



Purchasing Quarterly

Spring 2011, Volume 11, Issue 2. A Publication of the Travis County Purchasing Office, Cyd V. Grimes, C.P.M., Purchasing Agent

Purchasing Appreciation Month

By Jerome T. Guerrero

March was proclaimed as Purchasing Appreciation Month across the nation. Cyd V. Grimes, C.P.M., and her staff presented to the Commissioners Court the official



proclamation by the Governor's Office to commemorate the purchasing professionals.

"In local, county and state government positions, public purchasers can earn the public's trust by demonstrating initiative, dependability and wise, cost effective methods for making purchases and allocating public resources.

Fulfilling their many responsibilities in diverse settings, these hard working men and women increase operational efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of goods and work to promote uniform public purchasing standards for Texas and the nation.

The month of March has been designated for an awareness campaign to recognize all public purchasing professionals across our state for their efforts and contributions to excellence in government purchasing.

At this time, I (Gov. Perry) encourage all Texans to recognize the outstanding contributions of these devoted professionals. Their dedication signals once again that this state's greatest asset lies within the people who call it home."

Ms. Cyd V. Grimes has been the Purchasing Agent for Travis County since 1992. Ms. Grimes oversees all procurement processes for commodities, professional services, construction and Fixed Assets. Her office is also responsible for managing the County's Award-Winning Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Program and accounting for and disposing of all County property. ✂

Judge Bob Perkins Retires from Purchasing Board

By Jerome T. Guerrero

At the same Commissioners Court session commemorating Purchasing Month, a long time supporter of the Purchasing Office and Purchasing Board member announced his retirement. Judge Bob Perkins, formally of the 331st Criminal District Court is the last original board member to resign.

Cyd V. Grimes, C.P.M., read the words of gratitude on the plaque, *"...with heartfelt appreciation to District Judge Bob Perkins, last of the original Purchasing Board created in 1991 in*



recognition of your leadership and support."

Judge Perkins said, "I was the only one that was on there from the very beginning until the end. And I served with a lot of great colleagues that were District Judges ...and it was a pleasure to do that and it was a pleasure to advance the interests of Travis County taxpayers and the Commissioners Court and the District Judges. So I thank you for allowing me to serve." ✂

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Travis County

Cyd V. Grimes, C.P.M.
Purchasing Agent

Commissioners Court

County Judge Samuel T. Biscoe
Pct. 1 Commissioner Ron Davis
Pct. 2 Commissioner Sarah Eckhardt
Pct. 3 Commissioner Karen Huber
Pct. 4 Commissioner Margaret Gómez

Purchasing Board

OPEN
Presiding Chair

261st District Ct. Judge Lora Livingston

250th District Ct. Judge John K. Deitz

County Judge Samuel T. Biscoe

Pct. 3 Commissioner Karen Huber

Purchasing Quarterly

Sylvia Lopez, Contributing Editor
Jorge Talavera, Contributing Editor
Betty Chapa, Contributing Editor
Jerome T. Guerrero, Editor/Writer

Contact Us:

Travis County Purchasing Office
314 West 11th Street, Suite 400
Austin, Texas 78701
(512) 854-9700
(512) 854-9185 FAX

www.co.travis.tx.us/purchasing

Purpose of Purchasing Cooperatives

Staff Contribution

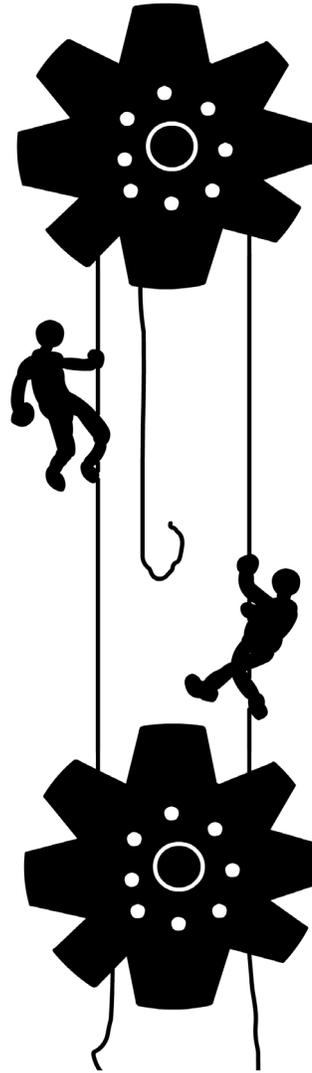
The County has a variety of interlocal agreements and participates in the purchasing programs of various local, state, and national cooperatives such as Houston Area Council of Governments (H-GAC), Texas Association of School Boards (BuyBoard), The Cooperative Purchasing Network (TCPN), U.S. Communities, and Federal Supply Schedules. Before using any cooperative, the Purchasing Agent researches and recommends cooperatives to the Commissioners Court. The Court then approves an interlocal agreement acknowledging the terms and conditions for using each cooperative, including any fee schedules, and authorizes the Purchasing Agent to make purchases under the terms of the interlocal agreement.

The number of purchases made with vendors on cooperative contracts has increased in recent years. Chapter 13 of the Travis County Purchasing Office Policies and Procedures Manual governs the use of cooperative purchasing agreements. The Purchasing Agent will issue an informal solicitation among cooperative vendors when there is more than one cooperative contract available. The advantage over issuing a formal solicitation is normally one of time and cost of

the procurement, however in most cases, especially high technology and construction procurement; a formal contract is still negotiated and awarded as a supplement to the cooperative contract.

The purpose of purchasing cooperatives is to obtain the benefits of increased buying power, thus passing efficiencies and savings to other governmental entities. Cooperatives comply with all State and local bidding requirements, and identify qualified vendors of commodities, goods, and services. The membership of

these cooperatives is comprised of cities, schools, counties, universities, and other governmental entities. The cooperatives provide the due diligence documentation requirement of competitive bidding. For the small agency, the purchasing workload is reduced. For the larger agency, several vendors on a cooperative can be contacted and pricing negotiated to increase the savings. Finally, some cooperatives offer rebates to members for usage of the contracts. Travis County received a rebate of approximately



See "Cooperatives" continued on page 5

Federally Funded Projects Continue to Grow

By Jason Walker

Since the approval of an Interlocal Agreement between the City of Austin and Travis County in January 2010 to share the procurement of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) services, the County has seen an increase of federally funded projects.

In July 2010, Travis County approved an amendment to Travis County's grant agreement with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) for the second year's allocation in the amount of \$2,187,544 to provide WAP services for low-income households. The first year's allocation of the two year grant period, ending August 31, 2011, was \$2,311,350. Travis County completed 846 multi-family units and 45 single-family units with this 2



year allocation of funds. Overall five certified Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs) were used; two as prime contractors and three HUB subcontractors totaling approximately \$1,246,877.

TDHCA will allocate more funds in the amount of \$2,300,000 to Travis County, and extending the grant period to December 31,

2011. It is anticipated that between 450 - 500 units will be completed with this allocation.

In November 2010, Travis County approved an Advanced Funding Agreement to receive federal resources in the amount of \$921,992 through the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) for the construction of McKinney Falls Pedestrian Way

See "Federal Projects" continued on page 5

Purchasing News Highlights

► The Purchasing Office is scheduled to move into the 700 Lavaca Building around the first week of July. Contact the Office if you have any questions.

► The 82nd Legislative Regular Session is considering changes to the

Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) rules: Proposal to add Veterans and Disabled Veterans to HUB status. This has been proposed several times in previous sessions.

► The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (TxCPA)

See "News Highlights" continued on page 4

Economic Opportunity Forums

05/04/11 - Round Rock Government Contracting Forum for Small Businesses

(\$10) Address: Texas State University-Round Rock Higher Education Center, 1555 University Blvd., Round Rock, TX, Information: Contact: FC Caranikas, PhD, 512.716.4820, fc16@txstate.edu. Sign up online to reserve your seat: <http://utsa.ecenterdirect.com>

05/24/11 - San Marcos, Texas Construction Services HUB Forum, Information:

Texas State University HUB Outreach Program and Office of Facilities Planning Design and Construction invite subcontractors who are Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs) or potential HUBs to meet and network with key stakeholders and decision makers (Texas State staff, general contractor/primes, job order contractors, other state agencies/universities and local minority trade organizations) on upcoming Texas State and other state agencies/universities construction projects.

For questions call Yolanda Strey, HUB Specialist @ 512.245.2523

Results-Oriented Procurements

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Marvin Brice, CPPB, Assistant Purchasing Agent and Jason Walker, Purchasing Agent Assistant attended the "Results-oriented Procurements" workshop, hosted by Strategic Partnerships Inc. (SPI), and The University of Texas at Austin's LBJ School of Public Affairs. They and other government procurement professionals participated in the workshop. The workshop offered insight into private sector processes. The workshop is one of a number of workshops held throughout the year for persons involved in commercial bidding and procurement.

The goal of the workshop is to improve attendees' understanding of private sector firms and how they approach the procurement process. That understanding often leads to increased competition and

proposals. The unique aspect of the procurement process from the commercial vendors' perspective is



SPI Vice President of Public Affairs Gay Erwin discusses procurement issues with Travis County's Marvin Brice (left) and Jason Walker

discussed by SPI's veteran consulting staff, who have been involved in the procurement process from both sides of the table and bring special insight and information to the training.

These courses have been

developed with input from corporate vendors, government procurement experts and sales executives who sell to government and also include the very popular "best practices" information.

Among the topics covered during the session are attributes of vendor culture, why vendors are reluctant to bid, vendor communication preferences, methods for overcoming procurement obstacles and more.

The workshops have been attended by proposal development teams, financial and business operations personnel, contract managers, purchasers, proposal evaluation team members and division directors. For more information on the next workshop, please contact Reagan Weil at rweil@spartnerships.com or (512) 531-3917

"News Highlights" con't from page 3

proposes to change HUB rules. One significant change reestablishes graduation procedures for the HUB Program, basing graduation on the Small Business Administration size standards set forth in 13 CFR § 121.201. Each industry has specific size standards.

► Proposals were accepted for the design of the 1st and 2nd floor renovation of the 700 Lavaca Building. Anticipated HUB participation is 31% using 13 certified HUBs, of which 11 are local.



Purchasing Liaison Appreciation Workshop 2011

August 25, 2011

Save the date!

Contact the Purchasing Office for more info!

Project. The design of this project was completed in December 2009. It is anticipated that the solicitation of bids for this project will be in October 2011.

In 2007, Travis County approved an Advanced Funding Agreement to receive federal resources for the design and construction of Frate-Barker Road Improvements in the amount of \$7,200,000. This amount was increased to \$9,200,000 in 2009. The design

of this project was executed through a Professional Services Agreement (PSA) in the amount of \$812,194 and currently is in the 90% design stage. Five certified HUB and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) subconsultants were used totaling approximately \$176,404. It is anticipated that the solicitation of bids for this project will be in February of 2012. The construction budget for this project is \$8,589,000. ✂

\$7,500 in FY 09 and approximately \$12,840 in FY 10.

There are several advantages for the County but what are the advantages to the vendor? By participating as an awarded vendor or supplier in one or more of the cooperatives, the vendor could achieve a virtual storefront with a customer base as big as Texas and beyond.

Each cooperative has procedures for the vendor to submit bids or proposals for goods and services. If the cooperative is based in Texas, it is likely it will follow State of Texas Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) rules and goals. Vendors should read each bid opportunity thoroughly as each contract may have language specific to either the commodity or the issuing entity. Some

cooperatives may have a fee, either percentage or a flat rate to participate and are zone or location specific - again READ the proposal thoroughly! Vendors are encouraged to visit each of these cooperatives web sites to learn their policies and procedures to submit bids.

A comparison chart of the cooperatives that Travis County uses is provided below. This is not a complete list of cooperatives. There are many cooperatives across the nation.

Purchasing Cooperatives are one of the many tools the Travis County Purchasing Office uses to increase its efficiency, and cost savings to County staff and the taxpayer. ✂

Cooperative/Contracting Entity Name	Web site	How to submit bids/proposals	HUB/Minority Participation
U.S. Communities™	http://www.uscommunities.org/	Respond and submit to bids listed on their web site; subscribe to their notification system	Dependent on Government entity origin of contract
The Cooperative Purchasing Network (TCPN)	http://www.tcpn.org/	Respond and submit to bids listed on their web site; subscribe to their notification system	Dependent on Government entity origin of contract
National Intergovernmental Purchasing Alliance Company (National IPA)	http://www.nationalipa.org/	Register on their site to receive notifications of solicitations	Dependent on Government entity origin of contract
Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)	http://www.hgacbuy.org/	Respond and submit to bids listed on their web site; subscribe to their notification system	Follows State of Texas HUB rules
BuyBoard®	http://www.buyboard.com/default.html	Register on their site to receive notifications of solicitations	Follows State of Texas HUB rules
Department of Information Resources (DIR)	http://www2.dir.state.tx.us/Pages/Home.aspx	Go to http://www2.dir.state.tx.us/ict/vendorresources/Pages/howtobecomeadivendor.aspx , to learn how to submit bids/proposals	Follows State of Texas HUB rules
State of Texas Contracts (including)	http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/contracts/	Respond and submit to bids listed on their web site; register on CMBL	Follows State of Texas HUB rules
Council on Competitive Government (CCG)	http://www.ccg.state.tx.us/contracts/	Contracts awarded through State of Texas/submit to respective agency	Follows State of Texas HUB rules
TxSmartBuy Term Contract	http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/contracts/txsmartbuy/	State of Texas Rules and procedures	
Managed Term Contract	http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/contracts/managed/		
State Travel Management Program Contracts	http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/contracts/travel/		
State Emergency Management Contracts	http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/contracts/emergency/		
Texas Multiple Award Schedules	http://www.window.state.tx.us/procurement/contracts/txmas.php		

Special Information



Purchasing Quarterly

Supplement to the Spring 2011 Issue

Communicating Clearly & Directly

By Jerome T. Guerrero

In business, prior to the advent of the technology age, using elaborate and sophisticated words was considered the norm. Today, with e-mail and other electronic communication, writing has become informal.

Writing for business should be simple, direct, clear and concise. Unless you're writing a technical journal, avoid using industry jargon or technical language. Keep your writing style for a general audience, for speeches, manuals and instructions, and presentations.

Want to improve your writing style? Try these basic tips:

- Find an editorial mentor. There is someone in your circle of friends whom you trust; have them review and share feedback on important documents you intend to distribute.
- Ask, "What is the intent of my message?" Start with a basic outline. Write a reference point so you can have a focus. This is especially helpful when writing e-mails.
- Be aware of your tone and intention — what you really want to

say and what you want the audience to understand. This is important because in writing, nonverbal cues are missing. Read your work aloud.



- Remember the five W's: who, what, where, when and why. Basic school lessons still serve as the guide to clear communication.
- Check for accuracy. Proof and then proof again. This is especially important with e-mails.
- Check for distractions. Beware of homonyms, such as "are/our" and "their/there." Even though readers understand what you meant, the error may interrupt the reader's flow and take away from your message.

- Remove extraneous phrases, clichés and poor word choices. For example, "Finally" can replace "When all is said and done," and "use" is generally better than "utilize."
- Avoid using social media language abbreviations, emoticons and symbols in e-mails or documents.
- Don't forget your signature line!

Keep on writing!

