

RESOLUTION NO. 20140626-092

WHEREAS, the City of Austin is committed to being an innovative organization, and it recently formed an Office of Innovation; and

WHEREAS, innovation can be defined in many ways, but a common aspect of innovation projects is that they are new and have uncertain outcomes; and

WHEREAS, working on a pilot innovation project would foster the creation of cross-departmental teams that with stakeholder engagement could address long-standing problems and facilitate creation of best-in-class programs; and

WHEREAS, the federal government found that the procurement process was a rich area for innovative solutions to long-standing problems, and the Small Business Administration (SBA) created a "RFP-EZ" program seeking to redesign certain procurement processes; and

WHEREAS, the SBA found that a redesigned federal procurement process increased competition, lowered bid prices, and allowed more small businesses to compete for government contracts due to a less burdensome process, and the City of Austin and local small businesses might benefit from a simplified municipal procurement process; and

WHEREAS, a pilot innovation project related to the City's purchasing process could help inform overall innovation program efforts; **NOW**,
THEREFORE,

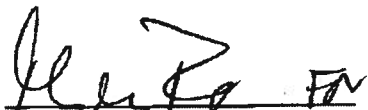
BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to initiate an innovative pilot project to create a simplified solicitation procedure for an upcoming procurement. This pilot project should include input from stakeholders in the design community and the technology community, as well as staff from the Office of Innovation, the Purchasing Department, and other departments as appropriate. After the pilot is complete, staff should analyze the results of the process and determine whether lessons learned could be applied to future procurements.

The City Manager shall provide a progress report back to Council by August 10, 2014.

ADOPTED: June 26, 2014

ATTEST:


Jannette Goodall
City Clerk

<https://rfpez.sba.gov/government>

RFP-EZ For Government

Make small dollar procurements better for both government and businesses.

RFP-EZ was created by the Presidential Innovation Fellows to:

1. Make it easier for new small businesses to start contracting,
2. Simplify the development of statements of work,
3. Improve agency access to information about small businesses,
4. Enable small businesses to submit proposals electronically,
5. Help officers evaluate proposals more quickly,
6. Improve how information (including prices paid by federal agencies) is captured and stored.

Ready to try RFP-EZ for yourself? [Sign up now](#) or email rfpez@gsa.gov for more info.

<https://rfpez.sba.gov/faq>

RFP-EZ FAQ

General

Q: What is RFP-EZ?

A: RFP-EZ is a web-based application that is comprised of five different systems, all meant to make it easier for small businesses to sell their services to government buyers, and for contracting officers to buy small dollar value services.

Q: Are there benefits to buyers and sellers in using RFP-EZ?

A: Yes. We know that buying goods and services for the Government and selling them to the Government can be complicated and intimidating. That shouldn't be the case, especially for small dollar value purchases. RFP-EZ helps streamline the contracting process for both the buyers and sellers. It represents a unique opportunity for innovative startups to easily access the federal .

government marketplace and, in turn, enable the Federal government to secure better and less expensive products and services, saving taxpayers money and improving the results delivered.

Q: Is this a government-wide initiative?

A: Yes. RFP-EZ is a government-wide initiative to help all procurement officials in the Federal government. It is part of the Presidential Innovation Fellowship Program, which was launched in 2012 under the direction of President Barack Obama and his Administration, to develop solutions for the government that can save lives, save taxpayer money, and fuel job creation.

Q: If an agency uses RFP-EZ for acquisitions over \$25,000, must it also post a notice in FBO? If so, why?

A: For procurements valued from \$25,001 to \$150,000, an agency must synopsise it in FedBizOpps (www.fbo.gov). At this time, the posting can be as simple as a link to the project here on RFP-EZ with the following text:

The solicitation is being issued in accordance with the procedures of FAR Part 13. This is a competitive requirement for [insert name of services]. This is a [insert set-aside] and has been assigned NAICS code [insert NAICS code] with a corresponding size standard of [insert size standard]. We anticipate issuing a [fixed price, time and material] order.

The request for quotation can be electronically accessed and responded to via the following link: [insert link provided in RFP-EZ]. All changes to the requirement that occur prior to the closing date will be posted in FBO and RFP-EZ. It is the responsibility of vendors to monitor FBO and RFP-EZ for amendments that may be issued.

However, we are working on creating a seamless link from FBO to RFP-EZ so that when a CO posts an RFP or RFQ in RFP-EZ, it also posts automatically to FBO. This feature is coming soon!

Q: What happens when an agency amends the SOW/RFP?

A: If a notice is required to be published on FBO, you would publish the notice of the amendment on FBO, with a link to the amendment on RFP-EZ. However, we are working on creating a seamless link from FBO to RFP-EZ so that when a CO posts an amendment to an RFP or RFQ in RFP-EZ, it also posts automatically to FBO. This feature is coming soon!

If a notice is not required to be published on FBO, you would amend the SOW/RFP on RFP-EZ, with the assistance of the administrators of the system.

Q: Why is RFP-EZ limited to acquisitions valued below the SAT (\$150,000)?

A: Generally, for acquisitions below the SAT, agencies can use simplified procedures for the purchase. The purpose of these simplified procedures, like the purpose of RFP-EZ, is to:

- Reduce administrative costs;
- Improve opportunities for small, small disadvantaged, women-owned, veteran-owned, HUBZone, and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses;
- Promote efficiency and economy in contracting; and

- Avoid unnecessary burdens for agencies and contractors.

Q: What are the parts or components of RFP-EZ?

A: There are five parts: SOWComposer; BidMaker; BidMonitor; RFP-EZ Marketplace; and Portfolio Browser.

Q: What is SOWComposer?

A: SOWComposer is a web-based system that allows contracting officers to post solicitations created by SOWComposer and valued under \$150,000 (sometimes referred to as the Simplified Acquisition Threshold or SAT) for certain IT services in a streamlined and standardized format.

Q: What are the benefits of SOWComposer?

A: Many times when a program office wants to buy something, they have to draft a statement of work (SOW) telling the public what exactly the Government is trying to buy. We thought it would make things easier if these program offices, including program offices in the same agency or different agencies, had a template already in place to help them draft their SOW. That's why we created SOWComposer. SOWComposer lets:

- the program offices write clear and easy to understand SOWs or use an already-existing SOW template;
- contracting officers view and edit the SOWs;
- the Government store these SOWs in a system to be retrieved later by any Government user; and
- the contracting officer post the SOW online.

The SOWComposer actually drafts more than just the SOW. It really drafts the agency's RFQ/RFP and allows the program office and contracting officer to insert the required deliverables, timelines, clauses, etc.

Q: What is BidMaker?

A: BidMaker allows small businesses to respond easily to RFQs posted by agencies that used SOWComposer. Using BidMaker, small businesses can:

- respond online instead of having to download the solicitation and respond with a paper-based offer>
- ask questions about the acquisition online, and the agency will post the response online and all offerors can then see the questions and answers in real-time
- Access "helper text" to assist in responding to the solicitation
- save their draft proposals for later review and use again
- store some standard information provided in the BidMaker to pre-populate required forms on the current and future acquisitions.

Q: What is BidMonitor?

A: BidMonitor helps contracting officers and program offices to organize proposals that are generated by BidMaker. It shows them:

- a list of current SOWs composed by SOWComposer and bid upon by BidMaker;
- information from proposals received, such as the name of offeror, date offer was submitted, and summary information from SAM;
- the full text of proposals;
- discussions between the reviewers and contracting officer about the proposals;
- prices previously bid for the same or similar services.

Q: What is RFP-EZ Marketplace?

A: Marketplace is a way for small businesses to find out when new SOWs composed on SOWComposer are posted that match the business' profile or when new IT-related acquisitions (valued above or below \$150,000) are posted on FBO. Once a small business signs up for an account, Marketplace lets them review SOWs, send messages to the agency points of contact, and receive email alerts when new solicitations are posted.

Q: What is Portfolio Browser?

A: This search tool allows agencies to find a list of small businesses that have already performed work for the Government. The agencies can view a profile of the business, its location, small business status, prior awards and award cost, and current catalog pricing of the business.

This helps small businesses market their services and products to the Government. It helps the Government find cost information to better prepare its independent Government estimate and helps ensure the Government gets the best price for the products and services it needs.

Q: Isn't Portfolio Browser and SBA's Small Business Supplemental System (SBSS)/Dynamic Small Business Search (DSBS) the same thing?

A: Not really. With portfolio browser, the small business can provide much more information about its company, such as prior quotes submitted, sample work, and other information.

Q: How can an agency participate in RFP-EZ?

A: On December 28, 2012, the Small Business Administration (the agency sponsoring the initiative) issued a notice announcing RFP-EZ as a pilot program at 77 FR 76588, available here. If the agency has a web design or development requirement valued below \$150,000, it should go to our homepage to find out more information about signing on to the system.

Q: Are there any special requirements to participate?

In this stage of the program, we have focused on helping innovative small businesses gain entry into the Federal marketplace and therefore have focused on web design and development services with an estimated price of under \$150,000. In the next stages, RFP-EZ could be open to all businesses and for all services.

Q: If this is a pilot program, does it mean it's exempt from the FAR?

A: No. Acquisitions conducted using RFP-EZ are subject to the FAR. The purpose of RFP-EZ is to make following the FAR requirements easier, both for agencies and small businesses.

Q: How will you be evaluating RFP-EZ during this initial stage?

A: We will be evaluating RFP-EZ on a number of levels, including whether it increases participation by new entrant small business and reduces time required to develop an SOW.

Need help? Just tweet @rfpez or email rfpez@gsa.gov!

RFP-EZ is an official website of the United States Government, and was created by Project RFP-EZ as part of the Presidential Innovation Fellowship program. *RFP-EZ is a pilot program. This website is an open beta.*

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- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [@rfpez](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [Fork this site on GitHub!](#)



TO: Mayor & Council Members
FROM: Urcha M. Dunbar-Crespo, Acting Purchasing Officer
DATE: August 11, 2014
SUBJECT: Progress Report to Council on a Simplified Solicitation Procedure
(Resolution 20140626-092)

*Michael Benson, CAO
for Urcha Dunbar-Crespo*

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a progress report on actions by the City in responding to the City Council Resolution No. 20140626-092 which directed the City Manager to initiate "an innovative pilot project to create a simplified solicitation procedure for an upcoming procurement; to include input from stakeholders in the design community and the technology community, as well as staff from the Office of Innovation, the Purchasing Department, and other departments as appropriate; to analyze the results of the process after the pilot is complete and determine whether lessons learned could be applied to future procurements."

It should be noted that many of the city's procurement processes are guided by state law, and as such, our flexibility in simplifying aspects of the process are limited. However, staff has identified commodity purchases between \$3,000 and \$50,000 to target for a pilot program to streamline some of our processes, and ultimately lead to even greater participation by local businesses.

Early in the fall we will engage with key stakeholders in the vendor community to obtain feedback on potential simplified procurement for these commodity purchases between \$3,000 and \$50,000. After these conversations, we will finalize a pilot program, and working with the Law Department, craft all necessary changes to solicitation documents to put it into place.

We believe these efforts will build upon the commitment to innovation that has existed within the Purchasing Office over the last decade, including the creation of eCheckbook and Contract Catalog, which allow Austinites easy access to all of the city's expenditures and contracts, as well as the award winning "Vendor Connection", which has given contractors and sub-contractors a simplified on-line tool to receive and track solicitations, as well as contract payments and sub-contracting payments.

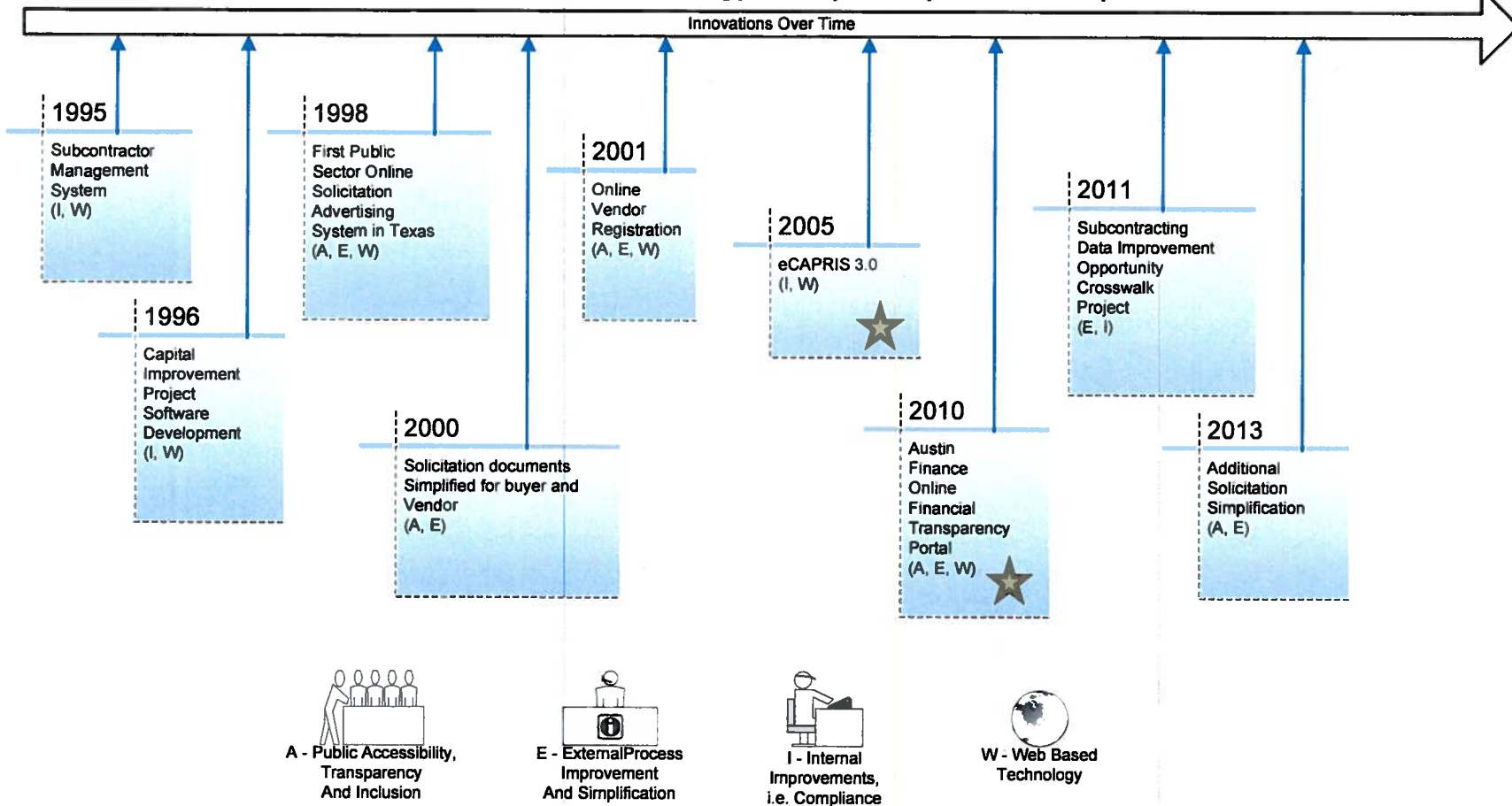
I am available if you have any further questions.

xc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
Elaine Hart, Chief Financial Officer
Greg Canally, Deputy Chief Financial Officer
Yolanda Miller, Deputy Purchasing Officer

Rosie Truelove, Director, Contract Management
Veronica Lara, Director, SMBR
Mike Benson, Chief Administrative Officer, Purchasing Office
Mark Walsh, IT Data Architect, Controller's Office

A commitment to innovation...

Positive changes in process, technology, transparency, accessibility and inclusion



★ Award for Excellence in e-Government - Government Finance Officers Association of the US and Canada