



Charles County Government

A Vendor's Guide to Doing Business with the Purchasing Division

To Our Prospective Vendors

This guide has been prepared to acquaint you with some of the procedures of the Charles County Government Purchasing Division. You will find useful information about the county procurement process, and suggestions that may help you improve your chances of being selected to do business with the county.

Our goal is to conduct all procurement in a professional manner and to regard each prospective vendor, bidder, or salesperson with honesty, fairness and integrity. We recognize that the procurement process can seem complex, and we invite your questions regarding any aspect of the procurement process of which you may be unsure.

We look forward to responsible business relationships that reflect favorably and are mutually beneficial to both the business community and Charles County Government. We strive to do all within our ability to maintain these relationships as we serve the interests of the citizens of Charles County.

Who Buys for Charles County

Purchasing conducts or provides oversight of all purchases in excess of \$2,500.00. However, most procurement is either initiated or requested by county departments.

How the County Buys

Small Purchases (less than \$5,000) – Charles County Government departments are authorized to conduct these purchases independently and will contact vendors directly. Only one quote is required. A purchase order is required for amounts over \$2,500.

Medium Purchases (from \$5,000 to \$50,000) – If practicable, informal quotations are obtained from at least three sources. These requests for quotations usually originate from the departments. Purchase orders are typically required and are issued by the Purchasing Division based upon requisitions submitted by the departments.

Large Purchases (more than \$50,000) – The Purchasing Division conducts a formal solicitation process to obtain sealed bids/proposals. Other bid documents are required to accompany the sealed bid/proposal, such as qualifications and experience, bid/proposal affidavit, bid bond, insurance certification, Minority Women Business Enterprise (MWBE) participation, etc. Formal solicitations are advertised in the following venues:

- Charles County e-Procurement Portal (Opengov)
- eMaryland Marketplace Advantage, the State of Maryland's online bid board
- One time in the Maryland Independent
- Social media: Facebook (www.Facebook.com/CharlesCounty)
- Online at www.CharlesCountyMD.gov/public-notice

Prime Contracting vs. Subcontracting

All contracting opportunities, whether small or large, solicited by Charles County Government Purchasing Division are prime contracting opportunities. The Purchasing Division will award a contract to the prime contractor, but the prime contractor is responsible for identifying and hiring subcontractors. The Purchasing Division does not select or hire subcontractors. Usually the prime contractor will have their team in place prior to submitting a bid; therefore, it is important to connect with prime contractors early in the solicitation process.

Who to Contact

Always make your first call to the Purchasing Division. We will direct your inquiries to the appropriate individuals as necessary. Please direct any inquiries to:

Phone: 301-645-0656

Email: PurAdmin@CharlesCountyMD.gov

Website: CharlesCountyMD.gov

Location & Business Hours

The Purchasing Division is part of the Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services and is located in Room B130 of the Charles County Government Building, 200 Baltimore Street, La Plata, Maryland. Normal office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Vendor consultations are conducted by appointment only

Charles County e-Procurement Portal

County formal solicitations may be found on the Purchasing e-Procurement Portal located on the county website at www.CharlesCountyMD.gov. Click "Business" and then "Bid Board/E-Procurement."

Vendor Notifications

All formal county solicitations are published on eMaryland Marketplace Advantage, the State of Maryland's electronic bid board, which provides email notification of solicitations published. Firms wishing to be notified of county solicitations should register with eMaryland Marketplace Advantage at <https://procurement.maryland.gov/>

Minority Women Business Enterprise (MWBE) Program & Small Local Business Enterprise (SLBE) Program

The county established the MWBE and SLBE programs to encourage participation of small, local, minority, and women owned businesses in county procurement. The programs are administered by the Charles County Economic Development Department.

For information, eligibility criteria, and how to apply, contact the MWBE/DBE Compliance Manager at 301-885-1340 or visit <https://www.meetcharlescounty.com/local-minority-business-programs/>

Charles County's E-Procurement Portal – Opengov (<https://procurement.opengov.com/portal/charlescountymd>)

The OpenGov Vendor Self-Service e-procurement portal is a free, online, self-service tool that directly allows Vendors to access their information when needed and be informed about Charles County Government formal procurement solicitations. All Charles County Government active Vendors will be required to access and use the Vendor Self-Service portal as the primary means of doing business with Charles County Government. The County only accepts electronic bids and proposals submitted through the Opengov portal. Vendors will receive electronic notifications for formal procurement posted by Charles County Government and other jurisdictions with whom the vendor has registered.

eMaryland Marketplace Advantage – eMMA (<https://procurement.maryland.gov>)

State of Maryland e-Procurement Portal. Vendors can register to receive notifications of solicitations from local jurisdictions and the State of Maryland. The County posts notices of publication of solicitation to eMMA but does not receive bids or proposals through eMMA.

Suggestions for Bidders/Offerors

- Always read the solicitation documents thoroughly before submitting questions.
- Comply completely with all instructions and requirements contained in the solicitations. Bids/proposals missing required information and/or containing incomplete forms may be rejected. Ensure submission of all required items specified.
- Attend the pre-bid/proposal meeting/site visit if one is offered.
- Ask questions. If you need clarification, submit questions to the procurement officer in writing via the e-Procurement Portal. Each question must be submitted individually.
- Check the e-Procurement Portal frequently. You are responsible for being aware of any addendums, updates, or notices concerning the solicitation posted on the e-Procurement Portal.
- Ensure your bid is submitted prior to the published bid/proposal closing date and time. Bids and proposals submitted late will not be accepted. The County only accepts electronic submissions via the e-Procurement Portal.

Fatal Flaws that Lead to Contract Failure

- Overcommitting Resources – taking on more work than your company can handle will cause poor performance and can result in contract termination.
- Bidding too Low – submitting a low bid to win a contract award will likely have negative consequences, including:
 - Failure to perform work at the stated prices causing termination of contract.
 - Rejection of bid.
- Failure to Read ALL Requirements and Follow Instructions – the solicitation outlines all the requirements. Be sure to read thoroughly and follow instructions. Common items overlooked include:
 - Living Wage Requirements
 - Minority Women Business Enterprise/Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Goals
 - Mandatory Affidavits

Typical Solicitation Process

1. Planning

Cost estimate, budget approval, timeline, key personnel

2. Document Preparation

Technical, administrative, contractual requirements finalized

3. Publication

OpenGov and eMaryland Marketplace

4. Pre-Bid/Proposal Conference

Interact with Contactors, explain scope, answer questions

5. Receive Bids/Proposals

Public bid opening or confidential proposal evaluation

6. Evaluate Responses

Lowest responsive and responsible, most favorable offer

7. Recommend Award

Obtain signed contract and

forms from winning vendor

Receive internal approvals

8. Notify Vendors

Provide sorry letters for

unsuccessful offerors.

Protest timeline

9. Receive Final Award Approval

10. Issue Notice to Proceed!

County Departments

- County Commissioners & Administration
- Office of the County Attorney
- Community Services
- Economic Development
- Emergency Services
- Fiscal & Administrative Services
- Human Resources
- Planning & Growth Management
- Public Works
- Recreation, Parks & Tourism

Types of Purchases

- Architectural and Engineering Services
- Building Materials
- Construction
- Construction and Turf Equipment
- Industrial Chemicals
- Information Technology Hardware and Software
- Janitorial Supplies
- Office Supplies and Furniture
- Painting
- Printing
- Professional Services
- Recreational Equipment
- Road and Culvert Repairs
- Safety Supplies and Equipment
- Vehicles and Repairs
- Grounds Maintenance and Debris Removal
- Water and Sewer Equipment and Repairs
- Water and Sewer Construction

Who Buys What?

Purchases are based on two factors:

1. Does the Agency/Department have a need for the product or service?
2. Does the Agency/Department have the budget to purchase the product or service?

Solicitation & Award Information

- Bid openings for bids received in response to invitations to Bid are public and conducted virtually. Bidders are encouraged to attend.
- Contract awards resulting from formal solicitations are made after completion of review, evaluation, and tabulation of bids/proposals. Award information is published on the county e-Procurement Portal after award has been made.
- Information concerning the county's formal solicitations is available on the e-Procurement Portal for at least 30 days after the award of the contract. Information concerning procurement documents not published on the e-Procurement Portal may be requested in writing in accordance with the Maryland Public Information Act, as directed on the County website.



Charles County Government
Department of Fiscal & Administrative Services
Purchasing Division

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www.CharlesCountyMD.gov