

WSDOT takes contractor bidding system online

Local News

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OLYMPIA - WSDOT will begin taking construction contractor bids online in September, an effort expected to reduce administrative paperwork and staff time, as well as reduce costs for contractors. Moving to an online bidding process is also in response to a recommendation in the January 2008 Construction Management/Highway Maintenance Performance Audit. Accepting and managing the bidding process online provides significant time and cost savings to both agencies and contractors by automating many current manual processes and eliminating the need for contractors to travel to the bid opening location to submit bids in person. Contractors currently submit bids on paper through a hand-delivered sealed bid process. Online bidding allows contractors to submit sealed, secure bids over the Internet. Contractors have a choice of submitting bids over the Internet, or delivering them to WSDOT on disk with a paper backup.

WSDOT is in the middle of one of its largest construction programs with more than 300 contracts going to bid between now and 2011. Increased competition for construction work has resulted in more bidders on each contract. In the last 12 months, the number of bidders on WSDOT contracts has increased from an average of four bidders per contract to double-digit bidder turnouts. By accepting and managing contractor bids online, WSDOT can take advantage of the latest electronic bidding technology to increase efficiency and save money and processing time. Online bidding also eliminates bidding errors with a built-in system that verifies calculations and finds missing data. "Disqualifying a low bid because of an error, results in taxpayers not getting the most competitive price for construction projects," said WSDOT's State Construction Engineer Jeff Carpenter. "On large contracts, the difference between the two lowest bids can be hundreds of thousands of dollars." Thirty states already use online bidding, with five more in the process of testing bidding systems. WSDOT selected Bid Express, a Web bidding information service to administer its online bidding system. Bid Express is owned by InfoTech of Gainesville, FL. Bid Express and WSDOT will conduct several training sessions for contractors interested in submitting bids electronically for WSDOT projects. For more information about WSDOT's online bidding, visit: www.wsdot.wa.gov/biz/contaa/. WSDOT is currently in Beta testing and the system will be in full production mid September 2009.