



# DOING BUSINESS WITH THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

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# **DOING BUSINESS WITH THE CITY OF GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This guide is an important resource for prime contractors, subcontractors, materials suppliers, service providers, retailers, and any other business that wishes to participate in the City of Gainesville's procurement process; it will help you to understand how the City of Gainesville makes purchases. After reading through the Guide, you should be armed with the necessary information to effectively do business with the City. Many government agencies follow similar processes, and as such, the guide may still be of benefit to you even if you do not conduct business with the City of Gainesville.

The information contained in the guide is a general overview and in no way replaces the City's Purchasing Policies and Procedures. The Purchasing Policies and Procedures can be found in Chapter 41-000 of the City of Gainesville's Financial Services Procedures Manual.

For more information on the City's Purchasing, or to obtain policies and procedures contact the Purchasing Division at (352) 334-5021.

## **2. GENERAL GOVERNMENT AND GRU**

The City of Gainesville is effectively split into two functional units: Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU) and General Government. General Government consists of everything other than GRU, and includes Finance, Fire, Police, Parks and Public Works to name a few. GRU's Purchasing is handled separately and somewhat differently than General Government's. This guide contains information only on General Government purchasing. For the purpose of simplicity, City of Gainesville throughout this Guide refers only to General Government. For information on GRU Purchasing, contact GRU's Purchasing Division at (352) 334-3400 x1240 or visit [www.gru.com/YourBusiness/DoBusinessWithGRU/](http://www.gru.com/YourBusiness/DoBusinessWithGRU/)

## **3. PURCHASING ORGANIZATION**

The City of Gainesville's purchasing function is *decentralized* up to \$50,000. This means that purchases under \$50,000 are not required to go through the central Purchasing Division; individual City departments and divisions can make their own procurement and purchasing decisions up to that amount. Decentralization is voluntary and certain departments still choose to have the Purchasing Division handle all or some of their procurement needs under the \$50,000 threshold.

All Purchases, whether handled by the individual departments/divisions or Purchasing, must follow certain rules, which are outlined in the City of Gainesville's Purchasing Policies and Procedures.

#### 4. THRESHOLDS

Purchases *under \$2000* do not require written quotations; verbal quotations are sufficient. Though competitive bidding is not required on purchases under \$2000, it is suggested that departments/divisions shop around for the best price and/or item.

Any purchase *over \$2000* requires at least two written quotations. Departments/divisions will solicit written quotations by telephoning, mailing or faxing a **Request for Quotation**.

Purchases *over \$50,000* are handled by the central Purchasing Division and require **Formal Bidding**.

Any purchase *over \$25,000* requires City commission approval, whether or not it went through the Purchasing Division.

#### 5. SOLICITATIONS

Both Purchasing and individual departments/divisions utilize these common methods of formal solicitation:

**Invitation to Bid (ITB)** – This is the standard method of solicitation for bids over \$5000. Terms and conditions, detailed specifications, bid forms, survey forms, and other documents accompany the Invitation to Bid. All bids are received sealed and are opened in public. Once bids are received and opened, no changes in scope or price are allowed.

**Request for Proposal (RFP)** – This is similar to an Invitation to Bid. It is generally used for services, when soliciting vendors' ideas or when the award is based on criteria other than price. An RFP requires the vendor to submit a detailed proposal to solve the problem described in the RFP. This method allows for negotiation with the best-evaluated proposal in the scope of services, price and delivery, whereas the sealed bid method allows no substantive changes. The criteria to be used in evaluation of the proposals are included in the RFP specifications.

**Request for Qualifications (RFQ)** – This method is utilized primarily for the acquisition of professional services. An RFQ requires vendors to submit a written statement of qualifications for the proposed project, which typically include: capabilities, adequacy of personnel, past record, experience, or other factors required by the City. Pricing may or may not be included. As in the RFP, this method allows for the negotiation on scope, price, delivery and terms. By statute, RFQs may be required for Architectural, Engineering, Landscape Architectural, or Land Surveying Services.

All formal solicitations will include any provisions affecting the purchase at hand, including, but not limited to:

- Detailed scope of services
- Technical specifications and descriptions
- Required delivery date/performance time
- Quantity

- Evaluation criteria and method
- Point of delivery
- Date, time, place of quotation or bid submittal
- Special conditions such as insurance and bonding
- City's contact person
- Terms of contract
- Pre-bid conference information, if applicable.

## 6. RECEIVING SOLICITATIONS: *GETTING ON THE VENDORS LISTS.*

### a. DemandStar

The Purchasing Division utilizes the services of ***DemandStar*** to maintain an automated registered vendors list and to send bid notifications. For a nominal annual fee, you may register with DemandStar and receive bid notifications for all participating agencies in the selected region. The larger the region you select, the more agencies covered and the greater the fee is. Many government agencies, including the City of Gainesville, have found DemandStar to be more cost-effective and efficient than maintaining their own vendor lists.

DemandStar will list all bids that go through the Purchasing Division. Remember this includes everything over \$50,000 and whichever other projects departments and divisions choose to send through them.

Registration with DemandStar is not a necessary requirement for doing business with the City of Gainesville. However, if a vendor does not register with DemandStar, they will not receive notification, unless they are local small businesses qualified by the City of Gainesville's Small Business Procurement Program (see page 5). Vendors may find bids handled by the Purchasing Division on the City's Purchasing website at: [www.cityofgainesville.org/resources/bidopp.aspx](http://www.cityofgainesville.org/resources/bidopp.aspx) or by calling (352) 334-5021. For bids not handled by the Purchasing Division, it is necessary to contact the department/division making the purchase.

For information on DemandStar, visit [www.demandstar.com](http://www.demandstar.com)

### b. Small Purchase Items: (Purchases under \$50,000):

Remember ***Decentralization***. Individual Departments may do their own purchasing up to \$50,000. Some departments and divisions do keep their own vendors lists.

The ***"Vendor Guide"*** is a listing of all City of Gainesville departments and divisions, a list of frequently purchased goods and/or services, and contact information. You should utilize the Vendor Guide to determine which departments/divisions have a need for your company's product/services and use the contact information to solicit business. Please call ahead to set up an appointment with the contact as opposed to simply "dropping by". Remember to have your materials, including business cards and any product/service information ready to give out at your appointment. The Vendor Guide is available from the Small Business Procurement Program website at [www.cityofgainesville.org/finance/sbpp/](http://www.cityofgainesville.org/finance/sbpp/) or by calling (352) 334-5027.

## **7. ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL BUSINESSES**

### **a. Small Business Procurement Program.**

The City of Gainesville has adopted a Local Small Business Procurement Program (SBPP), to make it easier for Qualified Local Small Businesses to get involved in the City's procurement. This program is for small businesses that are located within the corporate City limits. The Small Business Procurement Program works to maximize the utilization of Qualified Local Small Businesses in all areas of government procurement. The Small Business Procurement Program Office assists City departments/division find Qualified Local Small Businesses to meet their purchasing needs. Furthermore, for larger projects involving subcontracting, prime contractors are required to make good faith efforts to maximize their utilization of Qualified Local Small Businesses. If you are a local small business, please visit [www.cityofgainesville.org/finance/sbpp/](http://www.cityofgainesville.org/finance/sbpp/) for more information on the program and how to qualify.

The Small Business Procurement Program Policies and Procedures can be found in Chapter 42-000 of the City of Gainesville's Financial Services Procedures Manual.

To obtain the policies and procedures, or for more information on the City's Small Business Procurement Program contact the Small Business Procurement Program Office at (352) 334-5027.

### **a. First Time Competitive Bidding Waiver**

The department/division doing the purchasing may waive competitive bidding requirements for the first time order with a Qualified Local Small Business in an amount not greater than \$10,000 in order to fairly assess the business's capabilities to perform in accordance with the required standards.

### **b. Local Preference**

The City of Gainesville recently adopted a Local Preference Ordinance to promote the utilization of local businesses by giving them a 5% advantage (either price or evaluation points) over the lowest non-local bidder. The Local Preference Ordinance applies to most City-funded purchases over \$50,000. To be eligible for the Local Preference, you must have had a valid Occupational License for 6 months prior to the bid opening, and have valid zoning compliance certificates. For information on the Local Preference Ordinance visit the SBPP website.

## **8. YOU KNOW OF THE BID, NOW WHAT?**

### **a. Bid Document**

You may download the bid document from DemandStar at [www.demandstar.com](http://www.demandstar.com) if it is available. If you are not a member of DemandStar, you may still download the documents for a nominal fee. You may also pick it up from the Purchasing Division on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of City hall (200 E. University Ave.) or from the respective department/division doing the purchasing. Depending on the size of the document, there may be a nominal fee charged by the City. Qualified Local Small Businesses receive bid documents free or at a discounted price. You will be asked for your business card or contact information so that the department/division has a way of providing you with additional information if it becomes available.

It is your responsibility to understand and comply with all the information contained in the bid document. This may include, but is not limited to special provisions, technical specifications, and general conditions. The Small Business Procurement Program Office can assist you in working through the bid documents.

**b. Insurance/Bonds**

Insurance is required for all vendors who perform work on City of Gainesville property and for other work where risk is involved in the performance of the job. The types and levels of insurance will be stated in the bid document.

**c. Pre-Bid Conference**

Often, for larger, more complex projects, there will be a **Pre-Bid Conference**. The date, time and location will be stated in the bid document. If the Pre-bid is **Mandatory** you must attend the conference, on time, if you want to bid. At the conference there will be a sheet to sign in with your business name and contact information. Any business not represented at the pre-bid will not have its bids accepted. Some Pre-bid conferences are **Non-Mandatory**, and while you are not required to attend, it is strongly recommended that you do.

**d. Bid Questions**

Any technical questions regarding the bid must be submitted in writing to the buyer indicated in the bid document.

**e. Additional Information**

If additional information is made available an **Addendum** will be issued. As such, it is important that you leave your contact information when you pick up the document and/or on the conference sign-in sheet where applicable.

**f. Occupational License and Zoning Compliance**

If you are a local business, please ensure that you have your **Occupational License and Zoning Compliance Certificates**. It is against City policy to award a contract to a business that owes the City money or fails to abide by its regulations. Occupational License information can be obtained from the Billing and Collections Division at (352) 334-5024

**9. BID REVIEW**

**a. Opening**

Bids and RFPs are opened on the date and time stated on the bid document. Bid openings are open to the public. Once opened, bid information is written in the **Bid Record**. The Bid Record is immediately available for viewing, however actual bid documents are not available until 10 days after bid opening or at the time of award, whichever date comes first.

## **b. Evaluation**

The bids are evaluated using the criteria outlined in the bid document; best price or best evaluated. The bids are also reviewed to determine compliance with all specifications and provisions of the bid. Failure to comply will result in your bid being deemed **non-responsive** and rejected (i.e. If you change the scope of the work).

When the bid is awarded, notification of award is sent to all those who bid.

## **c. Disputes**

Any actual or prospective bidder or proposer who is aggrieved in connection with the solicitation or award of a contract or failure to award the contract, and whose direct economic interests would be affected, may protest in writing to the attention of the General Government Purchasing Manager. This is for all solicitations or awards, regardless of whether it is the Purchasing Division or another Department/Division making the purchase. If you are protesting, please ensure that you comply with the Bid Protest Procedures listed section 41-581 of the Financial Services Procedures Manual, or your protest will not be considered.

# **10. ONCE YOU ARE AWARDED THE BID...**

## **a. Purchase Methods**

It is necessary to ensure that everything in the contractual agreement for the purchase is correct. It will be your responsibility to meet all the terms in the agreement. There are 3 main methods of purchasing.

### **Purchase Orders:**

This is the most common method of purchasing for most instances. The department/division purchasing the goods and/or services will issue you a **Purchase Order**. This is documentation that funds have been set aside for the purchase and is your guarantee of payment if item, project or work is completed in accordance with the terms and conditions.

### **P-Card:**

The City has a Visa Purchasing card program allowing for cardholders to quickly purchase small value goods and/or services (under \$2000).

### **Contracts:**

Written contracts are required for purchases that will extend over a year or more. Contracts may also be required for large projects.

## **b. Payment**

If a P-Card is not used, payment will take on whatever form mentioned in the bid document and agreed upon by your business and the department/division doing the purchasing. Most often the City will ask for one invoice per 30 days, with a 30 day pay period.

### **c. Performance Evaluation**

The City of Gainesville's **Supplier Performance Program** provides a method for evaluating suppliers with which it does business in order to utilize those suppliers that provide the best pricing, quality, delivery and service.

A copy of the supplier evaluation form is sent with the purchase order to the supplier with notification that the supplier will be evaluated in those areas for that purchase. Suppliers' evaluation scores may be used in the evaluation of future bids.

## **11. NEXT STEPS**

If you are a local small business, complete the application for qualification as a Qualified Local Small Business: [www.cityofgainesville.org/finance/sbpp/](http://www.cityofgainesville.org/finance/sbpp/)

If you are not a local firm, register with DemandStar: [www.demandstar.com](http://www.demandstar.com)

All businesses can utilize the Vendor Guide to find departments/divisions for which you can potentially do business with. Download the Vendor Guide from the SBPP website or call (352) 334-5027.

If you are, or intend to be a subcontractor, keep informed of upcoming projects and network with the prime contractors that are bidding on the project.

## **12. QUESTIONS**

If you have questions, contact the Purchasing Division, the SBPP Office, or individual departments and divisions.

Purchasing Division: (352) 334-5021

SBPP Office: (352) 334-5027, website: [www.cityofgainesville.org/finance/sbpp/](http://www.cityofgainesville.org/finance/sbpp/)