



**Web Services in Action:  
Effectively Managing Your Purchasing Department Online**

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A White Paper for e-Purchasing®

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[www.findrfp.com/gov](http://www.findrfp.com/gov)

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## **Abstract**

Since its growth in the early 1990s, the internet has helped hundreds of thousands of organizations in the public and private sectors streamline their administrative tasks. Many government agencies utilize the World Wide Web to automate their purchasing departments. Although extremely beneficial, online management of solicitations takes time, money, and manpower.

This paper shows how e-Purchasing is able to assist government agencies in easily and effectively managing their purchasing departments electronically while increasing competition and driving down costs. It will begin by introducing the main features of the program. Next it will describe in detail how purchasing personnel can fully utilize each feature. Finally, it will list the benefits of using the e-Purchasing Program.

## Main Features

- Management Center – The Management Center allows government agencies to access all features provided by e-Purchasing. Users can review published and draft new solicitations, edit account profile and settings, view registered vendors and recent bid history, and track bid results.
- Solicitation Center - The Solicitation Center allows agencies to view published solicitations. Users can also draft new solicitation, providing vendors with detailed information and instructions about their solicitations. This feature allows users to control the entire bidding process from posting solicitations to releasing award information.
- Profile – This feature allows users to edit agency and contract information. The solicitation center lets agencies create their own personal place on the web. Users can customize setting to create a webpage similar to their agency's website. The profile page also provides users with a unique URL address that can be posted on their agency website so visitors can be directed to their e-Purchasing solicitation page.
- Vendor List – Agencies can maintain a list of registered vendors. This feature allows governments to track and control who has their solicitation documents and any given time. Buyers can also view all bid history for vendors using this feature.
- Bid Results - This features stores all bidding activity for any given solicitation. Users are able to access vendors' registration information and determine awards based on the lowest bidder. The result is cost savings to government buyers.
- Reverse Auction – e-Purchasing's Reverse Auction requires no new software. Reverse Auctions are competitive bidding events that are conducted live, via the internet. Any product or service that would normally be purchased through competitive bidding is a good candidate for reverse auctioning. Suppliers are able to view other participants' bids and submit counter bids. Agencies review auction activity and award contracts based on their best value criteria. Many agencies that have adopted this type of buying have found it a good way to reduce expenses. The entire process is conducted electronically, saving time and money and increasing administrative efficiency.

## Setting Up and Using Your e-Purchasing Account

### Getting Started...

1. Registering Your Agency:  
Visit [www.findrfp.com/gov](http://www.findrfp.com/gov) and complete the [Registration Form](#). An e-Purchasing specialist will review your account profile and a password will be emailed to you.
2. Reviewing Profile:  
After a password has been provided, [login](#) on the e-Purchasing website. Once logged in, you will be directed to the *Management Center*. Click on *Profile* to review your Agency and Contact Information. Changes can be made by clicking on “Edit Information”.
3. Account URL and Setting:  
The e-Purchasing program supplies each agency with a unique URL address that can be posted on your Government Website so that vendors will be directed to your Solicitation Center page. This URL can be found on your *Profile* page.

Users can also customize their page settings. Click on “Click Here to Change Settings”. This page will allow you to add text, color schemes, or images. You can copy and paste graphics from your agency website and upload them to your e-Purchasing page.

### Managing Your Solicitations...

1. Posting New Solicitations:  
Go to *Solicitation* page. Click on “Draft Solicitation”:
  - Solicitation ID: Enter Solicitation Identification number and title.
  - Solicitation Title: Provide a descriptive title for your solicitation
  - Dates: Using the drop down bar, select an issue date and time and a closing date and time
  - Description: Provide a description of services/products requested (note: if you are attaching bid specification, a detailed description is not necessary). Any special instructions can also be added in this field.
  - Contact Information: Contact information and Purchasing Agency are automatically entered by the system. You can modify this information if the solicitation contact person is different from account contact person.
  - Solicitation Document: Any documents/attachments for the solicitation can be uploaded in this field. For security reasons, only Word, .PDF,

text, or graphics can be attached. Browse to find documents and click “Upload” to attach.

- Bid Submission: Designate how you would like vendors to submit bids/proposals for solicitation. If you choose “Submit Manually” please provide vendors with detailed instructions (i.e. fax, mail, etc.)

Once you have completed the required fields, click “Submit”. *NOTE: Your solicitation will NOT automatically be published after it has been submitted.*

2. Publishing Solicitations:

After solicitation has been submitted, you will have the opportunity to review it before it is published. If any information needs to be modified, click “Edit This RFP” and make necessary changes. If information is correct, click “Publish” to change mode. Once the solicitation has been published, it can be viewed by vendors.

3. Updating Solicitations:

If you wish to add addendums, update your solicitation or change the status, you can do so by clicking on the bid title on the *Solicitation* page.

- Adding addendums: Click on “Add Addendum”. The current date will be used as a default date for Addendum Date. You must provide either a description of the addendum or attach an addendum document. Click “Add Addendum”.  
*NOTE: Your addendum will NOT automatically be published after it has been submitted. You must physically publish addendum on the review page.*
- Updating/Editing Solicitation: The solicitation can only be edited when it is in the Un-Published mode. To modify a solicitation that has been published, click “Un-Publish” and “Edit this RFP”.
- Changing Status: By default, the status is set at “Open”. To change the status, use the scroll down menu and click “Go.”  
*NOTE: The status can only be changed to “Under Review” or “Awarded” if the solicitation has expired.*

## **Tracking and Controlling Vendors...**

1. Notifying Vendors of Your Solicitation:

Once your solicitation has been published, the e-Purchasing system will automatically notify thousands of potential suppliers of your contract. Your solicitation and all documents accompanying it will be emailed to vendors, reducing the manual effort of copying and mailing documents and answering vendor phone calls. e-Purchasing notifies business of bid notices, RFPs, RFQs, pre-solicitation notices, and more.

2. Viewing Registered Vendors:

Vendors registered with your agency are stored and can be viewed using the e-Purchasing system. Click on “Vendor List” in the *Management Center* to access a list of all registered suppliers. To view vendor contact information, click on the vendor’s name. This page will also show bid history for each vendor.

You also have the option of updating a vendor’s status on the Vendor Contact page. You can certify a vendor to conduct work with your agency or reject any vendors you do not wish to do business with. To change status, click “Change Status”. To change status to a certified vendor, click “Certify”. To reject registered vendors click “Reject” and provide a reason in the Reasons field. All vendor information and status history is stored by the e-Purchasing Program.

3. Reviewing Bid History:

The e-Purchasing system allows you to track and control all vendors and bid activity for bid notices allowing online submissions. To view, click on “Bid Result” in the *Management Center*. This page will show you all suppliers that have submitted electronic bids for your solicitations. To view all bid history for a specific vendor, click on “Vendor List” and the Vendor’s name that you wish to review.

4. Conducting Reverse Auctions:

Reverse auctions offer a simple and efficient way for your agency to use the web to improve how you purchase products and services. Reverse auctions allow vendors to login and place bids at their convenience. If they are outbid, they have the option of placing additional bids. Reverse auctions increase the competitive edge and deliver more value-for-money to your agency. To conduct a reverse auction using the e-Purchasing system, you must click on “Reverse Auction” on the *Add Solicitation Specifications* page. Enter a minimum reduction in dollar amount for each bid. Buyers also have the option of rejecting any bids placed

## Benefits of e-Purchasing

- **Save Time & Money** – eliminate the costs associated with copying, mailing and advertising solicitation documents. The e-Purchasing program allows you to manage your purchasing process electronically.
- **Wider Distribution** – Your solicitations will be distributed to and viewed by hundreds of thousands of potential suppliers. The increase in competition results in cost savings for your agency.
- **Easy to Use** – The e-Purchasing program requires no additional software or hardware. This system makes posting and managing solicitations a quick and effortless. Simply log in and get going! Trained specialists are available to assist you.
- **Easy to Use** – e-Purchasing automates and streamlines the procurement process, allowing you to control the entire bidding process. You can manage your purchasing procedures right at your desktop! You control the entire bidding process, from announcing the bid/RFP to posting the award information