



Blair County Planning Commission

Procurement Policy

July 1, 2016

BLAIR COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
423 Allegheny Street, Suite 046
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648
814-693-2080

All procurements made by Blair County Planning Commission will be made in accordance with the following procurement standards.

Procurement transactions, regardless of method or dollar value, will maximize open and free competition. Blair County Planning Commission shall not engage in procurement practices which may be considered arbitrary or restrictive.

Purchases will be reviewed by the Director to prevent duplication and to ensure that costs are reasonable.

I. METHODS FOR PROCUREMENT

Procurements shall be made using one of the following methods:

A. Small Purchases

For purchases of less than \$500, efforts will be made to get the lowest and best price, but written records of such efforts are not necessary. It is preferred to make such purchases with vendors with an annual open purchase order.

Purchases which cost between \$500 and \$2,500 will require three over-the-telephone quotations of rate, price, etc. A memorandum will be prepared setting forth the date calls were made, parties contacted and prices obtained.

Purchases of supplies, equipment and services which cost between \$2,500 and \$10,000 will require written estimates but no legal advertisement is required. Blair County Planning Commission will solicit written responses from at least three vendors, and if no such responses are available, a statement explaining the procurement will be prepared and filed.

B. Competitive Sealed Bids

Bidding will be employed when detailed specifications for the goods or services to be procured can be prepared and the primary basis for award is cost. When the cost of a contract, lease or other agreement for materials, supplies, equipment or contractual services, other than those personal or professional, exceeds \$10,000, an Invitation for Bids (IFB) notice will generally be prepared. This notice will be published at least once in the *Altoona Mirror*, the official newspaper of general circulation in Blair County. This newspaper notice will appear not less than seven (7) days and not more than twenty-one (21) days before the due date for bid proposals. Blair County Planning Commission may also solicit sealed bids from responsible prospective suppliers by sending them a copy of such notice.

The IFB will include a complete, accurate and realistic specification and description of the goods or services to be procured, the bid deposit, payment bond and bond performance required (if applicable), the location where bid forms and specifications may be secured, the time and place for opening bids, and whether the bid award will be made on the basis of the lowest price or the lowest evaluated price. If the lowest evaluated price is used, the measurable criteria to be used must be stated in the IFB.

The newspaper notice must also contain language which calls to the attention of bidders all applicable legal requirements.

Sealed bids will be opened in public at the time and place stated in the IFBs. The bids will be tabulated by staff at the time of bid opening. The results of the tabulation and the bid procurements will be examined for accuracy and completeness by the staff who will make recommendations to the Blair County Planning Commission. In addition, the staff shall determine that all firms are responsive and responsible. The Blair County Planning Commission will make the decision as to whom the contract shall be awarded. After the bid award is made by the Blair County Planning Commission, a contract will be prepared for execution by the successful bidder. After the contract is signed, all bid deposits will be returned to all unsuccessful bidders.

Blair County Planning Commission may cancel an Invitation for Bid or reject all bids if it is determined that such is in the best interests of Blair County Planning Commission. Bidders will be notified in writing of such cancellation or rejection. Blair County Planning Commission may allow a vendor to withdraw a bid if requested at any time prior to the bid opening. Bids received after the time set for bid opening shall be returned to the vendor unopened.

C. Competitive Negotiations

Blair County Planning Commission will use competitive negotiations, regardless of contract amount, upon a written determination that:

1. Specifications cannot be made specific enough to permit the award of a bid on the basis of either the lowest bid or the lowest evaluated bid price (in other words, bidding is not feasible).
2. The services to be procured are professional in nature.

With the exception of certain professional services (principally engineering services), competitive negotiations will proceed as follows:

- a. Proposals will be solicited through newspaper advertisement; additionally, a Request for Proposal (RFP) may be prepared and mailed to qualified vendors. The newspaper advertisement must be published at least seven (7) days and not more than twenty-one (21) days before the date for receipt of the proposals. The RFP will describe services needed and identify the factors to be considered in the evaluation of proposals and the relative weights assigned to each selection factor. The RFP will also state where further details regarding the RFP may be obtained. The RFP will call attention to the same regulations discussed in the bidding process.
- b. Award must be made to the offeror whose proposal is determined in writing by the Blair County Planning Commission to be the most advantageous to Blair County Planning Commission. Evaluations must be based on the factors set forth in the Request for Proposal and a written evaluation of each response prepared. The review committee may contact the firms regarding their proposals for the purpose of

clarification and record in writing the nature of the clarification. If it is determined that no acceptable proposal has been submitted, all proposals may be rejected. New proposals may be solicited on the same or revised terms or the procurement may be abandoned.

For the procurement of certain professional services, an alternative to RFPs may be used. Blair County Planning Commission may publish a Request for Qualifications. RFQ's are handled in a similar method to RFP's. The staff will evaluate the responses and rank them by comparative qualifications. The highest scoring person or firm will be contacted and the Blair County Planning Commission will negotiate cost. If the Blair County Planning Commission is unable to negotiate a satisfactory cost arrangement, the second highest scoring person or firm will be invited to negotiate. The staff will maintain a written record of all such negotiations.

D. Noncompetitive Negotiations

Noncompetitive negotiations may be used for procurements when bidding or competitive negotiations are not feasible. Blair County Planning Commission may purchase goods and services through non-competitive negotiations when it is determined in writing by the Director that competitive negotiation or bidding is not feasible and that:

1. An emergency exists which will cause public harm as a result of the delay caused by following competitive purchasing procedures, or
2. The product or service can be obtained only from one source, or
3. The contract is for the purchase of perishable items purchased on a weekly or more frequent basis, or
4. Only one satisfactory proposal is received through RFP or RFQ, or
5. Noncompetitive negotiation of the particular type has been authorized by controlling law or regulation.

Procurement by noncompetitive negotiation requires the strictest attention to the observation of impartiality toward all suppliers. The Blair County Planning Commission must approve all procurements by non-competitive negotiation when only one supplier is involved or only one bid or response to an RFP/RFQ is received.

- E.** Bids will be accepted only from those contractors who can demonstrate an ability to successfully complete the scope of work being bid. References will be requested along with the contractor's bid proposal. Consideration will be given to such matters as contractor integrity, compliance with public policy, record of past performance and financial and technical resources in awarding contracts.
- F.** Upon submission of a bid, the contractor will present a bid guarantee equivalent to 5 percent of the amount of the contractor's submitted bid. Unsuccessful bidders will have their bid guarantee returned to them with the notice which advises them they

are an unsuccessful bidder. The successful bidder will post a performance bond equal to 100 percent of the contract amount, along with a payment bond equivalent to 100 percent of the contract amount at the signing of the contract and/or notice to proceed.

II. CONTRACTS

Generally, all procurement in excess of \$2,500 will be memorialized and supported by a written contract. Where it is not feasible or is impractical to prepare a contract, a written finding to this effect will be prepared and some form of documentation regarding the transaction will also be prepared. All contracts will contain language which allows the Blair County Planning Commission the opportunity to cancel any contract for cause. Said cause shall include, but not be limited to, demonstrated lack of ability to perform the work specified, unwillingness to complete the work in a timely fashion, cancellation of liability insurance or worker's compensation, failure to pay suppliers or workers, unsafe working conditions caused by the contractor, failure to comply with applicable laws (where applicable), failure to keep accurate and timely records of the job, or failure to make those records available to the Blair County Planning Commission (on request) or any other documented matter which could cause a hardship for the Blair County Planning Commission if a claim should arise or the work not be completed on schedule at the specified cost.

Requests for proposals may be structured to utilize value-engineering for any construction project in excess of \$50,000. Value engineering will allow the total job to be broken down and bid in sections, so as to produce the lowest overall cost of the project to the Blair County Planning Commission. A project can request proposals for heating as one element, electrical as one element, etc. In some cases, this will make for a more cost-effective project. However, this does not preclude a bidder from making a lump-sum bid. Total cost will be calculated when value-engineering produces different bids for different scopes of work. Those segmented bids will then be added together to give a final project cost.

III. DOCUMENTATION

All source documents supporting any given transaction (receipts, purchase orders, invoices, RFP/RFQ data and bid materials) will be retained and filed in an appropriate manner. Source documents will be filed and maintained in a reasonable manner, preferably in a subfile with the project file. Whatever form of documentation and filing is employed, the purpose of this section is to ensure that a clear and consistent audit trail is established. At a minimum, source document data must be sufficient to establish the basis for selection, basis for cost (including the issue of reasonableness of cost), rationale for method of procurement and selection of contract type, and basis for payment.

IV. EQUITABLE ACCESS

All necessary affirmative steps will be taken and documented to solicit participation of businesses of all types and all classes of owner. Where possible and feasible, delivery schedules will be established and work will be subdivided to maximize participation by small businesses and subdivided components will be bid as a separate contract. A list of locally owned, minority-owned, female-owned and small businesses and also minority businesses located within the trade region shall be maintained and used when issuing IFBs, RFPs and

RFQs, except when prohibited by law, regulation, or another controlling authority. This list shall also be consulted when making small purchases. Blair County Planning Commission will use the services and assistance of the Small Business Administration and the Minority Business Development Agency of the Department of Commerce. The successful bidder will be required to use these same criteria in selection of suppliers and subcontractors whenever possible.

V. CODE OF CONDUCT

A. Conflict Of Interest

No Blair County Planning Commission member, employee, consultant, elected official, appointed official or designated agent of Blair County Planning Commission will take part or have an interest in the award of any procurement transaction if a conflict of interest, real or apparent, exists. A conflict of interest occurs when the official, employee or designated agent of Blair County Planning Commission, partners of such individuals, immediate family members, or an organization which employs or intends to employ any of the above has a financial or other interest in any of the competing firms.

No Blair County Planning Commission member, employee or designated agent of Blair County Planning Commission may acquire a financial interest in or benefit in any way from any activity which uses any portion of Blair County Planning Commission funding (direct or grant), nor shall they have any interest in any contract, subcontract or agreement for themselves or any family members.

These Conflict-Of-Interest rules apply to all named parties and shall be effective for the period of service and for one year after leaving said office or position.

B. Acceptance of Gratuities

No Blair County Planning Commission member, employee or designated agent of Blair County Planning Commission shall solicit or accept gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from contractors, potential contractors, subcontractors or potential subcontractors.

C. Penalties

Any Blair County Planning Commission member, employee or designated agent of Blair County Planning Commission who knowingly and deliberately violates the provisions of this code will be open to civil suit by Blair County Planning Commission without the legal protection of Blair County Planning Commission.

Any contractor or potential contractor who knowingly and deliberately violates the provisions of these procurement standards will be barred from future transactions with Blair County Planning Commission for a period of five years.