

Common Procurement Terms for School Districts

Below is a glossary of commonly used procurement terms in school districts, designed to help community members and vendors better understand the purchasing process.

1. Procurement

The process of purchasing goods and services for the school district in a fair, competitive, and transparent manner.

2. Request for Proposal (RFP)

A formal document issued to solicit proposals from vendors when a school district needs a solution or service that includes evaluation criteria beyond just price.

3. Invitation to Bid (ITB) or Invitation for Bids (IFB)

A formal request asking vendors to submit a price to supply specific goods or services. The contract is usually awarded to the lowest responsible bidder.

4. Request for Quotation (RFQ)

A document used to request price quotes from vendors for specific goods or services, typically used for smaller or less complex purchases.

5. Bid

A vendor's formal offer to provide goods or services at a specific price, in response to an IFB or RFP.

6. Vendor or Supplier

A company or individual that provides goods or services to the school district.

7. Contract

A legally binding agreement between the school district and a vendor outlining terms, conditions, and pricing.

8. Purchase Order (PO)

An official document issued by the school district to a vendor, confirming an order for goods or services.

9. Sole Source

A situation where only one vendor is capable of providing the required goods or services, often requiring special approval.

10. Cooperative Purchasing

A process where multiple school districts or agencies join together to buy goods or services at better prices through shared contracts.

11. Competitive Bidding

A method of procurement that involves multiple vendors submitting bids to ensure the best value through competition.

12. Evaluation Criteria

The standards used to assess and compare vendor proposals, which may include cost, quality, experience, and more.

13. Award

The official decision to accept a vendor's bid or proposal and move forward with a contract.

14. Compliance

Ensuring all procurement activities follow applicable laws, policies, and procedures.

15. Addendum

A formal change or addition to a procurement document, often issued to clarify requirements during the bidding process.

16. Minority- or Women-Owned Business (MWBE)

A business that is at least 51% owned and controlled by minority group members or women, often given preference or additional support in procurement.

17. Bonding Requirements

Financial guarantees required from vendors (such as bid bonds or performance bonds) to protect the school district from default or non-performance.

18. Encumbrance

The reservation of budget funds once a purchase order is issued, to ensure money is available for the commitment.

19. Terms and Conditions

The standard rules and obligations that apply to all contracts and purchase orders.

20. Public Notice

An announcement (often online or in print) required by law to inform the public of upcoming bid opportunities.