



VENDOR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q - Why do I need to respond to the bid? Can't schools just buy from me anyway?

A – Texas purchasing laws over the past years have required public entities that purchase more than a certain dollar amount in a category for the entire year to competitively bid all purchases for that category. Though the legislature has raised the dollar amount recently, many schools adopted local policies and procedures to only make purchases through cooperatives that competitively bid items so that they do not have to be concerned each time they make a purchase if it is in a category that has to bid. Each MRPC participating district may have a different purchasing policy; however, by being an approved vendor on the MRPC, our participating districts have the assurance they can purchase products from your company and still meet Texas purchasing laws.

Q – Why do I have to pay a \$20 registration fee?

A – The MRPC recently went to an online system to process the bids. This online system has allowed a more streamlined process that benefits the participating school districts and vendors by shortening the timeline for the bid process from the previous manual processing system. We feel the annual \$20 fee is a very reasonable amount for vendors to have access to a marketing list of over 130 participating school districts and Regional Education Service Centers.

Q – What bids does the MRPC offer?

A – Currently the MRPC offers three bids each year. Those bids are:

- Combined Purchasing Bid – a list of specific office and instructional supply type items for a **one-time purchase**. The participating school districts enter the quantity they expect to order for these items before the posting of the bid. Once the bid has been awarded, purchase orders are submitted from each participating school to the vendor for delivery in July to the individual schools/campuses. The schools are only able to order from this bid during the specific time frame set for the bid.
- Instructional/General Supply Catalog bid – a bid that lists various categories of goods (e.g., office supplies, maintenance supplies, miscellaneous instructional supply, science equipment & supplies, athletic supplies, nursing supplies, etc.) The term of this bid is August 1 of the bid year to August 31 of the following year (i.e., August 1, 2012 – August 31, 2013.)
- Technology Catalog bid – a bid that lists various categories of technology goods (e.g., workstations, peripheral devices, audio-visual, distance learning equipment, etc.) The term of this bid is August 1 of the bid year to August 31 of the following year (i.e., August 1, 2012 – August 31, 2013.)

Q – What is a catalog bid? I'm not responding with a specific price.

A - A catalog bid allows a vendor to offer its entire product line within the category to which a response is entered. We ask you to respond with a discount amount for the category. This means you are offering your product to our participating members at your **regular catalog price (for the catalog that is in effect at the time of the quote/order), plus the discount amount you indicated.**

Q – The discount I can offer varies depending on the manufacturer or type of product. How do I indicate that when I respond to the bid?

A – When you respond to the bid, you should indicate the **minimum** discount that you can offer on **all** products. A “zero” discount is acceptable if there are certain items you would not be able to discount (or if there are only certain exceptions, you may indicate that in the “Special Notes” section.) You may also upload supporting documents that list discount rates by manufacturer or product. Many vendors have provided the school districts with logins/passwords to their online purchasing system so that the price to the school district is automatically shown.

Q – My company’s catalog prices usually change on January 1 (or at some other time during the year.) How does that affect my bid response?

A – This does not affect your bid response. Your response to the catalog bid means you are offering our participating schools your regular catalog price (plus any offered discount you indicated) that is **in effect at the time you give a quote and/or receive a purchase order**.

Q – My company carries products that would apply to more than one of these bids. Can I respond to more than one bid?

A – Definitely! We encourage you to respond to any and all bids you deem appropriate. We especially encourage vendors responding to the Combined Purchasing bid to also reply to the catalog bid(s), so that schools can continue to make purchases from your company throughout the year (although purchases after orders through the Combined Purchasing bid have been processed will be made at regular catalog prices plus offered discount, not the Combined Purchasing bid price.) And, the \$20 annual fee allows you to respond to as many MRPC bids as you wish for that year.

Q – My company offers services, not products. Should I respond to the bid?

A – The current MRPC bids are only for products (goods.) If your company offers services, you should contact the individual schools to determine their procedures for contracting services.

Q – I don’t see my product offered on the Combined Purchasing bid. How do I get my item added to the list?

A – The Combined Purchasing bid is made up of items that are commonly used by most/all the participating school districts. Additions to the list of items can only be made through a request by a school district. If enough schools within the cooperative indicate they have a need for the item also, the item will be added to the list. The MRPC has target groups (school secretaries, nurses, maintenance staff, etc.) that regularly review the list of items for changes and additions. **Ink cartridges and toner** are supplies about which we often receive inquiries; because of the variety of types used throughout the participating schools, these items are not offered through Combined Purchasing. Vendors of these items should respond to the Instructional/General Catalog bid under “Office Supplies”, and may also respond to the Technology Catalog bid if the vendor feels it is appropriate.

Q – How will I be notified that the MRPC has posted a bid?

A – The best way to ensure you are notified when the MRPC posts a bid is to register with us through Public Purchase. Instructions for the registration process are posted on this page. Note that it is a two-part process. The first part registers you with Public Purchase, and requires you to enter information about your company. Secondly, you will need to register with the agency (the MRPC), so that you will receive notice when the MRPC posts any bids. If you need help with either of these steps, contact Public Purchase support by using the “Chat” feature at www.publicpurchase.com, or e-mail support@publicpurchase.com.

Q – When will the bids be posted?

A – The bids are generally posted in the spring of each year. For 2012, the anticipated release date for the bids is March 12. Please give us a few days after this anticipated release date in case we have encountered unexpected delays, but if you have not received notice of the bid/have access when you login to www.publicpurchase.com, feel free to check with us by e-mailing dana.parrish@esc9.net or call 940-322-6928. (See the anticipated timeline for the 2012 bid cycle on this page.)

Q – How are the bids awarded?

A – Each bid is evaluated by the MRPC awards committee, which is made up of representatives from each of the four regional Education Service Centers and participating school districts. Bids are evaluated based on the requirements of TEC 44.031 (see the bid specifications for more details.) Catalog bids are generally awarded to any responding vendor who is deemed responsible to meet the evaluation criteria when school districts contact the vendor for a price quote as they have need throughout the term of the bid. The items on the Combined Purchasing bid are awarded line by line to the vendor(s) the committee evaluates as being the one who best meets the outlined criteria.

Q – Once I’ve been approved as a catalog vendor, why do I have to respond every year?

A – To retain the competitive spirit of the catalog bids, the term of the bids is August 1st of a year to August 31st of the following year. Therefore, to remain a catalog vendor from year to year, you must respond to the posted bid each year.

Q – I don’t have a printed catalog. My prices are found on my website. Is that okay?

A – Yes. Whatever method you use to publish your prices is the foundation of the catalog price bid.

Q – Am I allowed to contact the schools on the MRPC list? To whom should I send my catalog?

A - Yes, approved vendors are allowed (and encouraged!) to contact the schools on the MRPC list by sending your catalog, flyers, or whatever marketing material you feel is appropriate. Please remember that while the bid may be awarded in April, catalog vendors are not approved for purchases until August 1. We ask that if you are new to the approved catalog vendor list, you wait until late summer to send your materials so that our participating schools don’t run the risk of violating purchasing laws by trying to purchase from you before the term of the bid contract starts.

You can find a list of the participating schools under the “Districts” section of the www.mrpctexas.com website. There is also a Word document provided that you can use to make labels for your marketing materials. Because of the broad variety of users within the districts, we cannot provide individual names in departments. You can obtain these by checking the individual school websites, or we suggest you use a “generic” label such as “Maintenance Director at _____ ISD”, “Librarian at _____ ISD”, “Technology Director at _____ ISD”, etc. The name indicated on the list provided on our website is generally either the superintendent or the business manager of the district (whomever the MRPC administrators need to contact about cooperative issues.)