

Low Value Purchase Orders (RPA)

Low value purchase orders (RPA) are used for small procurements of commodities and services that do not exceed \$3,000. All County departments have delegated authority to issue low value purchase orders. In most circumstances the department issuing the purchase order must obtain three quotes (bids) and award to the lowest quote received. Except for developing the procedure for this type of purchase, the Purchasing Department is not involved in this process and does not directly authorize the purchase. To be considered for this type of purchase a potential vendor must make themselves known to the department who is issuing the purchase order directly and by registering in electronic procurement. Often departments will use the electronic procurement database of vendors to solicit for a low value purchase.

Procurement Card Purchases (CAL-Card)

County departments have personnel who have been issued “VISA” Procurement Cards, known as CAL-Cards, to procure various materials and supplies. These purchases are treated in the same manner as low value purchase orders. For most purchases, County procedures require departments to solicit three bids for each procurement card order. Each individual card carries both a single purchase dollar limit and a monthly dollar limit. To place an order, departments contact the vendor directly. Departments may place orders within their CAL-Card limits, directly with the vendors according to purchasing guidelines. As with low value purchase orders, the Purchasing Department does not directly authorize the purchase.

Direct Open Market Purchase Orders

Direct open market purchase orders are issued directly from County departments for procurements between \$3,000 and \$7,500. For this type of purchase a department should solicit at least three bids for each procurement. The Purchasing Department authorizes these types of purchases but does not directly issue the purchase order.

Open Market Purchase Orders

For procurements over \$7,500 an open market purchase order will be issued. Generally, this type of purchase order is used for a one time purchase of a commodity or service. In certain circumstances such as construction, an open market purchase order will be issued along with a separate contract. The purchase order verifies that funds have been approved for this procurement and performance can begin, and the separate contract provides a detailed description of the duties and responsibilities of the vendor and the County. The Purchasing Department authorizes and directly issues all open market purchase orders.

Blanket Purchase Orders

Blanket purchase orders, also known as Term Contracts, are for the purchase of commodities or services for which estimated quantities have not been established in advanced. Blanket purchase orders are generally used for recurring needs of the County and issued for use by a single department or countywide. In some cases prefix pricing will be established in the purchase order.

How does the bid evaluation process work?

Depending on the complexity of the bid, it can take from several days to several weeks to evaluate all the bids submitted. For certain evaluations, such as complex services that will be used by multiple departments, evaluation committees may be established to evaluate bid proposals. Typically, evaluation committees will be made up of end users from different departments as well as certain administrative staff. In these cases, Purchasing Department staff will not be part of the committee and will only provide guidance in the bid evaluation.

In many cases the Purchasing Department will award to the lowest responsible and responsive bidder. Please note, however, in many bid evaluations the Purchasing Department will use a “Best Value” evaluation and will take into account many factors other than cost when awarding a contract. Best value evaluations generally include factors such as past work performance, qualifications of staff and value added services. For a bid with many items, Purchasing, at its discretion, may award the entire contract to one bidder based on comparisons of the aggregate bids, or may make individual line-item awards to the lowest bidders.

Promises of an Award

Because the County relies heavily on competitive bidding, no one knows which bidder will receive an award until sealed bids are opened and evaluated. Therefore, no one can give assurance that a vendor will receive a particular order. County government is also subject to California law regarding conflict of interest, including the receipt of gifts. The County Procurement Code of Ethics Policy expects each employee, at no time or under any circumstances, to accept directly or indirectly, gifts, gratuities, or other things of value in violation of County policy or state law from suppliers, or which might influence or appear to influence procurement decisions.

May I inspect the bids? How do I learn about bid results?

To inquire about bid awards, call the Purchasing contact indicated on the bid at least seven to ten days after the bid opening date. After a bid has been awarded, all supporting documentation including bid tabulations will be available through a Public Records Request. To initiate a Public Records Request, please contact the Purchasing Department at (909) 387-2060.