

This document is a consolidation of the questions submitted during the Community Engagement Evening on School Board Procurement which took place on March 30, 2023. Questions are outlined in blue below and are followed by responses.

1. If a procured product fails (e.g. a tendered basketball is defective or of low quality), who is responsible for requesting a refund or warranty claim from the vendor? How are such requests tracked to ensure that the same product is not re-purchased in the future?

Response

If a product is defective, the school/department should work with the vendor for a solution i.e.: replacement. The school can escalate to Supply Chain Management if the solution is not realistic and does not meet the school's/department's needs. Any concern with procured goods and services should be brought to the attention of Supply Chain Management.

2. In our experience, tendered items are LESS durable or useful than items that could be purchased from other vendors. The total cost of ownership appears to be much HIGHER than could be obtained using local/ commercial vendors. Or alternatively, the products will wear out at the same rate (a soccer ball) where no service or warranty is possible, so the price is simply higher by using a tendered vendor. If such a situation is identified - how is the vendor REMOVED from the tender-approved list?

Response

School boards are required to comply with the Broader Public Sector (BPS) Procurement Directive. When total board-wide spending is forecasted to reach specified thresholds, competitive public procurement processes must take place. Provincial direction also requires all BPS entities, including school boards, to consider to utilize existing BPS compliant competitive procurement processes. Specifications are identified when the Board is looking to procure goods. If a school/department experiences a non-durable item, it should be brought to the attention of Supply Chain Management so that it can be addressed prior to making future purchases. For recurring wear on products, Supply Chain Management will work with the school/department & vendor to understand facts surrounding the issues. A Vendor Evaluation Form is available to report issues. Supply Chain Management is involved to ensure compliance with contractual obligations.

3. Every other school board in Ontario puts out RFQs or RFPs to qualify vendors. Why did we do away with this practice for clothing and force schools and parents to pay 15 to 25% for the same product and service? Also, please poll your schools to find out the lack of service and delays we are experiencing.

Response

The response to question #2 applies here as well. In this case, there was an existing vendor of record agreement through the Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace (OECM) that met the product specifications, so the DPCDSB utilized this agreement. If there are performance issues, schools are encouraged to bring this to the attention of Supply Chain Management by completing a Vendor Evaluation Form.

DPCDSB utilizes Bids and Tenders as the online platform for all public procurement opportunities. Vendors should also watch for other opportunities on the Province of Ontario website or through other agencies serving BPS entities such as OECM.

4. Is there a feedback submission process for vendor issues?

Response

There is a Vendor Evaluation Form that can be completed by the impacted school/department. The form goes to Supply Chain Management to review and address any issues or concerns. Please work with your school principal to obtain further details.

5. Who is the Vendor Feedback Form provided to? Only the principal – or can parent council members make direct complaints?

Response

The initial point of contact should be the Principal. Others on the School Administration team can assist as well. You are asked to engage the Principal to reach out to Supply Chain. The Principal should be involved as they are responsible for the funds flowing through their school. Having the connection to a school contact also allows Supply Chain Management to go back to obtain more information on concerns.

6. As a parent, how do we access a Vendor Feedback Form? Can we bypass the Principal as they are already overwhelmed with so much?

Response

See responses to question #4 and #5.

7. Do you realize that the three vendors you chose for apparel, spirit wear and uniforms are the most expensive in the market and parents are forced to fork out money they can't always afford. The board effectively eliminated competition by eliminating a very large number of vendors and offering a monopoly to three companies. What was the rationale behind it?

Response

See response to question #3 above. This framework also ensures there is consistent pricing for any school within DPCDSB.

8. How does a vendor get added to the list of vendors on contract with the school board?

Response

Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and Supply Chain Ontario encourage shared procurement initiatives and can provide access to Vendor of Record arrangements, which are available to all Public Sector Organizations

DPCDSB utilizes Bids and Tenders as the online platform for all public procurement opportunities.

Vendors should also watch for other opportunities on the Province of Ontario website or through other agencies serving BPS entities such as OECM.

Existing and prospective vendors are encouraged to register on these websites to receive notifications on upcoming opportunities.

9. Is an OECM vendor more important to you or a vendor who looks after your schools and provides the utmost value for their money? Often times at a quarter of the price charged by the OECM vendors. Consistent pricing was mentioned. Might I add that it is consistently high pricing that we are all forced to pay. Why are we doing this?

Response

See responses to questions #3 and #7.

10. How are vendors notified of a competitive procurement process taking place (RFP, RFQ, Tender)?

Response

See response to #8 above.

11. What can we do where there is only 1 vendor on the list. Literally you have granted them a monopoly and parents/schools are held ransom and have to pay that rate when it is possible to find the same product at a cheaper price.

Response

Public procurement processes are publicly available for all vendors to bid on. If the vendor meets the specifications with the lowest qualified price, they become the Vendor of Record. All vendors are encouraged to review Bids & Tenders and other publicly available procurement processes for opportunities.

12. If schools are "frequently" requesting to purchase spirit wear from independent suppliers - this suggests that they are not satisfied with the tendered vendor. How does the procurement team track and document requests to use non-tendered suppliers? How does this factor into future decisions and negotiations with the vendor?

Response

DPCDSB must abide by competitive procurement processes and utilize contracted vendors. Once the process has been completed, we need to follow the contractual language. If a vendor is not providing appropriate service as per contractual obligations, feedback must be provided to Supply Chain Management and appropriate investigations will take place.

13. Time is also valuable. Our parent council is trying to purchase school yard equipment. Products are available now from local vendors, but there is a multi-month wait for the tendered equipment and it costs more. Delivery will be too late for this year's students to benefit. Does time and availability factor into the decision making? Are there exceptions or workarounds for long delays?

Response

Schools are advised to plan ahead for major purchasing knowing there is a longer time horizon for certain goods or services. Supply Chain Management can assist with alternative solutions if required or if goods cannot be facilitated as specified with contracted vendors. If there are examples of delivery timelines that are beyond this school year, please share these with your Principal.

14. Is it possible to use a different vendor when being offered good quality at a lower price? What about needing merchandise for events, such as DECA, as we know needing medals and trophies cannot be delayed?

Response

If a school has specific needs for merchandise that cannot be met through an existing tendered agreement, they can reach out to Supply Chain Management to discuss options.

15. Our parent council was trying to have an ice cream truck visit the school for spirit day. We were told was not possible because the food truck was not on the preferred vender/supplier list. This was a one-time activity for a single, local school - how should we approach procurement for a food truck (as an example) in the future?

Response

There are certain requirements that must be met to limit risk when serving food to the public. The food truck operators need to demonstrate they have adequate liability insurance and follow public health protocols and would pass inspection reports for food safety. There are also other vendor agreements in place at the Board level which can impact food offerings at schools. Schools must also observe the requirements of *Policy/Program Memorandum 150: School Food and Beverage Policy* in their food offerings. Schools are encouraged to plan ahead and reach out to Supply Chain Management for guidance.

16. To what extent are local suppliers considered as an alternative to larger, cheaper but foreign/remote suppliers? Do the objectives of sustainability and accountability carry any weight? That is, does the procurement process consider shipping distance, greenhouse gas emissions, local working standards?

Response

The open procurement process is one that includes opportunities for all vendors. Transportation costs are a consideration as part of the total cost of goods and services being procured. It is incumbent on suppliers to know how procurement is done and how to be considered in the bidding processes. Sustainability is not in government mandate or procurement framework at present. However, through a Request for Proposal (RFP), school boards can ensure alignment with the DPCDSB environment stewardship policies as part of an evaluated bid.

17. Do you think the current procurement procedures work well? What could be improved?

Response

Compliance with the procurement framework and directives is of utmost importance given the school board is a publicly funded institution. DPCDSB continues to adapt to the Provincial procurement framework changes, with a continued emphasis on accountability, transparency, and value for money. If schools or community members have suggestions on areas for improvement within the existing frameworks, please have the Principal reach out to Supply Chain Management for further discussion.