

Procurement for Goods & Services

CDBG/HOME Guidebook



Section E

Overview

The purpose of the procurement requirements is to ensure that services and materials are purchased as efficiently and economically as possible, and to ensure compliance with applicable federal law.

Procurement requirements are contained in **2 CFR part 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* Subpart D – Post Federal Awards**. Organizations who receive CDBG funding or HOME funds as a subrecipient (not as an owner/sponsor/developer) are subject to these requirements.

Bid and Contract language required for any solicitation of construction services is included in **Appendix 1**.

General Procurement Provisions

Any grant recipients using federal funds to purchase goods or services must have written procurement procedures in place (2 CFR Part 200.319(c)). Whether you are a small agency purchasing occasional office supplies or a large organization contracting for millions of dollars of construction services, the requirements governing the purchasing process are designed to ensure that you:

- Follow a **free and open competitive process** in securing those products or services.
- Properly **document** your purchasing activities and decisions.
- Observe the special **rules for particular kinds of purchases** (small purchases, competitive sealed bids, competitive proposals, and sole source procurements).
- **Properly bond and insure** work involving large construction contracts and/or subcontracts.
- Use **local businesses** and contract with **small, minority and/or women-owned businesses** to the maximum extent feasible.

The essence of good procurement can be summarized as follows:

- Identify and clearly specify standards for the goods or services your organization wants to obtain;
- Seek competitive offers to obtain the best possible quality at the best possible price;
- Use a written agreement that clearly states the responsibilities of each party;
- Keep good records; and
- Have a quality assurance system that helps your organization get what it pays for.

Solicitations must clearly explain all requirements that the bidder/offeror must fulfill in order for his or her bid/offer to be evaluated by the organization. Solicitations for goods and services must be based on a clear and accurate description of the material, product, or service to be procured, and cannot contain features which unduly restrict competition. Some of the situations considered to be restrictive of competition include, but are not limited to:

- Placing unreasonable qualifying requirements on firms.

- Requiring unnecessary experience and excessive bonding.
- Specifying only “brand name” products instead of allowing “an equal” product.
- Noncompetitive pricing practices between firms or affiliated companies.
- Noncompetitive awards to consultants on retainer contracts.

Methods of Procurement

There are five methods of procurement that are identified in federal regulations:

- Micro-purchases;
- Small purchase procedures;
- Sealed bids (formal advertising);
- Competitive proposals; and
- Non-competitive proposals

I. Micro-purchase

The micro-purchase procedures allows the purchase of supplies or services totaling **no more than \$3,000**, using a simplified acquisition procedure.

- This method of procurement is a subset of an entity’s small purchase procedures.
- Allows an entity to expedite the completion of its lowest-dollar small purchase transactions and minimize the administrative burden and cost.

II. Small Purchase Procedures

The small purchase procedures applies to purchases over \$3000 and under \$150,000 (the current simplified acquisition threshold at 48 CFR Subpart 2.1) and allows recipients to acquire goods and services without publishing a formal request for proposal or invitation for bid.

- a. This method of procurement is typically used to purchase commodities such as supplies, equipment or other materials. The process is relatively simple, informal and does not necessarily involve competitive sealed bidding.
- b. Under the small purchase method, a grant recipient would send a request for quotes to potential vendors with a detailed description of the goods or services needed. In return, they receive competitive written quotations from an adequate number of qualified sources. A minimum of three competitive price quotes should be obtained.
- c. The small purchase method can also be used to acquire eligible types of services, such as professional consulting, environmental review, or planning. In general, the small purchase procedures should not be used to acquire construction contractors. It is recommended that these occur under the sealed bid approach.
- d. No cost or price analysis is required.

III. Sealed Bids (Formal Advertising)

Sealed bids (Formal Advertising) should be used for all construction contracts or for goods costing more than \$150,000.

1. Competitive sealed bidding requires publicly solicited sealed bids and a firm-fixed-price lump sum or unit price contract is awarded to the responsible bidder whose bid, conforming to all the material terms and conditions of the invitation for bids, is lowest in price.
2. In order for formal advertising to be feasible, the following minimum conditions must be present:
 - a. A complete, adequate and realistic specification or purchase description is available.
 - b. Two or more responsible suppliers are willing and able to compete effectively for the work.
 - c. The procurement lends itself to a firm fixed-price contract, and the selection of the successful bidder can appropriately be made principally on the basis of price.
3. When the competitive sealed bid (formal advertising) process is used, the following requirements apply:
 - a. Publication Period: The invitation for bids must be publicly advertised and bids solicited from an adequate number of suppliers. The publication should be published at least once in a newspaper of general circulation, providing sufficient time prior to bid opening. If the publication period is not of sufficient time to attract adequate competition, the bid may have to be re-advertised.
 - b. Invitation to Bid & Bid Package: See **Appendix 1** for bid and contract provisions.
 - c. Clear Definition: The invitation for bids, including specifications and pertinent attachments, must clearly define the items or services needed in order for bidders to properly respond to the invitation.
 - d. Public Opening: All bids must be opened at the time and place stated in the invitation for bids, and opened publicly for local governments.
 - e. Selection and Contracting: A firm-fixed-price contract award must be made by written notice to the responsible bidder whose bid, conforming to the invitation for bids, is lowest. Where specified in the bidding documents, factors such as discounts, transportation costs and life cycle costs must be considered in determining which bid is

lowest. Payment discounts are only used to determine low bid when prior experience indicates such discounts are usually taken advantage of.

- f. Rejection of all Bids: All bids may be rejected when sound documented reasons exist. Such documentation shall be made a part of the files.

IV. Competitive

Competitive proposals are used when the total costs will exceed \$150,000 and conditions are not appropriate for the use of sealed bids such as to purchase professional services.

1. The subrecipient publishes a written request for submissions, more than one source submits an offer and then review these submissions based on established selection criteria. Under this approach, there are two possible methods of soliciting proposals.
 - a. A Request for Proposals (RFP) asks that offerers submit both qualifications and cost information.
 - b. A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) can be used for purchasing architecture and engineering services. It only asks for information on the offerer's expertise/experience and not on cost, subject to a negotiation of fair and reasonable compensation. When acquiring services other than architecture or engineering, the full RFP process must be used.
2. When Competitive Proposals are utilized, the following requirements apply.
 - a. Publication Period: Proposals must be solicited from an adequate number of qualified sources and an advertisement must be published. RFP's/RFQ's should be published in a sufficient timeframe before they are due.
 - b. Clear Definition: The RFP/RFQ must identify the general scope of work and all significant factors of evaluation, including price where appropriate, and their relative importance.
 - c. Technical Evaluation: A written method for technical evaluation of the proposals received, determinations of responsible offerer and the selection for contract award should be established.
 - d. Award: Award must be made to the responsible offerer whose proposal will be most advantageous to the procuring party, price and other factors considered. Unsuccessful offerers should be notified promptly. The contract can be either a fixed price or a cost reimbursement type.

V. Non-competitive Proposals (Sole Source)

Non-competitive procurement should only be used when the award of a contract is infeasible under the other procurement methods and one of the following circumstances applies:

- a. Where the item is available only from a single source;
- b. Where a public emergency or urgent situation is such that the urgency will not permit a delay beyond the time needed to employ one or the other procurement methods; or
- c. Where after solicitation of a number of sources, competition is determined inadequate.
- d. The Block Grant Program, as the Federal awarding agency, expressly authorizes noncompetitive proposals in response to a written request from the subrecipient.

Bid and Contract Language

Agreements made for professional services or construction should contain provisions or conditions that allow for administrative, contractual, or legal remedies in instances in which a contractor violates or breaches the contract terms as well as provisions for termination. In addition all contracts must contain certain language to comply with federal regulatory requirements. **See Appendix 1.**

Bonding

The requirements for bonding in procurement are detailed in **Appendix 1.**

Conflict of Interest

Activities covered by CFR provisions:

In the procurement of property and services by CDBG and HOME subrecipients the conflict-of-interest provisions at 2 CFR 200.318 must be followed. These regulations require subrecipients to maintain written standards governing the performance of their employees engaged in awarding and administering contracts. At a minimum, these standards must:

- a. Require that no employee, officer, agent of the grant recipient shall participate in the selection, award or administration of a contract supported by CDBG or HOME if a conflict-of-interest, either real or apparent, would be involved;
- b. Require that employees, officers and agents of the grant recipient not solicit nor accept gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from contractors, potential contractors or parties to sub-agreements; and
- c. Stipulate provisions for penalties, sanctions or other disciplinary actions for violations of standards.

A conflict would arise when any of the following has a **financial or other interest** in a firm selected for award:

- A employee, agent or officer of the organization;
- Any member of an employee's, agent's or officer's immediate family including partner; or
- An organization that employs or is about to employ an employee, agent or officer of the grant recipient.

Activities covered by HOME regulations:

1. In cases not covered by 2 CFR Part 200, the HOME regulations at 24 CFR 92.356 governing conflict-of-interest apply. These provisions cover employees, agents, consultants, officers and elected or appointed officials of the subrecipient. The HOME regulations state that no person covered who exercises or has exercised any functions or responsibilities with respect to HOME activities or who is in a position to participate in decisions or gain inside information:
 - a. May obtain a financial interest or benefit from a HOME activity; or
 - b. Have an interest in any contract, subcontract or agreement for themselves or for persons with business or family ties.
2. This requirement applies to covered persons during their tenure and for one year after leaving the organization.
3. The HOME Final Rule includes a provision which states that no owner, developer or sponsor of HOME-assisted housing, including their officers, employees, agents, consultants, elected or appointed officials, or immediate family members (of either the owner, developer, sponsor or officers, employees, agents, elected or appointed officials, or consultants), may occupy a HOME-assisted unit in a development. This provision **does not** apply to:
 - a. An individual receiving HOME funds to acquire or rehabilitate his/her principal residence, or
 - b. An individual living in a HOME-assisted rental housing development where he/she is a project manager or a maintenance worker in that development.

Contract Retainage

1. The County will withhold up to 15% of the CDBG or HOME award amount included in the written subrecipient agreement until all federal compliance requirements are met.
2. All construction contracts between a grant recipient and contractor shall have 10% of payment retained until fulfillment of federal compliance is documented.

Excluded Parties

Grant recipients must not enter into any contract with any organization which is debarred or suspended or is otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in Federal assistance programs under Executive Order 12549, "Debarment and Suspension". All contractors must be registered in the System for Awards Management, go to <http://sam.gov/>. This applies to any CDBG or HOME assisted contract at any tier in the process. **Firms or contractors must be checked on the federal database before a contract is signed.**

