

Steps for Using Informal Purchasing Procedures

Informal purchasing can be used when the SFA/USDA formal procurement threshold has not been met. Informal purchasing just like formal purchasing must be procured with the opportunity for maximum fair and open competition. This means that more than one potential vendor is contacted and asked to submit a bid.

When purchasing locally grown produce, you will want to use the geographic preference option. This option can only be used to purchase unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products that have been minimally processed and this processing cannot alter the inherent character for a product. For example peeling, slicing, dicing, cutting, or grinding would not alter the inherent character.

Additional information can be found in the USDA 08-2010, a memo located on the USDA web site -- <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/governance/policy.htm> .

Specifications should not be developed that are so restrictive that open and free competition is not possible.

Once determined that informal purchasing procedures can be used, the following requirements should be met:

1. Notify prospective bidders (vendors) of the intent to purchase the foods, supplies, or equipment.
2. Provide bidders (vendors) product specifications, the period of time the bid price must be honored (week, month, semester, etc.), general purchasing conditions and any other information needed for the bidder to properly respond. It is recommended that this information be in writing to facilitate distribution of the information to potential bidders. This will also insure that all potential bidders are getting the same information.
3. Obtain price quotations from the bidders (vendors). The price quotes may be obtained in person, by telephone, or in writing using a price quote worksheet or catalog price information. Price quotes may be mailed, e-mailed or faxed.
4. Document the prices quoted.

5. Award the bid to the bidder (vendor) with the lowest price for the quality specified. If the lowest price is not awarded, document reasons for selecting a higher price. Any and all bids may be rejected if there are sound documented reasons.

If you have questions, contact your consultant.

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