

How to do Business with the **Province of British Columbia**



Every year, the B.C. Government buys a wide range of goods and services from businesses of all sizes and types.

Your business could be one of them.



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What does the B.C. Government buy?

Think of almost any product or service and we've probably bought it.

The B.C. Government – which currently includes 16 ministries and eight central agencies – regularly buys a wide range of goods and services from suppliers in British Columbia and elsewhere to support the programs and services we deliver to the people of British Columbia.

At any given time, we may be in the market for a snowmobile to help the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations track wildlife; require an IT consultant to help the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General implement new technology; or be working with a contractor to deliver child and youth mental health services on behalf of the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Who Can Sell to the B.C. Government?

Individuals and businesses of all types – including corporations, limited partnerships, co-operatives and not-for-profit societies – may respond to B.C. Government bid opportunities. You will find many of these bid opportunities posted on [BC Bid®](#).

Each bid opportunity will describe the goods or services required. You should carefully consider whether you will be able to successfully meet the bid requirements before you begin to work on your response.

You may choose to bid on your own, or you may collaborate with other suppliers to form a team to deliver the goods or services. Just remember, for all bids, one supplier must be designated as the lead (or prime) contractor, with legal responsibility for undertaking the work.

How does the Government decide when a project goes to BC Bid®?

The B.C. Government is responsible to the public for ensuring we pay competitive prices and receive the best possible value for money on goods and services acquired through procurement.

We post opportunities on BC Bid® when the value of the procurement exceeds certain criteria as outlined below.

GOODS

When the total value of the goods a ministry or agency needs is less than \$5,000, the ministry or agency usually requests a quote from three suppliers, often local businesses.

When the total value of the goods a ministry or agency needs is more than \$5,000, the opportunity goes to BC Bid®.

SERVICES

When the total value of the services a ministry or agency needs is less than \$75,000, the ministry or agency usually invites three or more suppliers – often from a list of pre-qualified suppliers – to submit competitive proposals.

When the total value of the services a ministry or agency needs is more than \$75,000, the opportunity goes to BC Bid®.

CONSTRUCTION GOODS AND SERVICES

Three ministries – the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Citizens' Services and Open Government and the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations – are responsible for the construction of facilities and road infrastructure for the B.C. Government.

These ministries post all construction projects with an estimated value of more than \$100,000 on BC Bid®. They also often post projects with a value of less than \$100,000

on BC Bid®. However, if the work is of a recurring nature, the ministry may invite three or more suppliers from a list of pre-qualified suppliers to submit competitive bids.

For low dollar value projects, the ministries request competitive bids, typically from known local contractors.

For hired equipment only:

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure selects suppliers using the "HETS" system. See www.th.gov.bc.ca/hired-equipment/hiredequip.htm.

The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations usually selects suppliers from its provincial Engineering Equipment and Services (EES) directory. See www.for.gov.bc.ca/hth/engineering/systems_links.htm.

B.C.'S TRADE AGREEMENTS

British Columbia has entered into agreements with the Government of Canada, the provinces and territories to reduce barriers to trade within Canada. The procurement provisions of these agreements ensure that, above certain defined dollar value thresholds:

- » all B.C. public sector organizations are required to post procurement opportunities to B.C. Bid®; and
- » suppliers located in other jurisdictions have the same access to government procurements as suppliers located in B.C.

For information on B.C.'s trade agreement commitments as they relate to procurement, see www.pss.gov.bc.ca/psb/related-legislation-and-trade-agreements.html.



What is BC Bid®?

BC Bid® is an on-line service where you can quickly and easily access B.C. Government bid opportunities and bid results.

There is no charge to browse BC Bid® and you do not have to register to visit the site. You can search for bid opportunities or bid results by category – goods, services or construction – and by organization, commodity and several other search criteria.

For each bid opportunity, you will find a summary description of what the buyer is looking for. The notice may also include the complete bid document (also known as the solicitation or tender document) that you can download for review, usually at no charge.

You may also choose to register as a supplier with BC Bid®. Once registered, you can sign up for an email service that will notify you when a bid opportunity specific to the goods or services you supply is posted. As a registered user, you will also be able to electronically submit bid responses, if requested by the buyer.

For more information on BC Bid®, please go to: www.bcbid.gov.bc.ca or call the BC Bid® help desk at: 250 387-7301.

OTHER B.C. PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS AND B.C. BID®

In addition to the B.C. Government, more than 600 other public sector organizations post Bid Opportunities on BC Bid®. These include:

- » school districts;
- » local governments;
- » universities and colleges;
- » health authorities;
- » Crown corporations; and
- » boards and commissions.

Procurement policies and procedures vary for each of these groups. This publication deals only with the policies and procedures of the B.C. Government. Please read all bid opportunities carefully.



How do I find out about opportunities not posted on BC Bid®?

For goods and services valued below the minimum thresholds identified above, we generally seek competitive bids from at least three suppliers.

We choose the suppliers to contact based on a variety of factors, including location, capabilities, proven competitive pricing, product lines, and past experience providing goods or services to government.

We learn about suppliers in a variety of ways: by checking listings and directories, consulting with colleagues, looking at past purchases, researching websites, reviewing advertisements and meeting directly with suppliers.

A GOOD PLACE TO START

Each B.C. Government ministry maintains a website that describes the programs it is responsible for and how it is organized to deliver services (go to www.gov.bc.ca).

In addition, the B.C. Government offers a searchable online directory listing individual offices and employees, including job titles (www.dir.gov.bc.ca).

You are welcome to contact individual ministries to introduce your company and the goods and services you provide – but remember, while the B.C. Government's requirements are diverse, not all offices will need the goods and services that you offer. We recommend you target your approach to the ministries or departments most likely to be interested in your goods or services.

For services, we may also choose to set up a list of pre-qualified suppliers. Ministries and agencies post opportunities to be on pre-qualified supplier lists, called Requests for Qualifications (RFQs), on BC Bid® as they arise. (See below for more on RFQs.)

What are the different kinds of bid opportunities?

We use several different approaches to find the right suppliers of goods and services for our projects. The four most common are:

INVITATION TO QUOTE (ITQ)

We use fill-in-the-blanks ITQ forms to purchase goods. To be considered as a supplier, you must demonstrate that you meet all of the requirements described in the ITQ, including quantity, quality, ability to meet delivery date(s) and conformance to specifications.

The supplier whose quote fulfills our requirements at the lowest total price is awarded a purchase order for the project. Purchase orders and other forms of contract are discussed below.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

We use RFPs when a purchase includes services and/or the purchase decision is not solely based on price.

An RFP describes the project and its requirements, the information we require from you as a supplier, and how your proposal should be formatted. It also includes the criteria we will use to evaluate your proposal, such as experience, skills and expertise, methodology, price and environmental considerations. Some criteria are more important than others, and are weighted accordingly – for example, skills and experience might be worth 25 per cent, while methodology is 10 per cent.

Your proposal must demonstrate how you can meet our requirements and fulfill our criteria.

The supplier whose proposal delivers the highest overall value to the B.C. Government is awarded a contract for the project.

INVITATION TO TENDER (ITT)

We use ITTs to acquire construction-related services. The ITT form typically follows a standard format, which describes the work to be done and requests pricing for specific components of the work.

The supplier with the lowest priced, technically acceptable tender is awarded a contract for the project.

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

We use RFQs to create lists of suppliers who are pre-qualified to bid on opportunities that may arise in the future.

RFQs are similar to RFPs: we ask you to describe your skills, experience, qualifications, and often price, and will evaluate your submission against our stated evaluation criteria. However, submitting a successful RFQ does not automatically mean you will receive a contract; it simply means you are now eligible to be invited to bid when a project comes up.

How do I respond to a bid opportunity?

How you respond depends on what kind of bid opportunity it is.

- » Bids submitted in response to an ITQ or ITT primarily involve submitting your proposed pricing.
- » Proposals submitted in response to an RFP or an RFQ need to demonstrate how you meet our business requirements.

It's very important that you read the ITQ, ITT, RFP or RFQ document carefully, and provide all of the information requested, in the format described.

The following details are important to understand when responding to any bid opportunity:

BID TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Each bid opportunity will have a separate section describing the terms and conditions that apply to that particular bidding process. It's important that you read this section and familiarize yourself with the details.

Your bid must be submitted in accordance with the instructions described in the terms and conditions.

BID CRITERIA

Each bid opportunity is unique, involving different mandatory and desirable requirements.

- » A mandatory requirement is one that must be met in order for your submission to be considered. If your submission is missing a mandatory requirement, it will not be evaluated and you cannot be awarded a contract. Mandatory requirements are indicated by the word "must" – for example, "bids must be received before 2:00 pm on June 22."
- » A desirable requirement is one that should be met, but is not required to be met. If your submission does not address a desirable, it will be evaluated but will not score as well as one that does address the desirable. Desirable requirements are indicated by the word "should" – for example, "bids should describe the colour of the product offered."

All bids:

- » must be received before the stated closing date and time;
- » must be signed by an authorized individual;
- » must be in English; and
- » should provide all requested information.

Our terms and conditions are written in plain language but they do address legal matters – if you are unclear about a specific requirement, or have any other questions about the bid opportunity, do not hesitate to ask for clarification.

LANGUAGE

The language of business for the B.C. Government is English. All submissions must be in English.

CLOSING DATE AND TIME

The document will have a specific closing date and time for submissions. Your submission must be received before the stated date and time.

SUBMISSION METHODS

The document will also indicate what method or methods you may use to submit your bid. Typically, bids may be submitted in-person or by courier. Fax is often an option, but mail or email are usually not acceptable.

E-BIDDING

Some bids will also have an e-bidding option, where you can submit your bid electronically through BC Bid®. To do this, however, you will need to register with BC Bid® as an e-bidder and pay an annual subscription fee.

If you regularly submit bids, or anticipate submitting large responses, becoming a BC Bid® e-bidder can save you both time and money.

To register for BC Bid® and become an e-bidder go to: www.bcbid.gov.bc.ca/custom/BCBidRegistrationGuide.pdf

SIGNING YOUR BID

To be legally binding, your submission must be signed by an individual authorized to bind your organization. In some instances, especially for ITTs, you may also apply a corporate seal.

If you are submitting your bid electronically, you will need to follow the BC Bid® instructions for submitting an e-bid.

QUESTIONS

All bid opportunities will identify an official contact person. This is the person to contact with any questions you might have about that specific bid opportunity.

We encourage you to ask questions if you are uncertain about how the procurement process works, or if you are unclear about what we want to buy. We will consider each question individually. If the answer is one all suppliers need to be aware of, we will provide both the question and answer to all suppliers, without identifying who asked the question.

How will I know if my bid was successful?

Successful bidders are contacted immediately upon conclusion of the evaluation process. It's our usual practice to also advise unsuccessful bidders of the winning bid. There may be a delay in advising unsuccessful bidders, while we finalize the contract to be awarded to the successful bidder.

Summaries of purchase orders for goods are posted to BC Bid® five days after an order is issued, and some ministries may also choose to post contract award summaries for services. The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure regularly posts unverified bid results for construction projects on BC Bid®.

Can I find out why my bid was unsuccessful?

Yes. You may request a debriefing after a purchase order or contract has been awarded. In the debriefing, you will learn how your bid stacked up in relation to the stated evaluation criteria, where your bid was strong and where it needed to be improved.

Under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, suppliers and the general public may also request information relating to contract awards.

For more information, go to:

www.pss.gov.bc.ca/psb/pdfs/Releasable_Information-Feb2013.pdf



What if I am not satisfied with the outcome of a bid?

We are committed to a fair, open and transparent procurement process that delivers best value to the taxpayer and is consistent with our policies, our trade agreement commitments and Canadian contract law.

Our procurement process does, however, involve competition among suppliers for our business. Occasionally, suppliers may feel that the process has not been conducted appropriately.

If you have a complaint about how a bid was conducted or a contract awarded, you may choose to file a vendor complaint at any time during the competitive process, and up to 30 business days after the contract was awarded. For information, see www.fin.gov.bc.ca/ocg/pgo/VCRP.htm.

My bid was successful. What kind of contract will I sign?

Government retail purchases, typically paid for with a government corporate charge card, do not require a contract document. For all other government purchases, you will receive one of the following:

PURCHASE ORDER

For goods over \$5,000, the Procurement Services Branch will issue a purchase order.

GENERAL SERVICE AGREEMENT (GSA)

For most services, the ministry or agency involved will issue a GSA either for:

- » general services;
- » information technology and management consulting professional services; or
- » financial review and assurance services.

For more information about the GSA, please visit: www.pss.gov.bc.ca/psb/gsa/gsa_index.html.

CONTRACT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

It is standard practice to include a sample contract or agreement in each bid package, so that all bidders are aware of the contractual terms and conditions you will be required to follow if your bid is successful.

CUSTOM CONTRACT

For some goods or services – particularly those with a value greater than \$250,000 – the ministry or agency involved will issue a standalone, custom contract based on the original Request for Proposal and the successful supplier's proposal. The language in most custom contracts is similar to that found in the GSA.

CORPORATE SUPPLY ARRANGEMENT (CSA)

CSAs are issued by the Logistics and Business Services division of Shared Services BC for goods and services to be acquired on an “as, if and when” requested basis.

A CSA is a form of standing offer: you will not receive a contract until an order (referred to as a “drawdown”) is made against the CSA. Drawdown documents vary; each CSA describes the required drawdown document.

CCDC 2 - 2008 STIPULATED PRICE CONTRACT

Contracts for the construction or modification of government buildings generally use the industry-standard template recommended by the Canadian Construction Documents Committee.

MAJOR OR MINOR WORKS CONTRACT

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations issue “major” and “minor” works contracts for the construction of roads, bridges, public works and other non-building related projects. The type of contract (major or minor) is based on the value of the work. For more information, see www.th.gov.bc.ca/publications/const_maint/contract_serv/contract_services.htm.



How will I get paid?

How you will get paid may vary. The vast majority of payments made by the B.C. Government for goods and services are by invoice or charge card:

INVOICE

In most cases, you will submit an invoice upon delivery of the goods or services. If you are providing services over a longer period of time, however, you may be asked to submit invoices at scheduled milestone dates.

Our policy is to pay suppliers promptly upon receipt of a satisfactory invoice.

Payment is by cheque or – for suppliers receiving multiple or recurring payments – through electronic funds transfer (EFT) directly into your bank account. The ministry or agency to which you are supplying goods or services will let you know how to set up an EFT.

CHARGE CARD

If you are a retail supplier – or you are supplying goods or service valued at under \$5,000 and you accept charge cards – the ministry or agency may choose to pay you using a government corporate charge card.

Where can I find more information?

PROCUREMENT SERVICES BRANCH

The Procurement Services Branch, part of the Logistics and Business Services Division of Shared Services BC, provides procurement services to the B.C. Government and other B.C. publicly funded organizations.

The branch also provides information and assistance to suppliers about the B.C. Government procurement process, including how to use BC Bid® and how to submit a bid.

Visit www.pss.gov.bc.ca/psb or contact us at purchasing@gov.bc.ca or 250 387-7300.

PROCUREMENT GOVERNANCE OFFICE, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT BRANCH

The Procurement Governance Office, Financial Management Branch is part of the Office of the Comptroller General in the Ministry of Finance. The branch supports the B.C. Government in achieving its procurement objectives and providing the public with value for money by:

- » establishing corporate procurement policy;
- » responding to inquiries about corporate practice; and
- » receiving appeal applications made under the Vendor Complaint Review Process.

Visit www.fin.gov.bc.ca/ocg/pgo/pgo.htm or contact us at procurementgovernance@gov.bc.ca or 250 387-9215.

For the complete B.C. Government procurement policy, see www.fin.gov.bc.ca/ocg/fmb/manuals/CPM/06_Procurement.htm.

OTHER RESOURCES

To review current bid opportunities and bid results or to register as a supplier, please visit:

BC Bid®

www.bcbid.gov.bc.ca

To find out more about how you can supply goods or services to specific ministries, please visit:

Ministry of Children and Family Development

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/service_providers/index.htm

Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

www.for.gov.bc.ca/tasb/cntmng/

Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

www.th.gov.bc.ca/publications/const_maint/contract_serv/contract_services.htm

For more information about being a small business and doing business with the B.C. Government, please visit:

B.C. Small Business Accord

www.jtst.gov.bc.ca/sbaccord/