

How to do Business with the **British Columbia** Government



Selling to the British Columbia Government means supplying a large marketplace.

Businesses of all sizes and types can be successful vendors to the Government.

Our goal is to help you do business with us.
We welcome new vendors.

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Business With the BC Government

Each year the public sector in British Columbia - including provincial and municipal governments, Crown corporations, schools, hospitals, colleges and universities - spends approximately \$8 billion on goods and services. This multi-billion dollar market represents significant business opportunities for BC companies. To assist you in becoming a supplier, this guide gives you a step by step overview to government procurement, the purchasing of goods and services.

Procurement Decisions

Each public sector entity does their own procurement. Many organizations such as schools, hospitals, and Crown corporations have their own purchasing departments. Where this is the case, you should introduce your company to the organization's purchasing department, which in turn may set up an appointment for you to speak with the appropriate person.

In the BC provincial government, the Ministry of Labour and Citizens Services - Common Business Services is the central purchasing group. They buy goods and services on behalf of ministries, as well as for other public sector agencies as requested.

Some ministries may purchase their own services, depending upon the service required. If you are a service provider, it is important to market yourself to the ministry your service is intended for and to the Purchasing Services group.

What does the provincial government buy?

We buy everything from asphalt to Z – class vehicles, and an enormous range of services. When you consider the programs and services provided by the public sector – such as education, health, forestry, environment – you can see that its purchasing needs are diverse. The public sector shopping list is much more than stationary and office furniture. For example, Accommodation and Real Estate Services acquires government office space, while the Ministry of Finance may contract for accounting services.

For contact information on specific ministries please refer to the following link.

www.pss.gov.bc.ca/psb/min_contacts.html

Government Purchasing Process

The Purchasing Process

The purchasing process begins when an individual ministry identifies the need for goods or services. For goods, the user prepares a description of the requirement and provides it as a requisition to the Purchasing Services Branch. For services and construction, the user may undertake the purchase process within their ministry, or use the services of the Purchasing Services group.

Purchasing Services determines the type of bid document to use, based on the nature and complexity of the purchase, using two main methods:

1. An Invitation to Quote is a bid document with a clear-cut requirement. Generally, the intent is to award the lowest bidder who meets the specifications, delivery, and quality requirements, however the lowest bidder is not always successful.
2. The Request for Proposals is the method used where we describe a situation and you propose a solution.

For more information on Request for Proposals please go to:

www.pc.gov.bc.ca/data/docs/ProponentRFPGuide.pdf

Invitations to Quote (ITQs) and Request for Proposals (RFPs) are posted on the BC Bid www.bcbid.ca web site once the tendering process begins.

Purchasing Services Branch

As a general rule, goods valued up to \$5,000 are purchased directly by government ministries and agencies. Goods purchases over \$5,000 are handled centrally by Purchasing Services Branch. Purchasing Services Branch may also procure services on behalf of ministries and agencies, upon their request.

Requests for Proposals specific to a ministry's programs, such as training consultants for the Ministry of Education, doctors for the Ministry of Health, or group homes for the Ministry of Children and Families, are usually issued by the responsible ministry. It's important that you market your company's offerings directly to the ministry that could be a potential user of your products or services and check BC BID regularly.

For more information visit: www.bcbid.ca



What is BC Bid?

BC Bid is a fast, easy, and convenient way to access BC public sector and ministry bid opportunities. Suppliers can browse and access BC BID postings any time through the BC BID website. BC BID has a value-added electronic notification service that will notify you through email when a bid opportunity specific to the goods and services you are interested in is posted on BC BID. Suppliers can also register to participate in electronic bidding, saving them both time and money by allowing them to submit their bids electronically through the BC BID site. Over 400 British Columbia public sector organizations use BC Bid to post bid opportunities. Purchasing Services' tenders are only available on BC Bid.

For more information on BC BID and to sign up to for electronic notifications and become an e-bidder go to: www.bcbid.ca



Once you have found the bid opportunity you are interested in on BC BID, it is time to start preparing your bid proposal. Your proposal will demonstrate how you can meet the needs of the bid opportunity. The details you need to include in your proposal will be outlined in the bid posting. On the bid posting, you will find supplier attachments and detailed information that will inform you on what you should include in your proposal. The terms, conditions, and performance requirements are identified on the bid posting. They may be different for each competition, so make sure you read them carefully.

To finalize your bid, all faxed or hard-copy bids must be signed by an official authorized to act on behalf of your company. Bids submitted electronically must be in accordance with the BC Bid instructions for e-bidding. Only pre-authorized e-bidders registered on the BC Bid system can submit bids electronically. All required documentation, drawings and other requirements requested in the bid posting must be included in your bid.

All bids must be submitted within the time frame specified in the bid posting. Closing time for bids is usually 2:00 p.m. on the date specified on the bid posting. Late bids will not be accepted. Each bid posting has its own specifications and will require that you set up your proposal according to the specifications laid out in the posting. If you have questions, please refer to the contact information in the bid document.

To register for BC BID and become an e-bidder go to:

www.bcbid.gov.bc.ca/custom/RegistrationGuide-20080311.pdf



Proposal Details

Before you begin your proposal, check the mandatory requirements outlined in the bid posting. These requirements are necessary for your bid to be passed on to the purchasing individual(s) in charge of awarding the bid. Make sure you identify how you have met all mandatory requirements, this will give you a better chance at winning the bid.

At minimum, your proposal should include the following information:

1. A title page displaying the Request for Proposal (RFP), number; the RFP closing date and time; the vendor's name, address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address, and the name of a contact person.
2. Table of contents including page numbers.
3. A short (one or two page) summary of the key features of the proposal.
4. The body of the proposal, including pricing, i.e. the "Proponent Response".
5. A one page letter of introduction, signed by an authorized signatory for the proponent.

For more information on how to prepare your proposal please refer to the [Responding to Government RFPs: A Proponent Guide to the Request for Proposals in the Government of British Columbia](http://www.pc.gov.bc.ca/data/docs/ProponentRFPGuide.pdf); www.pc.gov.bc.ca/data/docs/ProponentRFPGuide.pdf



Evaluation of Bids

All bids are evaluated in a fair and equitable manner based on the specified criteria. Typical criteria (which are stated in the bid document) include price, quality, delivery and service. Some criteria are more important than others, and are weighted accordingly.

The lowest priced bid is not always the winner. Like any consumer, we try to get the best value for each dollar and best value does not always translate into the lowest price. There may be other considerations. The bid document explains the criteria for selection of a successful supplier.

How do I know if my bid was successful or unsuccessful?

When the successful supplier has been selected, the firm or individual is notified by mail, telephone or fax, usually within 10 days of the bid closing. Many purchase awards are posted on BC Bid. Available information includes the name of the successful bidder and the total contract value. All enquiries relating to awards and contracts should be directed to the contact person responsible who is identified on the bid document.

At the conclusion of the Request for Proposals process, all proponents will be notified. Unsuccessful proponents may request a debriefing to review their proposal with the evaluators. The debriefing process will allow vendors a chance to hear feedback from the evaluators that will help make their bid(s) more successful in the future.

For Invitations to Quote (ITQs), the successful bidder(s) and their total bid price(s) are posted directly onto the BC Bid web site. This information is usually posted within 10 calendar days after the bid has closed and remains posted for a one month period.

Under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, suppliers and the general public may also request information relating to the award of contracts.



Corporate Supply Arrangements

Another opportunity for small and medium sized businesses to have an on-going supplier relationship with the government, is through a purchasing system called Corporate Supply Arrangements.

What is a Corporate Supply Arrangement?

A corporate supply arrangement (CSA) is a procurement arrangement established by the Purchasing Services Branch for a wide range of goods and services that are routinely required by ministries and other public sector organizations. CSAs offer discounted prices for a specific time period and are obtained through a competitive and fair bidding process.

Who has access to Corporate Supply Arrangements?

All ministries have access to all CSAs. Public Sector organizations have access to CSAs based on a Memorandum of Understanding between the public sector organization and the Purchasing Services Branch.

The following Public Sector organizations have access to CSAs:

- Public Body (e.g. School Districts, Crown Corporations, Municipalities)
- Group 1, Group 2 or Distributed Learning K-12 independent schools as defined by the Ministry of Education
- Regulatory body created by legislation
- Not-for-profit organizations delivering services on behalf of government
- Private company under contract to government to deliver services to the general public

How does my company become a CSA supplier?

CSAs are posted as any other goods or service request is posted, on the BC Bid website. Bidders who successfully meet all the requirements in the posting will then be evaluated with other potential candidates. The CSA will then be established with the successful respondent(s) and an arrangement will then be entered for a specified period of time.

For more information, visit: www.pss.gov.bc.ca/csa/csa.html

If you have a complaint about how a particular contract was awarded, we encourage you to consider using the Vendor Complaint Review Process. The Vendor Complaint Review Process is intended to provide access to a consistent, fair and timely process to deal with vendor complaints concerning the government's procurement process, and to identify ways to make improvements to the process.

Any complaints regarding a competitive process or a pending or awarded contract may be submitted at any time during the competitive process, and up to thirty (30) business days after the bid has been awarded.

A complaint must be submitted in writing in accordance with the instructions on the Vendor Complaint Review Process web site:

www.fin.gov.bc.ca/ocg/pgo/VCRP.htm



Contacts

Please visit the following page to view lists of Ministry Purchasing Contacts for all government ministries and agencies:

www.pss.gov.bc.ca/psb/min_contacts.html

To speak to a Purchasing Services staff member at one of our locations please contact:

Victoria

Purchasing Services Branch
PO Box 9476 Stn. Prov. Govt.
Victoria, BC, V8W 9W6
Phone: 250 387-7300
Fax: 250 387-7309

Kamloops

Purchasing Services Branch
2nd Floor, 455 Columbia Street
Kamloops, BC, V2C 6K4
Phone: 250 828-4322
Fax: 250 371-3890

Or visit our website at:

www.pss.gov.bc.ca/psb



Bidder – A vendor who responds to an Invitation to Quote (ITQ) by submitting a bid is referred to a bidder. The vendor who is awarded the contract is referred to as the successful bidder.

Bid Opportunity – Is a government or public sector document, soliciting a supplier for goods or services.

BC BID – An on-line site where you can access, browse and compete for public sector bid opportunities. www.bcbid.gov.bc.ca

Corporate Supply Arrangement (CSA) – Is an arrangement in which a supplier has offered to provide goods or services to one or more government or public sector entities for a specified period of time in accordance to agreed terms and conditions.

Invitation to Quote (ITQ) – Refers to the process and document used in government to solicit bids or quotes from vendors for the provision of clearly specified goods or services. The bids received in response to an ITQ are evaluated on price only.


Procurement – The act of buying goods and services for the government.

Proponent – The term proponent refers to a vendor who responds to a Request for Proposal (RFP) by submitting a proposal. The successful proponent is the vendor who is selected from the competitive process to supply government with the goods or services required.

Request for Proposal (RFP) – Refers to the process and document used in government to solicit proposals from vendors which will be evaluated on price as well as other criteria, including vendor qualifications and the proposed solution.

Request for Information – Refers to the process and document used in government to obtain information to be used in developing a future solicitation opportunity. It is often used to obtain specific information about a product, service, or process, as well as the availability and performance of the goods or services.

Request for Qualifications (RFQ) – Request for Qualifications (RFQ) refers to the process used to pre-qualify suppliers who are interested in a current opportunity or for pre-qualifying suppliers who are interested in supplying goods or services in the future on an if, as, and when requested basis.



Solicitation – The act of obtaining bids, quotes, offers, or proposals.

Supplier – The term supplier is often used interchangeably with the term vendor. However, in the context of government procurement, a supplier is a vendor who has been selected through a procurement process to supply government with goods or services.

Tender – Is a solicitation used to obtain proposals from which a successful bidder, or successful proponent, is selected.

Vendor – In the context of government procurement, any party that is in the position of being able to sell goods or services to government is a vendor.

Purchasing Services

www.pss.gov.bc.ca/psb/home.html

Procurement and Supply Services

www.pss.gov.bc.ca

Ministry Purchasing Contacts

www.pss.gov.bc.ca/psb/min_contacts.html

Vendor Complaint Review Process

www.fin.gov.bc.ca/ocg/pgo/VCRP.htm

Corporate Supply Arrangements

www.pss.gov.bc.ca/csa/csa.html

Responding to Government RFPs

www.pc.gov.bc.ca/data/docs/ProponentRFPGuide.pdf

BC BID

www.bcbid.ca

Core Policy and Procedures Manual

www.fin.gov.bc.ca/ocg/fmb/manuals/CPM/06 Procurement.htm

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/F/96165 01.htm

iProcurement website

www.cas.gov.bc.ca/Services/iProcurement/iProcurement.htm

Strategic Acquisitions and Technology Procurement Branch

www.saip.gov.bc.ca/satp/contacts.htm