Purchasing Department

Competitive Bid Process

Issuance of Competitive Bids
Under the State of Alabama bid law any request(s) for like or similar products and/or services which total $15,000 or more during a fiscal year must be competitively bid. The University of Alabama is considered to be one entity by state law. Therefore, requests that can be anticipated by the University for like or similar items or items to like or similar vendors and cumulatively total $15,000 or more within a fiscal year period are subject to the competitive bid law.

Note: Buyers within the Purchasing Department are assigned specific commodities and are constantly monitoring anticipated needs or current trends on campus. Standing contracts for recurring purchase of supplies, equipment or services are often established to expedite the issuance of purchase requests, to obtain volume discounts, and to insure compliance with the State Bid Law.

Information Needed to Prepare Formal Bid Invitations
The initial request for bid can be in the form of an approved requisition or a memorandum and should include the following information:

a) Complete description of the product or service including manufacturer's name, stock number, catalog number, size, color, finish, configuration, quantity, dimensions, etc. Do not assume that if a manufacturer's name and stock or model number are specified that all bidders will expend the time and effort required to determine the specifications of the specified brands and/or model numbers and respond with an item or items which would be acceptable. It is extremely important to accurately describe the desired product or service. Too much detail is infinitely better than too little. In the absence of a manufacturer's name, catalog number, and/or model number, specifications are imperative. The Purchasing staff is available to ordering departments for advice in preparing complete and accurate bid specifications.

b) Technical specifications made available to the end user by a vendor or manufacturer during initial investigation of the product or service. Technical Specifications should be forwarded referencing the appropriate requisition number.

c) Special requirements of the end user that should be included in bid specifications

1) Is installation required?
2) Are there required delivery dates?
3) What features or accessories are needed?
4) Is training to be furnished by the successful vendor?
5) Are samples required for evaluation?
6) Is maintenance service required?
7) Are there compatibility requirements with existing equipment?
8) Are there any other special requirements?

Evaluation Procedures for the Award of Competitive Bids
1. The appropriate award of a bid is initially determined by comparing bid responses to the specified requirements which include not only technical requirements and total price, but also prompt delivery, payment terms and discounts, and general specifications required by the University or end user. The
determination of an acceptable bid award is a joint effort between the end user and the Purchasing Department.

2. If the low bid is equivalent to the items specified and the general requirements enumerated in the "Request for Quotation", acceptance by the end user must be made known to the appropriate buyer in the Purchasing Department by memorandum, e-mail, or by submitting a purchase requisition issued to the successful vendor.

3. If it is doubtful that a low bid is acceptable, it may be necessary to require a demonstration by the low bidder(s) to afford an opportunity to prove equivalency to the items specified. When a demonstration is not appropriate, non-equivalency and ultimate award to a higher bidder must be justified in writing by the ordering department. Additional specifications or information may be obtained from the bidder to compare with the original specifications. Final evaluation and ultimate award of the bid is based on the total findings of the investigation. Appropriate documentation must be made part of the bid package upon award of the bid.

4. A letter of justification from the end user is required in the event a low bid is not acceptable. The justification must reflect a comparison of those items, areas, features, etc. which are not equivalent to the requirements as specified in the bid. A statement referencing a particular application of the specified items and the importance of this application should be stressed, and a statement as to why the low bid is not suitable for this application should also be included.

*NOTE: The following statements cannot be accepted unless substantiated by more specific information and explanation: a) "The low bid is not suitable for our purposes." (Why not?) b) "The low bid is not what I specified." (How is it unequal?) c) "The low bid is not equivalent to the specifications." (How?)