Formal Bids and Contracts. The Invitation for Bid is a formal procurement method (normally, purchases \$30,000 or more) utilizing legal advertising and a formal official opening of Bids viewed by witnesses at a prescribed time and date. Contracts resulting from the bid process may be of several types:

- One Time Contracts. (firm or fixed price) These are awarded for a specified quantity of goods or services. According to the terms of the contract, delivery may be in one or several shipments.
- Price Agreements. (Term or Requirements Contracts) These are awarded for anticipated amounts during a certain time period, usually one year. The contracts are binding for the full time period regardless of quantity. Price agreements may, at the discretion of the County or vendor, be renewed for up to two additional one year periods.
- Construction Contracting. Bids and contracts generally follow the format and framework described in this guide. They may, however, have additional special requirements for bid surety, bonding, insurance, wage rates, etc. The Bid Documents, including blueprints and specifications, are available for a reasonable fee from either the user Department or a consultant.
- Professional Services Contracting. Contracts for professional services are awarded on the basis of a number of qualitative factors and may or may not consider price. Some departments pre-qualify professional services providers with either competitive bidding or negotiations as a second step to the selection process. Procurement of professional services follows approved County policy, with the ultimate selection based on the best interest of the County and maximum value received.
- Service Contracts. The County contracts for services such as maintenance of equipment, janitorial, etc., on Invitation for Bids or Request for Proposals (RFP). Various factors including, but not limited to, the price quoted, experience of the firm, management ability as well as other bid criteria provided are considered when awarding these contracts. Additional requirements for bonds and insurance may apply.

Informal Quotations and Contracts. The informal Quotation Process (normally, purchases under \$30,000) may result in a Purchase Order for commodities, printing or services. There are two types of informal Quotations normally used:

- Written Quotations. Informal written Quotations are solicited in the same manner as written Bids, but without the formalities of a Public Bid Opening or Advertising for purchases between \$5,000 and \$29,999.99.
- Telephone Quotations. For purchases between \$1,000 and \$4,999.99, the Purchasing Department is authorized to obtain Quotations by telephone. Telephone Quotations have the same integrity as written bids, whereas the lowest responsive and responsible bidder receives the award.

How To Bid

Contents of Solicitations. The Bid Form contains the specifications for the commodity or service being purchased, the terms and conditions governing the bid, and will become a part of the actual contract if you are awarded the bid.

Adherence to Specifications. Manufacturer's names, trade names, brand information and/or catalog numbers listed in a specification are for information and establishment of quality level expected. They are not intended to limit competition. You may offer any brand which meets or exceeds the specifications. If bids are based on comparable products, indicate on the bid form the manufacturer's name and catalog number. You should submit with your bid, complete descriptive literature and/or specifications. You should also explain in detail how the proposed comparable item will meet the required specifications and not be considered an exception. Adequate proof must be submitted to substantiate the substitution. The Cobb County Board of Commissioners reserve the right to be the sole judge of what is comparable and acceptable. Bids which do not comply with these requirements are subject to rejection. If you fail to name a substitute, it will be assumed that you are bidding on, and will be required to furnish, goods identical to the bid standard.

Bidding Prompt Payment Discounts. You may offer a cash discount for prompt payment. However, such discounts will not be considered in determining the lowest net cost for bid evaluation purposes. Your bid should reflect any unit price discount to be considered in the bid evaluation.

Freight and Shipping Charges. All written and phone quotations must include FOB: Delivered or FOB: Shipping Point. If it is FOB: Shipping Point, an estimated freight amount must be included.

Submitting the Bid. Once you have completed and signed the Bid and Acknowledgment Form, seal the document(s) in the envelope provided and return to us using the enclosed mailing label. Be sure that your company name, the Bid Number and the opening date is clearly reflected on the outside of the bid envelope.

Be sure that your bid reaches the Cobb County Purchasing Department, 1772 County Services Parkway, Marietta, GA 30008, before the DELIVERY TIME and date specified on the Form - NO bids are accepted after that time. DELIVERY TIME is typically 12 noon with OPENING TIME at 2 p.m. on the specified date.

All bids are opened at the indicated time and date in a public forum, read aloud, tabulated and are available for public inspection. Regularly scheduled Bid Openings are televised live on Cobb County's government access cable channel, TV23.

For questions regarding the Bid Form, contact the Purchasing Department representative whose name appears on the Bidder Acknowledgment Form.

Errors in Bidding. Your bid is your firm offer to enter into a contract with the County. However, if you discover that you have made an honest mistake in your bid, which can be supported by proof that has evidentiary value you must notify the Director of Purchasing immediately. The Director of Purchasing, on a case-by-case basis and in the exercise of his professional discretion, may grant or deny relief.

How are Awards Made?

Acceptable Bids. After bids are opened, read and tabulated, they are analyzed by the Purchasing Division's Staff and/or user county department representatives to determine the lowest responsive, and responsible bid that meets specifications. To be responsive, a Bidder must complete all applicable portions of the Bid as instructed. Omission of a signature or any crucial part will result in automatic bid disqualification. In addition, all bids must meet the minimum acceptable quality level as stated in the specifications. Failure to meet the specifications will also result in disqualification of the bid; however, additional money will not be spent to obtain a quality level in excess of that specified.

Using Division's Concurrence. The User Department will also provide input into the Purchasing Department's recommendation and must provide a concurrence. Although the time varies, analysis and award is normally completed within ninety days (you will be notified in rare instances of exceptions).

Awards. All awards are made by the Board of County Commissioners, County Manager or Purchasing Director depending upon the dollar amount of the award and the budget authority of the specific purchase.

Bid Rejections. Whenever it is in the county's best interest, the county reserves the right to reject any and all bids.

Special Requirements of Some Bids

Many bids are for specialized products or services and contain requirements designed to meet specific needs. Some of the common special requirements are listed below.

Pre-Bid Conferences. Pre-Bid Conferences are designed to give you, the Vendor, the opportunity to meet Purchasing Department representatives, user department representatives, as well as examine and discuss specifications, bid conditions, and delivery information. Cobb County welcomes and values your input on these matters and encourages your attendance.

Security - Bid and Performance. Bid surety is designed to assure that Bids are presented in good faith and unconditionally may not be unilaterally withdrawn. Performance surety assures that a Contract will be faithfully performed.

Security is recognized as a possible impediment in your bidding, and is not required on the majority of purchases made by the County. If security is required, the specific conditions contained in the Invitation for Bid will indicate the kind and amount of security. If a Bid security is required with the Bid, the Bid will not be acceptable without it.

Bid Deposit. Cash, Money Order, a Bid Bond executed by a Surety company, Certified Check or Cashier's Check may be required to be submitted with your Bid as Bid Security. Any check submitted must be made payable to Cobb County Board of Commissioners. A PERSONAL CHECK OR A COMPANY CHECK OF A BIDDER SHALL NOT BE DEEMED A VALID BID SECURITY.

Performance and Payment Bond. Bond shall be issued by a Surety Company authorized to do business as surety in the State of Georgia, which has a Resident Agent in the State of Georgia.

Insurance. Whenever a Quotation or bid requires you to provide insurance, the low bidder must provide this prior to the Purchasing Division recommending award. It will be necessary for you to furnish a Certificate evidencing insurance coverages as may be required. All insurance requirements and a sample form will be provided to all interested Bidders.

Samples and Testing. From time to time the Purchasing Division may require samples of goods being bid. If such a request is made, all samples must be furnished free of charge (including delivery charges) and will be returned at Vendor's written request if not destroyed in testing.

Addenda/Changes in Bid Proposal. During the course of a formal written bid procedure, changes may take place affecting the terms and conditions or the specifications of the bid. In these instances, a written addendum will be mailed or faxed to all vendors who have received bid documents. These changes become an integral part of the bid and may be required to be signed and returned with the bid documents. The Addendum will indicate if a signature is required as well as if it must be returned.

Vendor's Responsibilities After Award

Contract Performance. After you have been Awarded a Contract - the acceptance of your delivery is conditional upon inspection by the receiving agency and their certification that you have fully complied with the terms of the contract. This includes, but is not limited to, on-time delivery of the exact items described in the Purchase Order.

Change Orders and Modifications. Occasionally, after a Contract has been awarded, changes occur in either price or performance. If the Contract provides for modifications, it is done by a written Change Order which is sent to the Vendor.

Please note that the Contract will specifically state the circumstances under which changes are allowed.

Purchasing Surplus Property

Cars, trucks and a variety of other types of miscellaneous equipment used by the County will be sold to the public either by Sealed Bid or Public Auction. Cobb County's Public Auction is conducted annually and is typically held in the month of September.

For further information, contact:

Cobb County Purchasing Department
1772 County Services Parkway
Marietta, GA 30008
(770) 528-8400

Invoice and Payment Procedures

The Cobb County Finance Department Accounts Payable Division is responsible for ensuring that all legal and procedural requirements have been met before authorizing payments to Vendors. In order to facilitate the timely processing of payments to Vendors, the Accounts Payable Division must have an up-to-date completed vendor master form on file, and a proper invoice.

Proper Invoice

The County may set forth the requirements for a proper invoice. The requirements of a proper invoice may be as set forth in the agreement or contract governing the purchase. However, no invoice submitted by a vendor shall be considered a proper invoice unless the invoice is an original invoice, is delivered to the County in accordance with the purchase order and sets forth the following and additional information:

- a) The invoice shall set forth the County purchase order number, and the invoice shall correlate to the County purchase order number under which the purchase was made; and
- b) The invoice shall set forth the name of the business organization that is recited in the County purchase order, and
- c) The invoice shall set forth the date of its preparation; and
- d) The invoice shall set forth an identifying number to facilitate identification of the invoice; and
- e) The invoice should set forth the vendor's federal identification number; and
- f) The invoice shall set forth a description of the goods or services or property provided to the County; and
- g) The invoice shall set forth the delivery terms set forth within the County purchase order; and
- h) The invoice shall set forth the location and date of delivery of the goods or services or property to the County; and
- i) The invoice shall set forth the quantity of the goods or services or property provided to the County; and
- j) The invoice shall set forth the unit price of the goods or services or property provided to the County; and
- k) The invoice shall set forth the extended total price of the goods or services or property provided to the County; and
- l) The invoice shall set forth applicable discounts.

Mail all invoices to:

Cobb County Finance Department
100 Cherokee Street, Suite 410
Marietta, GA 30090-9610

Non-Binding Nature of the Publication

This publication is designed solely to provide general summary information to those wishing to do procurement business with Cobb County. As such, it is not binding in either a legal or regulatory sense. The procurement activity of Cobb County is performed in accordance with the applicable laws of the State of Georgia, Cobb County Ordinances and other applicable rules and regulations which govern procurement.

This publication does not have the force or effect of any law, rule or regulation and should not be relied upon by bidders in determining their actions or conduct.