

CHAPTER 6

PROCUREMENT OF DESIGN-BID-BUILD CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTOR COMPETITIVE SEALED BIDDING

(Procurements Greater than \$50,000)

6.1 RELATED STATUTORY AUTHORITY

- 6.1.1 SC Code § 10-1-180 gives the State Engineer the authority and responsibility to determine the enforcement and interpretation of the building codes and reference standards on state buildings.
- 6.1.2 SC Code § 11-35-1520(13) list minor informalities and irregularities that are not cause for bid rejection.
- 6.1.3 SC Code § 11-35-1810 requires that the responsibility of the bidder shall be determined for each contract let by the State.
- 6.1.4 SC Code § 11-35-3005 provides a list of project delivery methods agencies are allowed to use on construction projects.
- 6.1.5 SC Code § 11-35-3015(2) provides that if the agency determines that design-bid-build is the most appropriate delivery method for the project, construction services must be procured through the competitive sealed bidding process as provided in SC Code §§ 11-35-1520 and 3020.
- 6.1.6 SC Code § 11-35-3020 requires that the agency send all responsive bidders a copy of the bid tabulation within 10 working days following the bid opening.
- 6.1.7 SC Code § 11-35-3020 permits negotiations after unsuccessful competitive sealed bidding within the limitations described by the law.
- 6.1.8 SC Code § 11-35-3020 requires that the lowest responsive bidder meets the State standards of responsibility.
- 6.1.9 SC Code § 11-35-3020 requires that the Agency provide all responsive bidders (and preferably any non-responsive bidders) a copy of the Bid Tabulation at the same time they provide them a copy of the Notice of Intent to Award.
- 6.1.10 SC Code § 11-35-3023(B) permits prequalification of construction bidders in a design-bid-build procurement for unique construction, or for projects over ten million dollars in value, in accordance with OSE criteria and procedure.
- 6.1.11 SC Code § 11-35-3030 requires that all competitive sealed bidding for state construction contracts in excess of \$50,000 be provided with bid security.
- 6.1.12 SC Code § 11-35-3030 and § 29-6-250 requires that all construction contracts valued in excess of \$50,000 be provided with both a performance and a labor and material payment bond in the full amount of the contract.
- 6.1.13 SC Code § 11-35-4210 permits the State Engineer to resolve protested construction solicitations and awards.
- 6.1.14 SC Code § 40-11-260 requires general and mechanical contractors to be licensed for projects valued at \$5,000 or more.
- 6.1.15 SC Code § 40-79-29 requires a valid license to engage in a burglar or fire alarm business or activity. Note that SC Code § 40-79-310 and § 40-11-410(5)(d) permits mechanical contractors with an electrical contractor's license to design, install, and service fire alarm systems.
- 6.1.16 SC Regulation 19-445.2042(C) states that a pre-bid conferences may not be made mandatory unless by written determination of the Agency head or their designee.
- 6.1.17 SC Regulation 19-445.2050 permits only the information disclosed at the bid opening to be considered as public information under the Freedom of Information Act until the Notice of Intent to Award is issued.
- 6.1.18 SC Regulation 19-445.2145(B)(3) designates design-bid-build as an appropriate project delivery method for any infrastructure facility (except guaranteed energy, water, or wastewater savings contracts).

6.2 ADVERTISING PROJECTS FOR BIDDING

- 6.2.1 The competitive sealed bidding phase of a construction project begins with the advertisement of the project in South Carolina Business Opportunities (SCBO). It ends with the signing of the construction contract by both parties and the issuance of the Notice to Proceed.
- 6.2.2 The Agency must advertise all construction contracts with a construction budget exceeding \$50,000 in SCBO (see Chapter 8 for small purchase advertisement requirements). The SCBO advertisement is the official invitation for construction bids. The Agency may advertise in other media but errors in advertisements other than SCBO do not constitute a basis for a protest.

- 6.2.3 The Agency must submit advertisements for construction contracts that exceed the agency's construction certification to OSE, using the Invitation for Design-Bid-Build Construction Services (SE-310) in MS Word format, for approval.
- 6.2.4 After a satisfactory review of the bid documents, OSE will approve the Invitation and submit it to SCBO for publication.

6.3 PRE-BID CONFERENCES AND SITE VISITS

- 6.3.1 Agencies must advertise pre-bid conferences and site visits in SCBO.
- 6.3.2 The Agency should schedule the conference to occur no less than 14 days prior to bid opening. This will allow the Agency to clarify by addendum any issues bidders raise at the pre-bid conference
- 6.3.3 An Agency desiring to make potential bidders' attendance at a pre-bid conference mandatory in order to bid the project must make a written determination that mandatory attendance is justified by the unique nature of the project and that a mandatory conference will not unduly restrict competition. The Agency must place this determination in its procurement file and provide a copy for information only to OSE with the SE-310.
- 6.3.4 Non-Mandatory Pre-Bid Conferences and Site Visits do not require attendance by prime bidders in order for them to bid a project.
- 6.3.5 **Who Should Attend:** The Agency, the Agency's A/E, and the OSE Project Manager should attend all pre-bid conferences for projects exceeding the Agency's construction contract certification.
- 6.3.6 **Conducting the Conference**
 - A. The Agency or its A/E should conduct the pre-bid conference. The guide "Pre-Bid Conference Discussion Items" found in Appendix B contains a list of suggested pre-bid discussion items. The Agency and its A/E should customize the actual list of discussion items for the particular project.
 - B. The Agency or its A/E should discuss the Bid Documents (project manual and drawings) at the pre-bid conference in sufficient detail to ensure that all prospective bidders understand the scope of the project.
- 6.3.7 **Attendance at a Mandatory Pre-Bid Conference**
 - A. If no prospective bidder, or only one prospective bidder, attends a mandatory pre-bid conference, the Agency must cancel the invitation for bid or schedule a new pre-bid conference that is either mandatory or non-mandatory.
 - B. If the Agency chooses to schedule a new pre-bid conference, it must advertise the conference in SCBO. The Agency should schedule this new conference to occur no less than 14 days prior to bid opening.
 - C. This may require the Agency to advertise a new bid opening date and time in SCBO at the same time it advertises the new pre-bid conference.

6.4 ADDENDA

- 6.4.1 The Agency must issue an addendum for modifications or corrections to the bid documents including, but not limited to, the following:
 - A. Providing a list of all firms represented at a mandatory pre-bid conference;
 - B. Providing responses to questions received from potential bidders during the bidding period;
 - C. Providing a list all substitutions approved by the Agency or design professional;
 - D. Changing the date for the receipt of bids;
 - E. Rescheduling a bid opening; or
 - F. Canceling the invitation for bids.

NOTE: Meeting minutes from a Pre-Bid Conference/Site Visit are NOT to be included in an addendum. Only information that changes the contract documents should be included.
- 6.4.2 The Agency must issue all addenda modifying or correcting the bid documents at least 120 hours, exclusive of state holidays, prior to bid opening. If there are intervening holidays, the 120 hour period must be increased by 24 hours for each such holiday.
- 6.4.3 If the Agency becomes aware of a critical modification or correction to the bid documents less than 120 hours prior to bid opening, the Agency should postpone the bid opening to allow issuance of the change a minimum of 120 hours prior to the revised bid opening time and date.

Example: Agency's architect issues an addendum at 3 PM on a Thursday. 120 hours later is at 3 PM on the following Tuesday. However, the intervening Monday is a state holiday requiring the Agency to add 24 hours to the 120 hour time period for a total of 144 hours. Therefore, the earliest cut-off for receipt of bids is 3 PM on the following Wednesday.

- 6.4.4 A potential bidder may protest an addendum within 15 days of its issuance, which is one reason why the Agency must not issue an addendum less than 120 hours prior to the date for receipt of bids. Otherwise, the time period to protest the addendum could extend beyond the time period to protest an award (10 day period). Moreover, this 120 hour period gives potential bidders the opportunity to digest and accurately price the addendum.
- 6.4.5 The Agency may issue an addendum postponing the date for receipt of bids or withdrawing the invitation for bids at any time prior to the time set for bid opening.
- 6.4.6 When the Agency does issue an addendum to reschedule a bid opening, OSE recommends that the Agency schedule the new bid opening date no less than 5 calendar days from the issue date of the addendum.
- 6.4.7 The bid documents notify potential bidders requesting plans to provide contact information, including an email address, to the party providing the plans. The Agency or its representative must retain this contact information in order to notify plan holders of addenda.
- 6.4.8 If an agency conducts a mandatory pre-bid conference, the Agency must send addenda to all entities attending the pre-bid conference. If the Agency does not conduct a mandatory pre-bid conference, the Agency should send addenda to all plan holders of record.
- 6.4.9 The bid form has a location for bidders to acknowledge receipt of addenda.

6.5 BID POSTPONEMENT

- 6.5.1 The Agency may postpone a bid opening for any of the following reasons:
 - A. Causes beyond the control of the bidders (e.g. flood, fire, accident, weather conditions);
 - B. Emergency or unanticipated events that interrupt normal government operations;
 - C. Revision of specifications and/or drawings; or
 - D. When postponement is clearly in the best interest of the State.
- 6.5.2 The Agency may postpone bids by issuing an addendum any time prior to the time set for the bid opening. If there is not enough time to issue a written addendum prior to the time set for the bid opening, the Agency must notify bidders by telephone or other appropriate means followed with a written addendum. If possible, the Agency should verify with bidders their receipt of the notice of postponement.
- 6.5.3 When time permits, the Agency must advertise notification of the postponement of bids in SCBO.
- 6.5.4 The addendum should notify the bidders of the postponement of the original bid date and establish a new bid date. The new bid date should be at least five days after the original bid date.

6.6 BID CANCELLATION

- 6.6.1 The Agency may cancel the invitation for bids by written addendum at any time prior to the time set for the bid opening.
- 6.6.2 The Agency may issue the addendum as late as the time set for opening of bids. The Agency should send the addendum to all plan holders of record as soon as the agency determines that it will cancel the bid opening.
- 6.6.3 The Agency must advertise the notification of the cancellation of bids in SCBO.

6.7 BID OPENINGS

6.7.1 Receipt of Bids Prior to Bid Opening

- A. The Agency must keep all bids (including modifications) it receives before the time of opening secure and unopened. However, the Agency's Procurement Officer or their designee may open unidentified bids solely for the purpose of identification.
- B. If a person opens a sealed bid by mistake, they should immediately write their name and position along with their signature on the envelope and deliver it to the Agency's Procurement Officer. This official must reseal the envelope and write on it an explanation of the opening, the date and time opened, the project number and their signature.

6.7.2 Public Opening of Bids

A. TIME FOR CONDUCTING BID OPENING

- 1. The Agency must publicly open bids at the time set forth in the SE-310 as the Bid Closing time.
- 2. In the event of a force majeure preventing the Agency from receiving bids, the Agency may postpone the bid opening until the next business day at the time originally specified.

B. BIDS RECEIVED AFTER DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT

1. The Agency must receive bids at the address indicated in the SE-310 and published in SCBO before the time for bid opening. If the indicated address is served by a central mailroom, delivery of bids sent by mail or other special delivery service (UPS, FED-EX, etc.) to that mailroom is sufficient.
2. The Agency must reject bids not delivered at the indicated location or the Agency mailroom before the time of the bid opening.
3. The Agency should return any bid it rejects for being late to the bidder unopened.
4. If, after the bid opening, the Agency discovers a bid delivered at the location for delivery or the mailroom before the time for bid opening, the Agency must open and consider the bid. In such event, the Agency must document the circumstances in writing and place it in its procurement file.

C. CONDUCTING THE BID OPENING

1. At the time set for the bid opening, as indicated on the SE-310 or as modified by addendum, the procurement officer should declare that the time for receipt of bids has arrived and that they will no longer accept bids. The Agency must reject all bids received after this time and return them to the bidders unopened.
2. After declaring the arrival of the bid closing time, the Procurement Officer should publicly give their name and the names of the witnesses and record this information on the bid tabulation sheet.
3. The Procurement Officer should then open timely bids individually and read them in the presence of one or more witnesses. When only one bidder submits a timely bid, the procurement officer should open the bid and read it aloud.
4. The Procurement Officer should read aloud and record on a bid tabulation sheet the following information from each bid:
 - a. The Name of the bidder;
 - b. Compliance with bid security requirements;
 - c. Acknowledgment of all addenda;
 - d. Base Bid amount;
 - e. Alternate bid amounts, if requested;
 - f. Names of all subcontractors listed for the Base Bid, if requested; and
 - g. Names of all subcontractors listed for the Bid Alternates, if requested.
5. If the Agency receives multiple bids within the same envelope, it should accept only the lowest responsive bid.

6.7.3 Conclusion of Bid Opening

After reading bids, the Agency should thank the bidders for submitting bids and make the following announcements:

- A. The date and location of the posting of the Notice of Intent to Award (SE-370), as set forth in the AIA Document A701-1997, Instruction to Bidders - SCOSE Version (A701).
- B. After posting, the Agency will send a copy of the SE-370 and the bid tabulation to each bidder within 10 working days of the bid opening.

6.8 BID WITHDRAWAL, MODIFICATION, OR CORRECTION**6.8.1 Withdrawal or Modification of Bids before Bid Closing**

- A. At any time before the time of the bid closing, a bidder may modify or withdraw their bid.
- B. A bidder's modification to their bid must be made on the bid form prior to the time of bid opening.

6.8.2 Withdrawal or Correction of Bids after Bid Closing

- A. Except in limited circumstances, bidders may not withdraw or modify their bids in the period after the time of the bid closing but before the time for bid acceptance.
- B. The Agency should require a bidder requesting permission to withdraw or correct their bid during this period to submit the request in writing. All decisions to permit correction or withdrawal of bids must be supported by a written determination of appropriateness made by the State Engineer or, if the project is within Agency certification, the Agency Head.

C. CORRECTION:

1. Correction to bids after bid opening may cause bidders and the public to question the integrity of state procurements and may be prejudicial to fair competition. Nonetheless, the Consolidated Procurement Code does permit approval of requests to correct a mistake in bid after bid opening in limited circumstance.
2. The following applies to a request to correct a bid after bid opening due to a mistake made:
 - a. Correction is allowable in the unlikely event that the lowest responsive and responsible bidder requests a downward correction in bid price due to a mistake in bid. The rules that follow do not apply to such a request.
 - b. With the exception of a. above, a mistake in judgment is never correctable.
 - c. A mistake of fact (error in transcription, clerical error, etc.) is correctable under the following limited circumstances:
 - 1) The mistake must be one that will clearly cause the bidder substantial loss and
 - 2) The correction must not be prejudicial to the interest of the State or fair competition.
 - a) If the bidder requesting correction is not the low bidder and the correction will make the bidder the low bidder, the mistake and intended bid must be clearly evident from examining the bid document.
 - b) A bid that is nonresponsive on its face is never the low bid; therefore, the mistake and intended bid must be clearly and unambiguously evident from examining the bid document in order to allow a correction that will make the bid responsive.
 - c) If the bidder is the low bidder and is requesting an upward correction to his bid that if allowed will not change his position as low bidder, then:
 - (1) The mistake and intended bid must be:
 - (a) clearly evident from examining the bid document; or
 - (b) apparent from an examination of clear and convincing evidence presented by the bidder.
 - (2) The corrected bid must be significantly lower than the next lowest bid so as not to create the perception in the minds of reasonable people that the bidder is attempting to game the system by seeking to recover the difference between his bid and the next lowest bid.
 - (3) The request must not be one to correct multiple mistakes.¹
 - (4) The requestor must not have a history of requesting bid corrections.²
3. Any request to correct a bid due to mistake must be made before performance.
4. A low bidder requesting an upward correction to his bid based on evidence other than the bid document must:
 - a. Provide the following documentation in support of his claim of mistake:
 - 1) A complete copy of his bid takeoff marked confidential.
 - a) All portions of the bid takeoff prepared by hand or typewriter must be provided in the original format.
 - b) All copies of those portions of the bid takeoff prepared on a computer must be accompanied by:
 - (1) an audit record, acceptable to the party reviewing the request for correction, showing the time, date, and nature of every change, up to the time of bid closing, made to those portions of the bid takeoff on which the bidder is relying to prove his claim of mistake and to prove his intended bid;

¹ Multiple mistakes, each of which will cause substantial loss, may raise the public perception that the bidder has intentionally built mistakes into his bid to use to his advantage after bid opening. Even if this is not in fact what the bidder has done, multiple unrelated mistakes in a bid, each of which will cause substantial loss, is an indication of extreme carelessness on the part of the bidder causing one to question the responsibility of the bidder. Provided the bidder meets the requirements for withdrawal of bid, permitting the bidder to withdraw his bid due to mistake is the better approach in such cases.

² A history of requesting corrections indicates the bidder, either negligently or intentionally, has a reckless disregard for the integrity of the State Procurement system and fair competition.

- (2) a description of the bid preparation program used by the bidder, including the name and edition of the software and information to provide the reviewer with an understanding of how the bidder prepares his bids using the program.
- 2) If the mistake involves a mistake by the bidder related to a subcontractor's bid, the subcontractor's bid as received by the bidder along with evidence showing that the bid was received by the bidder before bids were due to the agency.
- b. If required by the person reviewing the request, consent to an independent audit of any computer generated document including an audit of the software used, the hard drive of the computer and/or server on which the bid was prepared, which audit is to be provided at bidder's cost.
- 5. All statements by bidder and other individuals supporting the request for correction must be upon personal knowledge given under oath under penalty of perjury.

D. WITHDRAWAL

- 1. A bidder's request to withdraw a bid due to mistake must document the fact that the bidder's mistake is clearly an error that will cause him substantial loss.
- 2. Though there is no South Carolina case on point, the common law standard is that the mistake must be a clerical mistake as opposed to a judgment mistake, and actually due to an unintentional arithmetic error or an unintentional omission of a quantity of work, labor or material made directly in the compilation of a bid, which unintentional arithmetic error or unintentional omission can be clearly shown by objective evidence drawn from inspection of the bid and original work papers, documents and materials used in the preparation of the bid sought to be withdrawn.
- 3. Historically, such documents were prepared by hand making their authenticity more reliable. Today, it is normal for bids to be prepared on a computer and the evidence of authenticity without digital forensics is not reliable. Therefore, the bidder must certify by affidavit under penalty of perjury that the documents provided in support of its claim of mistake are either original work papers, documents, and materials or true and accurate copies of original computer data on which its bid was actually based.
- 4. If the Agency allows a bidder to withdraw their bid because of the bidder's mistake, the decision to do so must be supported by a written determination of appropriateness by the State Engineer or his designee or, if the project is within Agency certification, the head of the Agency or his designee.
- 5. If the Agency allows a bidder to withdraw their bid because of the bidder's mistake, the Agency must return the bid security to the bidder. In the case of an electronic bid bond, the Agency does not need to take any action to return the security.

E. RETENTION OF BID SECURITY

- 1. If a bidder withdraws their bid without the Agency's approval or refuses to enter into a contract, then the Agency must retain their bid security.
- 2. If the security is a bid bond, the Agency should make a claim on the bond in accordance with the bonds provisions.

6.9 IMMEDIATELY AFTER BID OPENING

After the bid opening, but before posting of the SE-370, the Agency needs to verify the following:

- 6.9.1** The bid security, in the form of AIA A310, is at least 5% of the base bid and accompanied by a signed power of attorney.
- 6.9.2** The surety company is licensed to operate in South Carolina and has a minimum financial rating in AM Best listing of A (any A is acceptable, including A---). See "Website Verification for Surety Companies" found in Appendix I of this manual.
NOTE: To check the authenticity of an electronic bid bond, go to the Surety2000 web site (www.surety2000.com) to register (as Owner/Obligee) and follow the links to match the electronic bid bond number provided on the bid bond. In this case, also check the listed surety company as described above.
- 6.9.3** The apparent low bidder and all listed subcontractors have the proper South Carolina Contractor's licenses to execute a contract for the project.
- 6.9.4** The lowest responsive bidder has met the other requirements specific to the project, as listed in the solicitation documents.

6.10 DETERMINATION OF BIDDERS' RESPONSIVENESS

6.10.1 Bid Irregularities that are Cause for Rejection

Reasons for which the Agency must reject bids as non-responsive include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Bidder's failure to attend a mandatory pre-bid conference and/or a mandatory site visit;
- B. Bidder's failure to deliver the bid on time;
- C. Bidder's failure to provide the required bid security, except as allowed by law;
- D. Bidder's failure to include a properly executed power of attorney with its bid bond;
- E. Bidder's failure to bid an alternate, except as allowed by law;
- F. Bidder's failure to list subcontractors as required by law;
- G. Bidder's qualification of their bid by materially modifying the bid form or listing material exceptions to the requirements of the solicitation;
- H. Bidder's delivery of their bid directly to the Agency or its representative via facsimile machine; or
- I. Bidder's failure to include in the bid envelope all material items required by the bid documents.

6.10.2 Minor Informalities that are Not Cause for Rejection

- A. The Agency should not reject bids for minor informalities (irregularities) in the bid.
- B. In such cases, the Agency may ask the bidder to correct the defect or where it is advantageous to the State, the Agency may waive the requirement.
- C. The Agency's request to correct or the determination to waive must be in writing.
- D. If the Agency asks the bidder for a correction of a minor informality and bidder fails to do so, the Agency may reject the bid as non-responsive.
- E. Minor informalities in the bid include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - 1. Bidder's failure to write "Sealed Bid Enclosed" on the outside of the mailing envelope;
 - 2. Bidder's failure to seal the bid envelope;
 - 3. Bidder's listing of a modification to the bid amount on the outside of the bid envelope provided such modification does not reveal the bidder's bid price before the bid opening (however, such modifications will only be considered to the extent permitted by law);
 - 4. Bidder's failure to list information on the envelope other than that which may be required by law;
 - 5. Bidder providing a fax copy or other reproduction of any or all bidding documents in the bid envelope;
 - 6. Bidder's failure to indicate for an alternate "ADD" or "DEDUCT", but only when the adjustment to the base bid is obvious;
 - 7. Bidder providing additional listings of "Subcontractor Specialty" beyond those listed on the bid form;
 - 8. Bidder's failure to sign the bid, but only if:
 - a. the firm submitting the bid has formally adopted or authorized the execution of documents by typewritten, printed, or rubber stamped signature and submits evidence of that authorization, and the bid carries that signature; or
 - b. the unsigned bid is accompanied by other material indicating the bidder's intention to be bound by the unsigned document, such as the submission of a bid guarantee with the bid or a letter signed by the bidder with the bid referring to and identifying the bid itself;
 - 9. Bidder providing a reproduction of a signature on any or all bidding documents;
 - 10. Corporate Bidder's failure to include its seal on the bid;
 - 11. Bidder's failure to sign the bid bond but only if the bond has been properly executed and signed by the bonding company or agent; and
 - 12. Immaterial variations from the exact requirements of the bidding documents.

6.10.3 Failure to Provide Required Bid Security

- A. A bid that does not include the bid security required by the SE-310 is non-responsive and the Agency must reject it.
- B. Each bid in excess of \$50,000 must include in the bid envelope either a certified cashier's check or a bid bond payable to the Agency (the Agency must be named as the obligee) in an amount not less than five percent of the Base Bid. Personal checks or letters of credit are not acceptable.

- C. Copied or faxed bid bonds and Powers of Attorney are acceptable, but must be included in the bid envelope.
- D. The Agency must give a bidder submitting a bid security that is not in the required amount or written by a surety not meeting the required surety rating and financial strength one working day from the bid opening to cure the deficiency.
- E. A working day closes at the time of day the Agency's facility that receives the bids normally closes.

6.10.4 Failure to Acknowledge Addenda

The Agency must reject a bid where the bidder failed to acknowledge all addenda unless:

- A. The bid received indicates in some way that the bidder received the addendum(a), such as where the addendum(a) added another item to the solicitation and the bidder submitted a bid on it, if the bidder states under oath that it received the addendum(a) before bidding and that the bidder will stand by its bid price; or
- B. The addendum(a) has no effect on price or quantity or merely a trivial or negligible effect on quality or delivery, and is not prejudicial to bidders, such as an addendum(a) correcting a typographical mistake in the name of the governmental body.

6.11 DETERMINATION OF BIDDER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Before posting the SE-370, the Agency must satisfy itself that the prospective contractor meets the State's Standards of Responsibility.

6.11.1 Criteria for Determining Responsibility

Criteria the Agency should use in determining whether the contractor meets the State's Standards of Responsibility include whether the contractor has:

- A. The appropriate financial, material, equipment, facility, and personnel resources and expertise (or the ability to obtain them) necessary to meet all contractual requirements;
- B. A satisfactory record of performance;
- C. A satisfactory record of integrity;
- D. The necessary legal qualifications to contract with the State (includes being properly licensed);
- E. Supplied all necessary information in connection with the inquiry concerning responsibility; and
- F. No record of debarment from participation in construction projects in past 3 years from any state or Federal agency as recorded in the federal government's System for Award Management (SAM). This can be found at <https://www.sam.gov/portal/SAM>.

6.11.2 Verify Proper Contractor Licensing and License Limitations:

- A. Before posting the SE-370, the Agency must verify that the prospective contractor and their listed subcontractors have the proper contractor's license and license limitations and they were in effect at the time of bidding.
- B. If the Agency determines that a prospective contractor or one of their listed subcontractors does not have the proper license and license limitations, the Agency must declare the prospective contractor is non-responsible. The Agency should notify the SC Contractors' Licensing Board that the contractor or subcontractor is offering to perform work without a proper license. The Agency may contact the Contractors' Licensing Board at: <http://www.llr.state.sc.us/POL/Contractors/>.

6.11.3 Related Resources for use in Determining Responsibility

- A. If an Agency is uncertain about a prospective contractor's responsibility, it should require the prospective contractor to complete the Questionnaire for Contractors (SE-350) and provide any other information the Agency may need to support its determination.
- B. The Agency should complete the project/Agency information on the SE-350 and send it to the contractor by certified mail with return receipt requested. The Agency may also send the form via email to expedite the process, but the hard copy must still be mailed.
- C. Upon receipt of the SE-350 and other requested information from the prospective contractor, the Agency should verify the information contained therein together with any other information available to the Agency, to determine if the prospective contractor is deficient in one or more way.
- D. If a prospective contractor is determined to be responsible, then the Agency may proceed with submitting to OSE the Request for Concurrence in Posting Notice of Intent to Award (SE-360).
- E. Right of Nondisclosure: Except as otherwise provided by SC law, the Agency must not disclose bidder furnished confidential information outside of the offices of SFAA, the Office of the Attorney General, OSE, or the Agency without prior written consent by the bidder.

6.11.4 Action upon Determination of Non-Responsibility**A. WRITTEN DETERMINATION**

1. If the Agency determines a prospective contractor, to whom it would have otherwise awarded a contract, to be non-responsible, it should prepare a written determination to that effect. The written determination must:
 - a. Be prepared by the Agency's Procurement Officer;
 - b. Set forth the basis of the finding of non-responsibility; and
 - c. Be made part of the agency's procurement file.
2. The Agency should promptly send a copy of its determination to the non-responsible bidder and to OSE.

B. AWARD TO NEXT LOWEST BIDDER

The Agency may proceed with awarding the contract to the next lowest responsive and responsible bidder by submitting to OSE the SE-360 for that bidder.

6.12 TIE BIDS

If two or more bidders are tied in price, while otherwise meeting all of the required conditions, the Agency must award the project as follows:

- 6.12.1 When the tie is between a South Carolina firm and an out-of-state firm, award the project to the South Carolina firm;
- 6.12.2 When the tie involves a business certified by the South Carolina Office of Small and Minority Business Assistance as a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) award the project to the MBE.
- 6.12.3 When the tie is between South Carolina firms, award the project to the South Carolina firm located in the same taxing jurisdiction as the project's location; and
- 6.12.4 When the tie is between South Carolina firms in the same taxing jurisdiction as the project's location, award the project by the flip of a coin witnessed by the procurement officer and all interested parties.

6.13 REQUIRED BID TABULATION

6.13.1 The Agency must prepare a final Bid Tabulation consisting of the following information:

- A. Project name and number;
- B. Agency name;
- C. Names of the persons opening bids and the witnesses, each of whom must initial the Bid Tabulation sheets;
- D. List of all contractors submitting bids;
- E. Acknowledgment of addenda;
- F. Inclusion of proper bid security;
- G. Base Bid amount(s);
- H. Bid Alternate amounts, if requested; and
- I. Listing of subcontractors for Base Bid(s) and Alternate(s), if requested; and
- J. If the Agency declared any bid to be non-responsive or non-responsible, the reasons for that declaration.

6.13.2 The Agency must provide OSE a copy of the Bid Tabulation along with the SE-360.

6.14 EXTENDING BID EXPIRATION PERIOD

- 6.14.1 If the Agency desires to extend the bid expiration period beyond the time given in the Bid Form, then it should obtain a written extension of bid prices(s) from the lowest several bidders before the expiration of that period.
- 6.14.2 A bidder does not have to agree to hold its bid price beyond the bid expiration period; however, the Agency should consider for award only the bids of those bidders who provide a written extension of their bids before the expiration of the original bid expiration period.
- 6.14.3 If the Agency fails to obtain a written extension of at least one bid before the end of the expiration period, it will have to re-bid the project before it can award a contract.

6.15 REJECTION OF ALL BIDS

6.15.1 Unless there is a compelling reason to reject one or more bids, the Agency must award to the lowest responsible and responsive bidder.

- 6.15.2** The Agency may cancel the invitations for bids after opening, but prior to award, if the procurement officer determines in writing that:
- A.** Inadequate or ambiguous specifications were cited in the invitation;
 - B.** Specifications have been revised;
 - C.** The supplies or services being procured are no longer required;
 - D.** The invitation did not provide for consideration of all factors of cost to the State, such as cost of transporting state furnished property to bidders' plants;
 - E.** Bids received indicate that a less expensive article differing from that on which the bids were invited can satisfy the needs of the State;
 - F.** All otherwise acceptable bids received are at unreasonable prices;
 - G.** The bids were not independently arrived at in open competition, were collusive, or were submitted in bad faith; or
 - H.** For other reasons, cancellation is clearly in the best interest of the State.
- 6.15.3** The Agency must state the reasons for canceling an invitation for bids in its determination.
- 6.15.4** The Agency must post a copy of the determination on the date and at the location given at the bid opening for the posting of the SE-370.
- 6.15.5** The Agency must also mail a copy to all bidders, along with their bid security, and to OSE.

6.16 RE-BIDDING PROJECTS

- 6.16.1** If the Agency rejects all bids, it may re-bid the project provided it significantly modifies the scope of the construction documents or delays re-bidding by up to or beyond three months, depending on what's in the best interest of the State. The Agency must advertise the project for re-bid just as it did for bid.
- 6.16.2** When re-bidding a project, the Agency must add the word "RE-BID" before the Project Name on the SE 310. If scope changes are made, the Agency must modify the project description in the SE-310.
- 6.16.3** For contracts exceeding Agency construction certification, the Agency must submit the new SE-310 to OSE in MS Word format for approval and advertisement in SCBO.

6.17 PERMITTED NEGOTIATIONS AFTER UNSUCCESSFUL BIDDING

- 6.17.1** If bids exceed available funds, the Agency may negotiate with the lowest responsive and responsible bidder when it determines in writing that:
- A.** Circumstances will not permit the delay required to re-solicit competitive sealed bids; and
 - B.** The low bidder's base bid, less any deductive alternates, does not exceed available funds by more than ten percent of the construction budget established for that portion of the work.
- NOTE:** The "available funds" are considered to be the Total Approved Project Funding (Line 1 of Budget on page 2 of the SE-310) less any amount already committed by the Agency (i.e. A/E fees, equipment, etc.). The "construction budget" is the Construction Budget for this Contract (Line 2 of Budget on page 2 of the SE-310). The calculation then becomes:
- Step 1: Calculate 10% of "construction budget".
 - Step 2: Determine the "available funds" and add it to the Step 1 value.
 - Step 3: If the "low bidder's base bid, less any deductive alternates" is less than the total in Step 2, negotiation is allowed.
- 6.17.2** In negotiations, the Agency may change the scope of the work to reduce the cost to be within the established construction budget. However, the Agency may not reduce the cost below the established construction budget by more than ten percent, without a written request by the Agency and the written approval of the State Engineer. The Agency's request must be in the best interest of the State.
- 6.17.3** The Agency may not accept or use substitution of listed sub-contractors as a means to negotiate a reduction in the contract amount.
- 6.17.4** Upon completion of successful negotiations with the contractor, the Agency must submit the following to OSE along with the SE-360:
- A.** The written determination declaring the reason(s) for negotiation; and
 - B.** A description of the changes made to the scope of the project.

6.18 INSUFFICIENT FUNDS AUTHORIZED BY FORM A-1

The Agency may not award a construction contract for a PIP project unless the most recently approved Form A-1 authorizes unencumbered funds sufficient to cover the full amount of the contract plus construction contingencies.

6.19 NOTICE OF INTENT TO AWARD

6.19.1 Requirement of Posting

- A. Once the Agency determines that the lowest responsive and responsible bid is within available funds and has concurrence of OSE, it must post the SE-370. The Agency shall post this notice at the location stated in the AIA A701-SCOSE and announced at the bid opening.
- B. Even if the Agency received only one bid, it must post the SE-370.
- C. On the day of posting, the Agency must send a copy of the SE-370 with the bid tabulation to all bidders.

6.19.2 OSE Concurrence with Posting

- A. If the proposed contract value exceeds the Agency's construction contract certification, OSE must concur in the posting of the SE-370.
- B. For such contracts, the Agency must provide the bid and responsibility determination documents supporting award of a contract to the proposed awardee. The Agency must make this submittal using the SE-360.
- C. At a minimum, the Agency must submit copies of the following documents along with the SE-360 to OSE:
 - 1. The lowest responsive and responsible bidder's Bid Form;
 - 2. Contractor licenses, if required, for the low responsive and responsible bidder and his listed subcontractors (found at <https://verify.llronline.com/LicLookup/LookupMain.aspx>. Select the category "Contractors – Commercial" or, if applicable, "Burglar Alarm, Fire Alarm & Fire Sprinkler" and follow the instructions.)
 - 3. If any other bidder submitted a lower bid but was determined to be non-responsive or non-responsible a copy of:
 - a. That bidder's Bid Form, and
 - b. A statement setting forth the basis for disqualifying such bidder;
 - 4. The low responsive and responsible bidder's bid security with power of attorney;
 - 5. The final bid tabulation;
 - 6. A copy of the proposed SE-370; and
 - 7. A copy of the sample Contract to be executed by the parties;
- D. OSE will have five working days from the date of receipt of the SE-360 and all required documentation to notify the Agency of any defect in their documentation or, based on that documentation, any apparent defect in their bid opening procedures or determination of responsiveness and responsibility.
- E. If the Agency does not receive a response from OSE within five working days from the date OSE receives the SE-360 and all required documentation, OSE will be deemed to have granted approval for the Agency to post the SE-370.
- F. To submit by email, the Agency must email the OSE Project Manager and the OSE administrative assistant PDF copies of the SE-360 and all required documentation.

6.20 CONTRACT EXECUTION WAITING PERIOD

- 6.20.1 Unless the Agency received only one bid, it must wait ten (10) days after posting the SE-370 before it may enter into a contract with the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. If only one bid is received, and that bid is determined to be responsive and responsible, the protest period is waived.
- 6.20.2 During this time, any bidder who disagrees with the Agency's decision as to who is the lowest responsive and responsible bidder may protest the contract award.
- 6.20.3 If the State Engineer receives such a protest in writing during this period, the Agency may not award a contract until the matter is resolved unless the Agency requests a lifting of the stay in accordance with the provisions of the Procurement Code and the State Engineer grants the request.
- 6.20.4 If the State Engineer does not receive any protests, the Agency may enter into the contract on the eleventh day after posting the SE-370.

6.21 SUBMITTING THE CONTRACT TO CONTRACTOR FOR EXECUTION

- 6.21.1** Once all conditions precedent to executing a contract have occurred, the Agency should submit a completed contract to the Contractor with a cover letter requiring the Contractor to execute the contract and return the original to the Agency within seven days.
- 6.21.1** The Contractor shall also be required to provide the Agency with the following documents within three days after submitting the signed contract:
- A.** Certificate(s) of insurance in the form of the latest edition of the ACORD 25S showing that the Contractor has insurance in place for the project that meets the requirements of Article 11 of the SC Division of Procurement Services, Office of the State Engineer Version of AIA Document A201-2007 General Conditions of the Contract for Construction or any different amounts required by the project specifications;
 - B.** The Performance Bond (SE-355) with executed Power of Attorney; and
 - C.** The Labor & Material Payment Bond (SE-357) with executed Power of Attorney.

6.22 REVIEWING CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE AND PERFORMANCE AND PAYMENT BONDS

- 6.22.1** After receiving the certificates of insurance and performance and payment bonds from the contractor, the Agency should review them to determine that they are authentic and meet the requirements of the Procurement Code, Regulations and the contract.
- 6.22.2** The Agency is responsible to assure that it has the required labor and material payment bond in place before signing the contract and permitting the Contractor to start work. Failure to do so could make the Agency liable for the contractor's failure to pay its subcontractors and suppliers.
- 6.22.3** After confirming that all bonds and insurance are valid and in place, the Agency shall sign the contract and send one original copy back to the contractor and one copy to OSE for their files.

6.23 RETURN OF BID SECURITY AND DISPOSITION OF BIDS

- 6.23.1** Except for the three lowest responsive and responsible bidders, the Agency should return the bid securities of all other bidders within 10 days after the date of the bid opening. Upon execution of a contract, the Agency shall return the bid securities of the three lowest bidders.
- 6.23.2** The Agency must retain all bids until it has a fully executed contract. The Agency must retain the bid of the successful bidder in its procurement file.