Working with the University of Minnesota

Working with the University of Minnesota can be a confusing process. The U of MN is very decentralized and as a public entity has specific rules that must be followed. Here are a few tips for doing business with the University.

Orders under $50,000
These are placed directly by U of MN departments. Purchasing Services provides U Wide agreements for commonly used goods and services but otherwise has no input into these lower dollar purchases. In order to be considered for these lower dollar purchases, you need to contact the various departments that may purchase your goods or services. Use the University’s Department Directory (at http://www1.umn.edu/systemwide/directories) to get contact information on different departments.

Do not cold call on departments. Contact the department and arrange for a meeting if their time permits.

U Wide/U Market Contracts
Many of the small dollar purchases made by the departments are done via U Wide and U Market contracts. The contracts are set up by Purchasing Services for items with high volume usage across all departments. It is recommended that departments purchase from these established contracts wherever possible. Suppliers registered in MBid to receive requests will be notified if there are bid opportunities for U Wide and U Market Contracts.

The U of MN may also choose to use State of Minnesota contracts to purchase goods or services without competitive bidding.

Orders over $50,000
Supplier selection for orders over $50,000 is managed by Purchasing Services via a Request for Bid or a Request for Proposal (RFP). To have access to these requests, suppliers must be registered in MBid.

Professional Services
These requests have an extra review dollar limit. Professional Services and Consulting that is $25,000 or more are reviewed and approved by Purchasing Services but those $50,000 or more are published for bid on MBid.

MBid System
Go to purchasing.umn.edu/mbid/login.html and register. You will be asked to choose commodity categories that might fit your type of business. You will receive an email confirming your registration - usually within 24 hours.

What happens next? When an RFP or an RFB goes out that is appropriate for your chosen category(s), you will receive email notification of the request. You may also choose to check the MBid website any time to see what other requests have been posted.
Responding to RFB and RFPs

Here are some tips for responding to requests.

- Check the due date. LATE responses WILL NOT be accepted.
- Read the entire document to ensure you have a complete understanding of the scope and all the items and specifications.
- For RFPs:
  - Check the RFP document for the tentative calendar. The question period for supplier to submit questions is defined there. Questions are NOT accepted after the date.
  - Review the RFP scoring criteria. Make sure you are adequately addressing these areas to demonstrate your strengths in the heavier weighted areas.
  - Provide everything that is asked for in the exact manner in which it is requested.
  - Your proposal must be a specific response to the RFPs specific requirements. Do not just forward marketing materials.

Procurement Card

Departments may also purchase their goods and services through a departmental purchase card. This card is limited to $2,500 per transaction. There are some goods and services that are restricted from purchase on the card.

Miscellaneous

- U of MN standard terms are Net 30; FOB U of M
- Any alternate terms and conditions on any supplier paperwork must be removed or approved by U of MN Office of General Counsel.
- Conflict of Interest Policy – U of MN follows Minnesota 15.43 Acceptance of Advantage by State Employees.

  Purchasing staff cannot …accept directly or indirectly from a person, firm, or corporation to which a contract or purchase order has been or may be, awarded, a rebate, gift, money, or anything of value other than items of nominal value. No such employee may further accept any promise, obligation or contract for future reward. *University Purchasing considers $5.00 to be nominal value for purposes of avoiding conflict of interest in purchasing. According to State law (M.S. 15.43), violation is a misdemeanor.

Purchasing Questions: If you have further questions, check the University of Minnesota Purchasing web site at purchasing.umn.edu. You can also email purchase@umn.edu or call 612-624-2828.