

Steps to Consider If You're Interested in Statewide Contracting

A recurring theme from discussions with vendors is their interest in doing business with the state – not at all surprising with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts spending billions of dollars in products and services annually. Although there's no defined formula for success, having the opportunity to work with the state does depend on whether your business offerings fall in line with what the state needs – which may change over time. It also requires businesses to do some upfront planning and preparedness to understand the state's procurement process and timetable.

The Operational Services Division (OSD), the state agency charged with meeting the broad product and services needs of Executive Departments, Massachusetts cities and towns, school districts, public institutions of higher learning, housing authorities, and various other public institutions, offers tools to help prospective bidders. We refer to these resources below and provide suggested actions – both short and long-term – so vendors may be best positioned should they wish to pursue Statewide Contracting.

Actions to Take Now

1. Set up a free business profile in COMMBUYS – the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' online purchasing and procurement portal:
    a. Statewide Contract (SWC) and other state opportunities are posted in COMMBUYS
    b. COMMBUYS vendors receive email notifications for opportunities that align with their profile
    c. Bidding to get on Statewide and Departmental Contracts takes place in COMMBUYS
    d. Executive Departments and various other entities transact their purchasing in COMMBUYS.

2. Review OSD's procurement schedule, published monthly, to determine what SWC activity the state is planning over the next several months.

3. Examine the state's existing SWCs by reviewing the Contract User Guide(s) that align with your business' offerings. Take note of the duration of existing contracts and the associated commodity codes, each listed on page one. Businesses may wish to include relevant commodity codes in their COMMBUYS profile.

4. Examine Request for Response (RFR) documents for existing contracts that fall in line with your business offerings. In part, these RFRs may raise your awareness about future contract requirements. Find RFR documents for existing contracts in COMMBUYS: COMMBUYS.com > Select Advanced to the right of the top Search Bar > Select Blankets from the Document Type drop-down > Enter the contract number, e.g., FAC124, in the Description field, and select the magnifying glass.

5. Attend Free online training courses to learn about state procurement:
    a. How the State Buys Goods and Services
    b. How to Locate and Respond to Bids in COMMBUYS
    c. Understanding Elements of Bid Solicitation.

6. Sign up to receive OSD's bi-monthly magazine. View past issues of OSD's *Buy the Way* magazine.

7. Connect with us through social media. Follow @Mass_OSD on our LinkedIn, Instagram, MA Procurement Insights Blog, YouTube, and OSD Podcast channels to keep up to date with the latest agency activities.

OPERATIONAL SERVICES DIVISION
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Actions to Take as the Bid Opportunity Approaches

The state announces its intent to post a SWC bid opportunity (Intent to Procure notice) at least 40 days in advance of the release of the RFR. During this time, vendors should review their progress against the previous recommendations and consider the following actions:

1. Assemble your bid team, the individuals who will review the RFR, once posted, gather the required information and documentation, and submit the quote in COMMBUYS. The team may consist of project managers, legal and finance staff, and the individuals who prospectively will manage the Statewide Contract.

2. Consider adjusting the business' commodity codes in COMMBUYS, as appropriate, to be in line with those provided on the Intent to Procure notice.

3. Investigate possible Supplier Diversity Plan (SDP) partners. In most cases, SWC vendors must commit to spending a specific percentage of their contract sales with qualifying diverse businesses. Understand which businesses are eligible to serve as SDP partners and use the state's Directory of Certified Businesses and the U.S. Veterans Administration Vendor Information pages to identify possible sub-contractors or partners that may provide general business support to your organization by way of janitorial, accounting, legal, catering, or IT services, for example.

Actions to Take When the Bid is Posted

1. *Acknowledge* the bid to be apprised of any updates/ amendments to the bid: *Login* to COMMBUYS, navigate to the bid using the Advanced Search, and select "Yes" on the *Acknowledge Receipt and View Solicitation* window.

2. Thoroughly review the RFR document and compile a list of questions.

3. Attend the Bidders Conference, if offered, and submit questions through the Q & A feature in COMMBUYS.

4. Assemble all required information and documentation.

5. Plan ahead! Allow sufficient time to submit your quote in COMMBUYS. This timeframe may vary widely; however, vendors are advised – at a minimum – to begin several days in advance of the bid opening date (due date) and at a time when OSD Help Desk staff are available (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.) should they have questions. Late submissions will not be accepted.



Reach the OSD Help Desk at 888-MA-State (627-8283).