

**SUBJECT: CRITERIA FOR AWARDING CONTRACTS TO THE LOWEST RESPONSIBLE BIDDER**

The award of public contracts is of vital interest to the taxpayers and citizens. Many state laws provide for award to the lowest responsible bidder in order to avoid favoritism and its concomitant evils. It would be unfair to bidders, who have expended time and money in the preparation of bids, to be denied equal consideration.

The basis of making awards to the lowest responsible bidder has been adopted with the view of enabling a public body to enter into contracts with the same efficiency and economy that a prudent business person does in the conduct of everyday business affairs. This beneficial result cannot always be obtained when the award goes to the lowest bidder. Definite specifications must be adopted to enable all bidders to make intelligent bids. This establishes a common standard by which to measure the respective bids to determine the lowest responsible bidder.

The New York Courts define the term lowest responsible bidder as one able to respond or answer in accordance with what is expected or demanded. More specifically, the lowest responsible bidder has been interpreted as requiring the successful bidder to possess:

- 1) Financial or procuring ability to complete the contract;
- 2) Integrity and trustworthiness;
- 3) Skill;
- 4) Judgment;
- 5) Ability to perform faithful and conscientious work;
- 6) Promptness;
- 7) Experience;
- 8) Previous performance of satisfactory work;
- 9) Other essential factors which may depend upon the type and kind of contract involved. For example, for vendors of instructional materials, preferences will be given to vendors who agree to provide materials in alternative formats. For apparel or sports equipment vendors, responsible bidders will be considered to be those that comply with fair and proper labor standards including those related to child labor, employee compensation, employees' rights to form unions, and working conditions.

(Continued)

# POLICY

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Non-Instructional/Business  
Operations

**SUBJECT: CRITERIA FOR AWARDING CONTRACTS TO THE LOWEST RESPONSIBLE BIDDER (Cont'd.)**

On opening and tabulating the bids, the public official must determine two things to make a valid award:

- 1) The responsibility of the bidder;
- 2) Which of the responsible bidders has submitted the lowest bid.

Awarding a contract required to be let to the lowest responsible bidder is mandatory. No authority, except by statute, authorizes the official to accept any other bidder.

Determination of the responsibility of a bidder by the official requires the exercise of judgment and discretion in favor of the institution for which he/she works. This discretion must be exercised honestly and fairly, not arbitrarily nor capriciously. The decision must be based on facts obtained after investigation into the responsibility of the bidders which show that the lowest bidder to whom the award was not made was not a responsible bidder. Failure to make such an investigation invalidates the contract award and such award will not be upheld.

The lowest bidder who is not the lowest responsible bidder must prove that the investigation of the responsibility of bidders was not made or that such action was not the result of the exercise of honest and fair discretion in determining the responsibility of the bidders, but was arbitrary or capricious. The ultimate facts must be recorded.

It is the policy of the District to provide equal opportunities for awarding contracts regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, political affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, military status, or disability.

Adopted: 6/16/1999  
Amended: 7/5/2005