

Contact Us

After reviewing this guide, we encourage you to contact us with any questions you may have about the State, its departments and agencies, and how your products/services may meet our needs.

Phone: (207) 624-7340

Fax: (207) 287-6578

Web: www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/home

Street Address:

Division of Procurement Services
111 Sewall Street
Burton M. Cross Building
4th Floor
9 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0009



Doing Business in Maine

A guide for current & prospective vendors



Maine by [Nick Youngson CC BY-SA 3.0 Pix4free](#)

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FINANCIAL SERVICES
DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES

Table of Contents

Welcome	1
Who We Are.....	1
What We Do.....	2
Our Policy	2
Getting Started	3
Our Website	3
AdvantageME & Vendor Self-Service	3
Bidding Procedures.....	4
Commodities	4
Contractual Services.....	6
Submission of Bids/Proposals	8
State Terms and Conditions.....	8
Special Bid Conditions	8
Closing of Bids	9
Awards.....	9
Disputes and Appeals	10
Summary of Appeal Guidelines	10
Additional Information	12
“Backdoor” Selling	12
State Policy On Accepting Gifts.....	12
Political Subdivisions and School Districts	13
Helpful Information From Vendors	13
Office Hours For Virtual Vendor Visits.....	13

Welcome

This guide has been prepared for current and prospective vendors seeking to do business with the State of Maine. It provides information about our policies and procedures, our standards for quality, and other considerations.

Who We Are

The Division of Purchases, currently known as the Division of Procurement Services (or just “Procurement Services”) was established in 1931 with responsibility under law ([5 MRSA §1811](#)) to purchase all services, supplies, materials, and equipment required by Maine State Government.

Procurement Services works with approximately 350 organizational units—including departments, agencies, and commissions that comprise Maine State Government—to purchase quality goods and services that meet the needs of the State, while ensuring best value for Maine citizens.

What We Do

Procurement Services buys a wide variety of goods (i.e., commodities), such as automobiles, food products, medicines, machinery, equipment, boats, paper, furniture, and clothing. These items are procured by trained procurement and contracting specialists who buy from both small and large qualified businesses.

We also procure services on behalf of the State. “Service” refers to manual labor that does not produce a tangible commodity. Some types of services—such as management consulting, information technology, programming, and employee training—are the responsibility of the requesting agency.

In obtaining these professional services, agencies must follow guidelines set by Executive Order and rules developed by the Division of Procurement Services.

Our Policy

The established policy of the Division of Procurement Services is to ensure **competitive bidding**, whenever practicable, in buying materials, supplies, and services by State departments and agencies. State standard specifications will be used wherever possible, as well as nationally accepted specifications, such as the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), federal specifications, etc., to ensure procurements will meet the State's needs.

Along with best value, our policy takes into consideration factors such as initial cost, suitability for intended purpose, operation, quality, maintenance, etc., as well as delivery in time for the need to be met. Requirements, conditions, and terms contained in specifications and bid invitations are intended to accomplish our policy objectives to the extent possible, consistent with the additional need to allow the greatest possible competition among suppliers.

We seek to do business with responsible suppliers that offer quality products and services needed by the State of Maine.

Getting Started

Our Website

To get started, interested vendors should visit the Procurement Services public website and Vendor's page at www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/home.

This site is updated regularly and includes valuable information for State entities, vendors, and the general public, such as.

- Bid Opportunities
- Requests for Proposals (RFPs)
- Requests for Applications (RFAs)
- Requests for Information (RFIs)
- Pre-Qualified Vendor Lists (PQVLs)
- Notices of Intent to Waive Competitive Process (NOIs)
- Contract Listings
- Commodity Assignments
- Purchasing Tools
- Vendor Registration Information
- Contact Information for Procurement Services Staff

AdvantageME & Vendor Self-Service

The State of Maine's financial accounting system (AdvantageME) includes integrated treasury and e-procurement functionality.

A key feature of the AdvantageME system is [Vendor Self-Service \(VSS\)](#), which allows vendors to register for the commodities and services they are able to provide to the State.

Registering on VSS is important for two key reasons:

1. When the State issues a solicitation through AdvantageME for a vendor's products or services, VSS will automatically generate an email message alerting registered vendors to the opportunity (as long as the commodity code identified on the bid is listed on the vendor's profile).
2. Once a contract is awarded, the awarded vendor MUST have a VC code issued through VSS in order to receive payment from the State.

Bidding Procedures

Commodities

For a needed commodity with an estimated cost over \$5,000, Procurement Services will issue an electronic Request for Quotations (RFQ) with open competition among all registered bidders, unless waived by the director under 5 MRSA § 1825-A. In general, the process is as follows:

- RFQ is posted on VSS (2 days)
- Bids are submitted (14 days)
- Procurement Services reviews and awards the lowest cost bid that meets specifications (3 days)
- Appeal period (15 days)

When costs for contractual services are expected to exceed \$10,000*, they are bid using a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. Notices of RFPs are published for three consecutive days in the *Kennebec Journal*, Augusta, Maine. [Chapter 110](#), the promulgated rule governing this process, is available at the Division of Procurement Services website.

Under certain circumstances, a commodity procurement may be exempt from the competitive bidding process.

These circumstances include:

- Emergency;
- Vendor is unique based on proprietary designation or other mitigating conditions (i.e., statute, regulation, copyrights, patent, etc.);
- Product that supports existing equipment.

Items under \$5,000 or items under current contracts issued by Procurement Services may be purchased directly by agencies.

Alternate Commodity Bids

The State will consider responses submitted for alternate commodities to the extent that such action is deemed to serve the best interest of the State.

The bidder quoting on a commodity other than specified must furnish complete identification, descriptive literature, or data with respect to the alternate commodity proposed. Lack of such information on the bid will be construed to mean that the bidder proposed to furnish the exact commodity as described.

The State of Maine reserves the right to reject any and all bids, in whole or in part, to waive any formality and technicality in any bid, and to accept any item or items in any bid.

Contractual Services

When costs for contractual services are expected to exceed \$10,000, they are bid using a Request for Proposal (RFP) process. Notices of RFPs are published for three consecutive days in the *Kennebec Journal*, Augusta, Maine. [Chapter 110](#), the promulgated rule governing this process, is detailed on the Division of Procurement Services website.

In general, this process is as follows:

- RFP posted in *Kennebec Journal* (3 days)
- Questions due from bidders (4 days after last day of posting in *KJ*)
- Q&A Summary posted (6 days after last day of posting in *KJ*)
- Proposals due (15 days after last day of posting in *KJ*)
- Proposal evaluation and award (8 days)
- Appeal period (15 days)

The above timeline may be extended for more complex RFPs and for RFPs valued over \$1 million, which are reviewed by the State Procurement Review Committee (SPRC).

Under certain circumstances, a services procurement may be exempt from the competitive bidding process. These circumstances include:

- Emergency – Used for departmental emergency/critical purchase. ([5 MRSA §1825-B, 2., B.](#))

- Single Source / Unique Vendor – Only one source is able to provide the service.
- Proprietary/Copyright/Patents Services – The vendor/provider has proprietary rights associated with the goods or services, including copyrights or patents.
- University Cooperative Project – Any higher education entities with a main campus in the State of Maine ([5 MRSA §1825-B, 2., E.](#))
- Grant – Used when the agency is awarded a grant that specifically names the provider/vendor as a grant partner, or the provider/vendor was awarded a grant through a competitive process.
- State Statute or Agency Directed – Used when the agency is directed to contract with a specific provider according to State of Maine statute or by governing State body (i.e., Office of the Attorney General).
- Federal Agency Directed – Used when the agency is directed by a federal agency to contract with a specific provider.
- Willing and Qualified – Used for services that are being performed by multiple providers, so long as they meet the agency's qualifications, and the providers are willing to provide services as outlined in a standard contract.
- Client Choice – Clients obtain services from a provider of their choice.

Services valued \$5,000 to \$10,000 may be procured by soliciting a minimum of three quotations after making known the scope of work to be done. The low bidder is awarded the contract. Contracts for services valued under \$5,000 can be negotiated by agencies without a competitive procurement process.

Submission of Bids/Proposals

Bids for commodity items must be submitted electronically as outlined in each RFQ. Additional and alternate bids may also be submitted. File attachments may be uploaded to the electronic bid response. Supporting documents and literature may be faxed or mailed to the Division of Procurement Services.

Proposals submitted in response to an RFP must also be submitted electronically according to the RFP specifications. Bidders may submit multiple proposals, if allowed in the RFP, and can provide their proposal response using multiple submissions.

State Terms and Conditions

The State's terms and conditions, applicable to all State purchases, can be found within the service contract templates posted on the Forms page of the Division of Procurement Services website:
<https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/forms>.

Special Bid Conditions

Special bid conditions applicable to a specific commodity or type of purchase are listed by the State in the invitation to bid under "Special Instructions" or attached file(s). Special bid conditions supersede general conditions, if conflicting.

Closing of Bids

Commodity quotes close at 2:00 p.m., local time, on the announced day. Attempts to enter a bid response after the exact time set for closing are not recorded as received responses and are not considered for award.

Competitive proposals for contractual services as described in an RFP close at 11:59 p.m., local time, on the announced day. Any submissions received after the proposal due date and time will not be considered for evaluation.

Submitted proposals will be opened the next business day and a list of the bidders will be made available upon request. All submissions received by the due date and time will be transferred to the agency for review and will not be available for inspection until after a conditional award has been announced.

Awards

Awards will be made with reasonable promptness by written notice or by issuance of properly executed purchase order. Awards will be made to the bidder offering the best value to the State of Maine, taking into consideration the qualities of the goods or services to be supplied, their conformity to specifications, the purposes for which they are required, the date of delivery, and the best interest of the State. ([5 MRSA §1825, B7](#))

Tie commodity bids will be awarded to in-State bidders or to bidders offering commodities produced or manufactured in the State if the price, quality, availability, and other factors are equivalent. ([5 MRSA §1825, B8](#))

Disputes and Appeals

The Director of the Bureau of General Services (BGS) has promulgated [Chapter 120—Rules for Appeal of Contract and Grant Awards](#), which govern the procedures by which an aggrieved person may appeal a contract award decision.

Below is a summary of the appeal guidelines. Potential appellants are encouraged to read the full text of the rule (posted on the Procurement Services website at the above link) before filing an appeal request.

Summary of Appeal Guidelines

1. Only aggrieved persons may request a stay of award or an appeal. An aggrieved person is any person who bids on a contract and who is adversely affected financially, professionally, or personally by that contract award decision.
2. A stay must be requested in writing within 10 calendar days of award notification and must state clearly the specific nature of the grievance, demonstrate irreparable injury to the petitioner, a reasonable likelihood of success on the merits of the appeal, and there being no substantial harm to adverse parties or to the general public.
 - a. Procurement Services will notify the petitioner in writing about the decision regarding the request for a stay within seven days of receipt of the request.
 - b. Failure of the petitioner to obtain a stay does not affect the petitioner's right to request a hearing of appeal.

3. An appeal must be requested in writing within 15 calendar days of award notification and must clearly demonstrate why the petitioner believes that at least one of three criteria has been met. The appeal criteria are: (1) a violation of law; (2) an irregularity creating a fundamental unfairness; and (3) an arbitrary or capricious award.
 - a. Procurement Services will notify the petitioner in writing about the decision regarding the request for a hearing of appeal within 15 days of receipt of the request.
 - b. A hearing will be granted unless: (1) the petitioner is not an aggrieved person; (2) a prior request by the same petitioner about the same contract award has been granted; (3) the request was made more than 15 days after the notification of contract award; or, (4) the request is capricious, frivolous, or without merit.
4. An appeal committee consisting of three members will be appointed to hear the appeal. The commissioner of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services will appoint two members from departments not involved in the contract award. The third member of the appeal committee will be the director of the Division of Procurement Services or a designee.
5. The hearing must be held within 60 days of receipt of the initial request and will provide the opportunity for both the petitioner and the awarding department to present testimony and documentary evidence related to the issues on appeal. The appeal committee will keep a written record of the hearing and will meet after the close of the hearing to make its determination.

6. The appeal committee's actions are limited to one of the following:
 - a. Validate the contract award decision under appeal, or
 - b. Invalidate the contract award decision under appeal.
7. The appeal committee will submit its written decision to the director of the Bureau of General Services not later than 15 days following the hearing after which the director must notify the petitioner, the contracting State agency, and all intervenors within 10 calendar days.
8. This notification is considered final agency action and, as such, may be eligible for judicial review.

Additional Information

“Backdoor” Selling

Attempting to make a sale without going through the central purchasing authority is prohibited per Executive Order 2 FY 81/82.

State Policy On Accepting Gifts

It is against State policy for an employee to accept gifts from any person or business that does business with, or expects to do business with, the State of Maine. Further, it is unlawful (Title [17-A, MRSA. §§ 602, 604, 605 and 606](#)) for certain persons or businesses to give gifts to State employees and have them accepted.

For the purpose of administrative guidance, gifts do not include advertising items of nominal value such as calendars, pens, or pencils. Goods and services which involve a pecuniary benefit should be considered to be gifts.

Political Subdivisions and School Districts

The Division of Procurement Services is committed to providing purchasing opportunities for political subdivisions and school districts in Maine by allowing them access, through our vendors, to our contract pricing. For that reason, our solicitations commonly ask bidders: *Will you accept orders from political subdivisions and school districts in Maine at the prices quoted?* We take a bidder's willingness to extend contract pricing to these entities into consideration when making awards.

Helpful Information From Vendors

Potential vendors may submit brochures, photographs, facilities lists, descriptive materials, and price lists which will enable our Procurement Services staff to form a valid assessment of your business capabilities and products. These materials may be used in bid development or in determining sources of supply.

Office Hours For Virtual Vendor Visits

Vendor sales representatives who wish to meet with Division of Procurement Services staff should contact the staff member assigned to the relevant [commodity group](#). In general, our staff is available for virtual visits, by appointment, on Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

We welcome your business!
