

The City of Austin has a program designed to encourage MBE/WBE participation in purchases under \$5,000. The purchases typically made at this level are for goods, equipment, or non-professional services. For fiscal year 1999-2000, the City purchased approximately \$2.6 million worth of goods and services from the MBE/WBE community through these smaller purchases.

The individual City departments solicit bids for these purchases. It is not necessary to be a certified MBE/WBE to participate, but you must be registered with the City Purchasing Office as a vendor to receive solicitations. Unfortunately, there is no central point of contact where interested businesses can learn about current under \$5,000 bidding opportunities. The key to receiving solicitations is to make sure when you register as a vendor that your company gets listed under all commodity codes in your field. In the event your company is solicited to bid on a City under \$5,000 purchase, there are several steps you can take to ensure the process works smoothly:

1. Make sure the buyer sends you all specifications, terms, and addenda in writing.
2. Make sure you know which City department is making the purchase and get the name and phone number of the buyer.
3. Submit a written bid meeting specifications by the specified deadlines. Commodity awards are made to the lowest bidder **meeting specification**.
4. If your company is the successful bidder for the good or service, make sure you receive written confirmation and a City purchase order number before you deliver the goods or perform the service. If any change orders occur after award, get written confirmation before proceeding.
5. Once the goods or service has been successfully delivered, you must submit a written invoice to receive payment. The invoice should contain your company's name, remittance address, an itemization of the goods or service invoiced for, and a total amount due. Do not include sales tax.
6. The remittance address on your invoice must match the remittance address on the City's accounting system or payment will not be processed. Confirm that your remittance address is correct by calling the City Purchasing Office at 974-2500 before submittal. You may submit a written request to the Purchasing Office to have it corrected if necessary.
7. Once you submit an invoice, you should normally receive payment within ten to 15 business days. If not, contact your buyer. Have the purchase order number available for reference. City employees who handle purchasing and accounts payable regularly can easily research the status of your payment and advise you of its status.

Following the above steps doesn't always guarantee a smooth bid and purchase process. However, it will certainly make life a lot easier for you if you follow them. ;