Procurement of Events
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Below are common questions received pertaining to soliciting conferences, meetings, and events (collectively “event”) and its related components. Please refer to Policy 33 prior to posting a solicitation. If you need further clarification, contact the Office of the State Procurement (OSP).

1. **What must I include in the total projected cost?**

   Total projected cost includes all applicable costs that will be paid to the contract vendor(s) regardless of who will be paying for the cost of the obligations or if multiple vendors are providing the services (see FAQ #3). For example, the total projected cost includes the total number of lodging rooms even if some of the rooms will be paid directly by attendees.

   If the event is scheduled on a recurring basis, or if there are multiple vendors, then the agency must consider the cumulative cost of all occurrences as part of the total projected cost.

2. **What if the total projected cost of the event exceeds my ALP delegated authority?**

   a. Before the solicitation process:
      i. You may request a one-time exception from OSP to exceed your ALP delegated authority.
         a. You must submit to your agency-delegated OSP staff person a request for an exception in writing. This request is reviewed by OSP and approval to exceed your ALP delegated authority will be made by the OSP Acquisition Manager in writing.
         b. If approved, prior to posting, you must submit your solicitation documents for review and obtain written approval by OSP.
         c. Prior to award, you must submit your bid tabulations and award recommendation for review and obtain written approval by OSP. You may issue the award after receiving OSP approval.
         d. You must document requests and written approvals in the purchasing file.
      ii. Send a Requisition Information Form (RIF) to your agency-designated OSP staff person for OSP to conduct the solicitation.

   b. After the solicitation closes and prior to the award:
      i. You may request a one-time exception to exceed your ALP delegated authority.
         a. You must submit to your agency-delegated OSP staff person a request for an exception in writing. With the request you must include the solicitation, bid tabulation, and award recommendation.
         b. This request and supplementary information is reviewed by OSP and approval to exceed your ALP delegated authority will be made by the OSP Acquisition Manager in writing. If the exception is granted you may issue the award.
         c. You must document the request and written approval in the purchasing file.
      ii. If the responses exceed your agency’s budget, you may cancel the solicitation and rebid the event.

   For additional information, please refer to your ALP Manual.

3. **Should I solicit an event as a total package with one contract or can I solicit by component (i.e., meeting rooms, catering, lodging, etc.) and issue multiple contracts?**

   It is considered best practice to solicit the event as a total package. On occasion, it may be deemed in the agency’s best interest to procure various components separately. Contact OSP for further guidance.
4. **How should I solicit a location for a venue?**

When you detail a location specification for an event, write the specification to include the broadest geographic area that:

- Maximizes competition; and
- Meets the business needs of the agency

If there is a business need to limit geographic area, you must include a written justification in the purchasing file that states reasons for limiting the area for the venue. This business justification may also be included in your solicitation to allow the vendor community context for the specified geographic area.

5. **What should I do if I want to contract with a governmental unit for an event?**

An agency may contract with a governmental unit directly if the total projected cost of the event is $10,000 or less. If the total projected cost is in excess of $10,000, you must receive written approval from OSP before you can contract directly with a governmental unit.

6. **What is the process for contracting directly with a governmental unit?**

You must review the governmental unit’s contract, and prior to execution, the Facilities-Use Addendum must be attached. The Facilities-Use Addendum is located on OSP P/T’s secured site for forms.

After the documents are signed, you must submit the signed contract and the signed Facilities-Use Addendum to OSP P/T section for final review and execution.

To assist you in this procurement process, OSP P/T created the Facilities-Use Addendum to be used with event contracts for city-owned, county-owned, and state-owned facilities, including:

- University of Minnesota
- Saint Paul RiverCentre
- Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
- Duluth Entertainment Convention Center (DECC)
- Mayo Civic Center
- St. Cloud River’s Edge Civic Center
- Earle Brown Heritage Center
- Eagan Community Center
- Camp Ripley
- Giants Ridge

7. **May I specify what types of venue are acceptable or not?**

The solicitation should be made available to all venues, unless there is a business justification to exclude such venues. To specifically require or exclude a type of venue, you must:

- Prepare a written justification based on a business need; and
- Obtain written approval from your agency head or delegate; and
- Obtain written approval from OSP Acquisition Manager prior to issuing the solicitation; and
- When approved, include a statement in Exhibit A: Specifications that the agency will not accept responses from an excluded venue.

8. **May I require that meeting facilities be near restaurants or lodging?**

Yes. Your specifications may require that restaurants or lodging facilities be within a certain distance from the meeting venue, however, you may not require a specific lodging or restaurant (e.g. Holiday Inn, Applebee’s, etc.).

9. **If my contracted venue has an exclusive caterer(s) and catering was not part of the solicitation, how should I procure catering services?**

Follow ALP policies and procedures or contact OSP for guidance.
10. Can I include environmental or sustainable requirements?

Yes, environmental and sustainable requirements should be considered. Contact OSP for guidance.

11. Should I do a site visit for all Responders who have submitted a response prior to awarding a contract?

In the Solicitation, the State reserves the right to inspect a facility prior to contract award. OSP recommends that site visits are limited to the lowest responsive, responsible responder to determine whether the venue meets the solicitation requirements.

12. What should I look for on the site visit?

The purpose of a site visit is to determine if the venue meets the minimum criteria detailed in Solicitation and Sample Contract, including Exhibit C – Attachment 1.

13. Can I accept gifts or samples from vendors or responders?

No. You may not accept gifts. Any requests for samples should be detailed in the solicitation. Accepting gifts or samples may be perceived as a conflict of interest. Contact OSP for further guidance.

14. If audio-visual (A/V) equipment and services were part of the solicitation, can I award the contract without it?

Per the Sample Contract, the State reserves the right to provide its own A/V without penalty. You may choose not to award if in the best interest of your agency. If A/V equipment rental is not awarded but is needed, you must use Contract Release A-203(5).

15. How do I reject a responder?

When rejecting a responder, you must prepare a rejection letter (template can be obtained from the OSP secured website). The letter should provide the reason for rejection (e.g. responder took exception to State’s Terms and Conditions).

Contact OSP before you issue a rejection letter.

16. When do I encumber funds for the current or future fiscal year?

If the event is in the current fiscal year, you must encumber funds prior to executing the contract.

If the event is in a future fiscal year, prior to issuing a contract award, you must have a written commitment that you will encumber funds as soon as the fiscal year budget is available.

17. How do I encumber funds if the funding source is anticipated receipts?

The encumbrance must equal the obligation amount of the contract and follow the procedures established by Minnesota Management & Budget (MMB).

18. How should receipts and payments for events be processed?

Contact your agency’s financial staff for assistance and follow MMB policy and instructions.

19. What is the procurement process for sending employees to an event which includes registration fees and/or lodging?

A solicitation would be required unless there is an exception in law, such as Single Source or doing business with another government unit.

20. Do I need to solicit for booth space at an event?

Policy 33 is not applicable. OSP defers approval of monetary sponsorships, booth rental, and staff time that will be devoted to an event to your Department’s agency head.
21. If my agency wants to construct an exhibitor’s booth for use at an event, do I need to solicit the construction?

Follow ALP policies and procedures. Policy 33 is not applicable.

22. How do I obtain the services of an event planner?

Event planning services are considered Professional/Technical (P/T) Services. Contact your P/T Coordinator for assistance.

23. Do I include event planners in the total projected cost?

No. Do not include the cost of an event planner in the total projected cost of the event.

24. What type of services can an event planner provide?

You may use event planners to:

- Coordinate speakers and presenters;
- Plan, design, and distribute marketing materials;
- Provide consultation and advice about events;
- Coordinate on-site management, oversee participant registration, and coordinate event evaluations; and
- Collect registration fees.

25. What is the process for an event planner to collect registration fees?

Contact your P/T Coordinator or agency's financial staff for assistance, and follow MMB policy and instructions.

26. Should sponsors and event planners endorse or recommend lodging or restaurants to attendees when those items are not included in the event solicitation?

No, but they may provide factual lists of resources in the area.

27. If lodging or meals were not included in the solicitation but attendees may need these services, what can I do?

If attendees need lodging or meals, you may direct them to the local Convention and Visitors Bureau or websites.

28. Where do I find information to make my events accessible?

When planning events keep in mind and plan for staff or attendee needs for accommodations for accessibility.

Resources:

- The State has a contract, Contract Release S-884(5), for sign language interpreting and related services. Related services include
  - On-Site (Face to Face) Visual Language Interpretation Services for American Sign Language (“ASL”)
  - Video Remote for American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreting (“VRI”)
  - Communication Access Real Time Translation for American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreting (“CART”)

OSP Resources: If you have questions, contact the appropriate agency-designated OSP staff person listed below. If your agency is not listed, contact any of the following OSP staff:

Elizabeth Randa, Elizabeth.Randa@state.mn.us, (651) 201-3122
Katy McCann, Katy.McCann@state.mn.us, (651) 201-3128 (BWSR, CAPM, DEED, MPCA, OSA)
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Virak Soth, Virak.Soth@state.mn.us, (651) 201-2434 (BCA, DHS, DPS, MNOPS)
Erin McCormack, Erin.McCormack@state.mn.us, (651) 201-3168 (AGO, DPS, MNIT, Tourism, MMB)
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