

CHAPTER 15  
PURCHASING

**265—15.1(16) Applicability of competitive bidding.** Items, including goods or services, that are expected to cost in the aggregate in excess of \$50,000 will be obtained as a result of a formal or informal competitive bidding process conducted by the authority, or through the department of administrative services whenever such procurement is in the best interests of the authority, as determined by the authority. Items, including goods or services, expected to cost \$50,000 or less in the aggregate may be obtained in any manner deemed appropriate by the authority.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the authority may exempt any item from competitive bidding if the item is noncompetitive or is purchased in quantities too small to be effectively purchased through competitive bidding; if there is an immediate or emergency need for the item; if the purchase of the item facilitates compliance with set-aside procurement provisions; or if the executive director of the authority determines, in the executive director's sole discretion, that the authority's best interests will be served by exemption from the bidding process.

**265—15.2(16) Methods of obtaining bids or proposals used by the authority.** Formal or informal bids or proposals are to be obtained by one of the following methods. If more than one method is applicable to the purchase of a particular item, the authority shall choose the method of bidding to be utilized.

**15.2(1) Formal bids.**

*a.* To solicit formal bids, the authority shall prepare a written invitation-to-bid document and shall send it via the United States Postal Service or electronic mail to selected vendors in the business of providing the goods or services sought by the authority. Goods or services may also be obtained by the authority using reverse auction methods via the authority's Internet website.

*b.* The invitation to bid shall contain the due date and time of the bid opening, a complete description of the item needed, and any other necessary or proper items.

*c.* Formal bids received prior to the submission deadline set in the bidding document shall be made available to any interested party on the date and hour designated on the bid form. As the bids are opened, they shall be tabulated, and the results of the tabulation shall be made available to any interested party. The original bids and the tabulations shall be maintained at the authority for one year following the date on which the bids were opened.

*d.* An award shall be made within 60 calendar days from the date of the bid opening, unless a different time frame is stated by the authority in the invitation to bid or subsequently agreed to by the vendors. The price quoted by the vendors shall remain binding throughout the applicable time period. If an award is not made within the applicable time frame, all bids shall be deemed rejected.

**15.2(2) Informal bids.**

*a.* Informal bids may be obtained by the authority through use of a written bid form, over the telephone, via facsimile transmission, or in electronic format, including over the Internet or through electronic mail. When requesting informal bids, the authority shall contact selected vendors supplying the goods or services sought by the authority and shall communicate to each vendor the date on which bids must be received, a complete description of the item to be purchased, and the time period during which the bid must remain valid. Goods or services may also be obtained by the authority using reverse auction methods via the authority's Internet website.

*b.* Written informal bids shall be opened as received, and informal telephone, facsimile, or electronic bids shall be recorded as received. If a bid is received over the telephone, a telephone bid form shall be used to record the bid received. If an electronic bid is received, a printout shall be used to record the bid received. Following the submission deadline, the authority shall tabulate the bids received and make the award. The bids and the tabulations shall be available to interested parties after the submission deadline and shall be maintained by the authority for one year following the submission deadline.

c. If an award is not made within the time frame indicated by the authority when requesting bids, all bids shall be deemed rejected.

**15.2(3) Request for proposals.** Whenever a requirement exists for an item and cost may not be the sole criterion for selection, the authority may issue a request for proposals. The purpose of a request for proposals is to provide the vendor with sufficient information about the authority's requirements and goals to allow the vendor to propose a solution to the authority's requirements.

a. The authority shall prepare a written request for proposals and shall send it via the United States Postal Service or electronic mail to selected vendors in the business of supplying the goods or services sought by the authority.

b. An award shall be made within 60 calendar days from the date of the proposal opening unless a different time frame is stated by the authority in the request for proposals or subsequently agreed to by the vendors. The terms quoted by the vendor shall remain binding throughout the applicable time frame. If an award is not made within the applicable time frame, all proposals shall be deemed rejected and not binding.

c. At a minimum, a request for proposals shall address the following criteria: the need for a proposal conference; the purpose and background of the request; important dates in the proposal and the award process, including the submission deadline; administrative requirements for submitting the proposal and the format required by the authority; the scope of the work to be performed and any specific requirements which the vendor must meet; and any contractual terms and conditions which the authority anticipates may affect the terms of the vendor's proposal.

**265—15.3(16) Items purchased through the department of administrative services.** Goods and services may be obtained by the authority through the department of administrative services (DAS) whenever procurement through DAS is in the best interests of the authority. Items procured through DAS may be obtained by DAS in any manner it deems appropriate.

**265—15.4(16) Posting solicitations.** Formal bids and requests for proposals issued by the authority shall be posted to the authority's Internet website. The posting shall indicate that it is a notice to prospective bidders, contain the due date and time of opening of the bid or proposal, describe the items to be purchased, and provide the name, address and telephone number of the person to be contacted to obtain official bidding documents.

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**265—15.5(16) Contract purchases.** The authority may enter into contract purchase agreements for items, groups of items, or services. Contract purchase agreements are subject to the competitive bidding requirements previously outlined, where applicable.

**265—15.6(16) Blanket purchase agreements.** If the authority foresees a requirement for frequent purchases of off-the-shelf items, the authority may establish blanket purchase agreements. A blanket purchase agreement is a formally approved charge account that is designed to reduce paperwork and the number of checks issued. Blanket purchase agreements are subject to the competitive bidding requirements previously outlined, where applicable.

**265—15.7(16) Bids and proposals to conform to specifications.** All bids and proposals must conform to the specifications indicated by the authority. Bids and proposals that do not conform to the specifications stated may be rejected. The authority reserves the right to waive deficiencies in the bids or proposals if in the judgment of the authority its best interests would be served by the waiver.

**265—15.8(16) Time of delivery.** When evaluating bids or proposals, the authority may consider the time of delivery when determining the successful vendor.

**265—15.9(16) Cash discounts.** When evaluating bids or proposals, the authority may consider cash discounts.

**265—15.10(16) Ties.** The authority shall resolve ties among bids or proposals which are equal in all respects by drawing lots unless only one of the tied bidders is an Iowa business. If only one of the bidders tied for an award is an Iowa business, the Iowa business shall be given preference over all tied out-of-state businesses. If it is necessary to draw lots, the drawing shall be held in the presence of the vendors who submitted the tied bids or proposals whenever practical. If the tied vendors are not present, the drawing shall be held in front of at least two persons, and the authority shall document the drawing.

**265—15.11(16) Time of submission.** All formal bids and proposals shall be submitted by the vendor in sufficient time to actually reach the authority prior to the submission deadline specified in the bid document. All informal bids shall be submitted by the vendor in time to reach the authority prior to the submission deadline indicated by the authority. Formal bids and proposals shall be marked by the authority with the date and time received by the authority. Formal bids and proposals received after the submission deadline shall be returned to the vendor unopened. All vendors to whom invitations to bid or requests for proposals are sent shall be notified of any changes in submission deadline.

If a formal bid or request for proposals is canceled prior to the submission deadline, any responses already received shall be returned unopened. If an informal bid is canceled prior to the submission deadline, any bids already received shall be destroyed.

**265—15.12(16) Modification or withdrawal of bids.** Bids or proposals may be modified or withdrawn prior to the time and date set for the bid or proposal opening. Modifications or withdrawals shall be in writing and delivered in a sealed envelope that properly identifies the correct bid or proposal to be modified or withdrawn. A bid or proposal may be withdrawn after opening only with the approval of the authority if the authority finds that an honest error was made by the vendor that will cause undue financial hardship to the vendor and that will not cause undue financial hardship or inconvenience to the authority.

**265—15.13(16) Financial security.** The authority may require bid security, litigation security, and performance security on formal bids or proposals. When required, security may be by certified check, certificate of deposit, letter of credit made payable to the authority, or any other form specified by the authority.

**265—15.14(16) Rejection of bids and proposals.** The authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids or proposals. Bids and proposals may be rejected because of faulty specifications, abandonment of the project, insufficient funds, evidence of unfair or flawed bidding procedures, failure of a vendor to meet the authority's requirements, or for any other reason if the authority determines that its best interests will be served by rejecting any or all bids. Following the rejection of bids, new bids may be requested by the authority at any time deemed convenient by the authority.

**265—15.15(16) Vendor appeals.** Any vendor whose bid or proposal has been timely filed and who is aggrieved by the award of the authority may appeal the decision by filing a written notice of appeal before the Iowa finance authority board at the address set forth in rule 265—1.3(16) within three days of the date of the award, exclusive of Saturdays, Sundays, and state legal holidays. The notice of appeal must actually be received at that address within the time frame specified to be considered timely. The notice of appeal shall state the grounds upon which the vendor challenges the authority's award. Following receipt of a notice of appeal which has been timely filed, the board shall notify the aggrieved vendor and the vendor who received the contract award of the procedures to be followed in the appeal. The board may appoint a designee to proceed with the appeal on its behalf.

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These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code section 16.5(1) "f."

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