



## **Questions and Answers from *OPM and DAS Present: Understanding State Procurement Authorities and Processes***

February 24, 2021

### **Can you explain the process for doing a sole-source procurement with a DAS procurement?**

Waivers of the competitive process are handled through a Standardization Transaction. The following link provides details on what an agency must submit to DAS Procurement to initiate such request. Those needs over \$50,000 go out to vote to a committee, and generally take about a week for approval. DAS will then work with the agency to execute a contract for the purchase.

[DAS \(and OPM\)- Waivers of the Bid Process--Related Resources \(ct.gov\)](#)

### **Can you talk about use of DAS state contracts by municipalities or LEA's?**

Most of the DAS procurement master agreements are available for use by Connecticut municipalities and law enforcement agencies. When you find your desired contract in CTsource, please review the contract award document and it will indicate if the contract is open for political subdivisions (which include municipalities and law enforcement agencies).

### **Are there job aids available to use CTsource? Are there presentations that you can share so we can take a look at those trainings that have already happened?**

DAS publishes instructional resources in the State Contracting Portal (CTsource). While these resources are not called job aids, they serve the same purpose. A link to these resources follows (and they include all of the instructional training videos): [CTsource Portal Information](#)

### **What if you can get a better price from other vendors than the price on contract?**

Because all of our contracts are public, at any given time someone can beat our price, but in most instances those same suppliers may not be able to hold their prices for the term of the contract, may not be able to agree to the legal and business protections built into our contracts, and may not be able to provide the same terms and conditions that was required in the bid or RFP. In these instances, your agency must still use the state contract. However, if you encounter such, we encourage you to ask that supplier to bid on our next solicitation for these products and/or services and help create new competition. Additionally, we encourage you to contact the Contract Specialist to review the specifics of the price you obtained. At times we are able to lower the price on our master agreements based on market changes during the term of the contract.

### **Do you recommend scoring the services of an RFP separate from the cost? A possible threshold to meet before evaluating the cost? Example, if you pass the scope with a 75% of all points, you can then be evaluated for cost.**

There are many ways to structure the evaluation of proposals received in response to an RFP. Requiring a separate cost proposal from the main proposal can be advantageous in some situations. Please refer to the sections on writing an RFP and evaluating proposals in [the OPM Procurement Standards](#) for general guidance. To discuss these options further, please reach out to a member of the OPM/Finance Procurement team.

### **Where do we find OPM reports that are completed monthly?**

OPM's monthly waiver reports can be found on the OPM website [here](#).



**Do professional services include Temp Medical Services?**

Temporary Medical Services fall into a category of professional services that, individually, would have to be procured as a PSA, but due to needs across the State, are available as part of a master contract through DAS on CTsource. There are a number of professional services available through master contracts due to statewide need. We recommend always checking CTsource to see if there is a master contract for the service you need before going out to bid.

**If a contract is with an individual, less than \$20,000, and shorter than a year, does it require OPM approval?**

No, a PSA with an individual for an amount of up to \$20,000 AND up to one year in term does not require OPM approval.

**Can you give an example for when an amendment would NOT need OPM?**

Amendments to PSA require OPM approval in the following circumstances:

- 1) The cost of the original contract is greater than \$50,000
- 2) The amendment has a cost of 100% or more of the original contract cost
- 3) The amendment increases the cost to more than \$50,000
- 4) The amendment extends the term beyond a one-year period
- 5) The amendment is the second or subsequent amendment.

These options are listed in the Core-CT requisition system for an amendment.

OPM approval would NOT be needed, for example, if a contract for \$40,000 was being amended for the first time and the amendment was only for a change to the scope of work of the contract (with no change to the cost).

**If the PSA is for an individual, does the individual need to register as a vendor in Core-CT? Or is the vendor registration limited to companies?**

All vendors are required to register as a vendor in Core-CT, including individuals. The registration site can be found [here](#).

**Does your team include the input from other agencies on the writing / requirements that are required in a procurement (RFP)?**

OPM's procurement standards and human service RFP template were both written with input from a variety of State agency procurement staff. OPM solicits feedback from agency procurement staff prior to making any substantial changes or updates to these documents.

**What types of training are allowed under GL -71 versus training needing a PSA?**

DAS has outlined a few types of training situations allowable under GL-71d; however, if you come up with a situation that isn't clear we encourage you to contact OPM and DAS to review. In most instances, training is handled as a PSA.

**Do you consider a POS contract/procurement to have direct client contact? And a PSA, no direct client contact?**

According to Connecticut General Statute Sec. 4-212, a personal service agreement is hired by an agency to provide services to the agency. Connecticut General Statute Sec. 4-70b defines a purchase of service contract as a contract with an organization or a municipality to "obtain direct health and human services



for agency clients...generally not for...training or consulting services.” If you’re not sure whether your contract should be a POS or a PSA please reach out to the OPM team.

**Is IT consulting services the only professional service that goes through DAS and not OPM?**

There may be some other exceptions to professional services procured according to OPM regulations. As noted above, if there is a statewide need for a certain type of professional services, DAS might set up a statewide contract. We recommend searching the State Contracting Portal, CTsource, for a professional service prior to initiating your own procurement. If you are unsure whether a service should be procured through DAS or OPM, please reach out to us.

**How do these rules apply to municipal and quasi-public agencies?**

OPM’s procurement regulations DO NOT apply to municipalities or quasi-public agencies; this is stated in OPM’s procurement standards. Additionally, the DAS’s procurement statutes and regulations do not apply to municipalities and quasi-public agencies; however, most of our contracts are available for use by those entities.

**Would there ever be an exemption for the IT consulting Services where an agency would procure outside of DAS?**

IT Consulting services contracts are handled by DAS through the authority granted in Title 4d of the Connecticut General Statutes. If you have a unique situation that you would like clarification, please contact DAS Procurement for further guidance.

**What category does professional printers fall under? If a printer wants to be an approved vendor, how would they go about this?**

Printing Services is handled by DAS Procurement under Title 4a of the Connecticut General Statutes. If there is a printing company seeking to do business with the state, we encourage you to guide them to the CTsource supplier resources and/or have the contact DAS Procurement for guidance:

[CTsource Registration](#)

**As a state employee how do I access CTsource?**

All state employees can access the CTsource Bid and Contract Boards as all of the information included there is public. If your agency role requires you to post solicitations and/or award contracts, contact DAS Procurement and we can connect you with your Agency Administrator to set up your appropriate roles in the system.

**Are the Procurement Standards updated and posted with updates?**

The Procurement Standards are periodically updated. Updated versions will be posted on the OPM website [here](#) and accompanied by guidance, training, and/or additional information.

**When is the next STARS Training?**

Some STARS training materials are available on the CORE-CT help page [here](#).

The STARS team communicates additional information about training through your agency training coordinator.

**What is the approval process for contracts with an individual?**

The approval process for a PSA with an individual is the same as that of other PSAs requiring OPM approval. A requisition is submitted through CORE-CT and routed to OPM/Budget and then OPM/Finance for approval.



**Do all sole source purchases need to be approved by DAS?**

Generally, all sole source purchases under Title 4a and 4d of the Connecticut General Statutes (goods and contractual services, including information technology) need to be approved through DAS. Depending upon the amount of the purchase, DAS would guide you to General Letter 71 or a Standardization Transaction (waiver of competitive process) guidelines.

**Can you explain the State Contract Standards Board's role in the procurement process and the cost benefit analysis requirement.**

Please refer to the State Contracting Standards Board's [website](#) for more information on its role in the procurement process and the cost benefit analysis (CBA) requirement.

**If we have a non-competitive PSA that is over \$50,000 (or 1-year) and approved by OPM, it will still need to go onto the CTsource portal. Is there a special process for that? When is that due to be posted?**

Certain procurement staff team members within agencies will be granted access to post on CTsource and can follow CTsource instructions to post contracts on the portal. Statute does not specify a timeline the posting of contracts on CTsource. Agencies should include such requirements in their agency-specific procurement policies.

**How would one enter a vendor in Core when seeking OPM approval to issue an RFP for over \$50,000? We wouldn't know who will win the contract.**

Requests to issue RFPs can be submitted without a vendor listed in the supplier field. The requisition must then be updated with a vendor when soliciting approval to go to contract.

**Occasionally we have service needs for small community-based providers who do not necessarily have technological capacities to check the CTsource portal. Are there any specific recommendations on how to advertise to these groups?**

There are many ways to advertise an opportunity beyond the CTsource portal. Agencies can post opportunities on their website and/or can issue email notifications when a new opportunity is open. For more ideas on how to reach a broad set of potential suppliers, please reach out to us.

**When an individual registers in Core CT, will they get a Supplier ID number like a supplier does?**

Yes, all suppliers in Core-CT, whether individuals or organizations, will receive a supplier ID.

**If we are contracting with an individual, do we still need to do a waiver of employment if we are getting OPM approval through CORE?**

PSAs with individuals require a Waiver of Classified Service form in addition to OPM approval.

**Can DAS provide a training to provide an automated training on how to do an RFP/bid procurement process training step by step as a desk webinar for those who want to learn?**

This is a great training idea and DAS will consider this for future training topics.

**If there are any required updates to the provisions that must be included in our PSA (for example, the Non-Discrimination section was recently updated for slight changes), how will we be notified of the newly approved language that we must now include/update?**

OPM will notify agencies via email in the event of any changes to the provisions that must be included in PSAs.



**When is the next E-requisition training for approvers?**

We will notify agencies when a training on e-requisitions is scheduled. In the meantime, please consult the CORE-CT job aids and helpdesk for assistance.

**Is it appropriate or allowable for agencies to mail information about RFPs to vendors?**

Yes, agencies can use a variety of forms of communication to notify potential suppliers of contracting opportunities, including mail.

**Can vendors be added to a State contract individually at any time or only at specific intervals when vendors are solicited?**

After a contract has been awarded, the suppliers awarded that contract are the only suppliers who can perform that work. Suppliers cannot be added to an existing state contract unless there are unmet needs, in which case DAS would conduct a supplementary solicitation.

**Is there training for CTsource available online?**

Yes, all of the CTsource training materials are online, including online videos. They can be found at the resources links here: [CTsource](#)

**I have encountered many vendors throughout the years who think that just because they register their company name on the portal they believe that they hold a state contract as a "state approved vendor." Is there a way to include a notation somewhere that this is not true?**

DAS has also encountered this same false assumption. We call this "the myth of the list". Here is some information to share with vendors on this topic: [DAS Procurement Vendor List Myth \(ct.gov\)](#)

**What do I do if my agency doesn't have the right users setup in the CORE workflow?**

Please reach out to the [CORE-CT helpdesk](#) to request their help in correcting your agency's CORE workflow.

**For gray area solicitations, should we reach out to OPM, DAS or both to start a conversation on where it belongs?**

Please reach out to one team first – *either* DAS or OPM. From there, we will bring in the appropriate folks to determine how best to meet your needs.

**Can DAS contract specialists support our solicitation if it is less than \$200,000?**

DAS Procurement is available to support you throughout the procurement process, regardless of the cost of the contract. While the agencies have the authority to handle their own procurements (when a state contract is not in place) for purchases less than \$200,000 (under the directives in General Letter 71), DAS is always willing to assist and guide agencies with those procurements as needed. Please reach out to the DAS Procurement main phone line at 860-713-5095 to get more information and to request assistance with your procurement.

**Can I customize the OPM RFP template to fit my agency needs?**

The RFP template was designed to solicit a broad array of competitive proposals using best practices in human service procurement. There are many options for customization built directly into the template to tailor the RFP to your needs. If you are interested in customizing the template further, please reach out to the OPM procurement team and we can answer your specific questions about the template and how to produce the best RFP for your solicitation.



**How should I decide whether a procurement should be competitive if historically there was only one response?**

Whenever possible a procurement should be done competitively. Even if you have historically only received a small number of responses to a solicitation, the market may have changed since the last attempt to solicit proposals. There are many ways to do research to determine whether there might be additional vendors interested in providing a service. One is to reach out to other State agencies who contract for similar services and learn more about their solicitation process. Another is to issue a request for information (RFI) prior to initiating an RFP process. For assistance, please reach out to the appropriate procurement team at DAS or OPM.