

The MHEC newsletter is sent to member schools, MHEC contractors, prequalified bidders and interested parties. We thought it might be interesting to share some of the most “common” mistakes reported by MHEC contract managers when bidders respond to our solicitations.

- 1) **Omitting Documents** – MHEC provides a checklist in every solicitation to help bidders submit the necessary documents. If you use the checklist and include everything on this list, your bid will have a better chance of being complete and being evaluated.
- 2) **Not Following Instructions** – We have had bidders walk into our office with hard copies of their bid, wanting to leave it with our receptionist for evaluation. We have had bidders submit a complete response without including an electronic version. Bids must be submitted in a sealed envelope with the bid number referenced. We require one signed paper copy with all supporting documentation plus one electronic copy of the entire bid response. *The bid must be signed! Yes, surprisingly we have received bids that were not signed.*
- 3) **Not Considering Price** - Pricing is important; being awarded an MHEC contract is competitive and bidders sometime assume that because they are on a contract now, they will be on the successor contract as well. Make sure that your price is the lowest that you can offer MHEC members and that you include your price in the sample format provided in the bid. We have received perfectly submitted bids in every respect except that pricing was omitted or included in the wrong section; we have received bids that offer a discounted price (40% for example) but no explanation of what the discount is off (is it MSRP or catalog price?). Be sure to include a sample price list and a link to your pricing for evaluation. Bidders should be careful and competitive.
- 4) **Reorganizing MHEC Tabs** – MHEC bids are organized into sections and to streamline the review process, bidders are asked to submit their response in a specific order and naming convention. Bidders will sometimes create their own order which slows down the review process and makes it difficult to find the answers to specific questions. The MHEC receives multiple bid responses and our goal is to have all responses submitted in the same format.
- 5) **“Thinking That More is Better”** – Don’t provide photos, testimonials, marketing material or other information unless it is asked for in the bid. We have had responses submitted with narratives that covered everything except what was being asked for in the bid!
- 6) **Failure to Plan** – Procurement calendars are included in every MHEC bid and deadlines are not usually modified. So don’t wait until the last minute to submit your response and don’t assume that any request to MHEC for an extension will be approved. Extensions are rarely made when a bid has posted and are not granted for individual bidders.

- 7) **Not Asking Questions** - Every MHEC solicitation offers an opportunity for an interested bidder to ask questions. There is, however, a defined timeframe for submitting questions so read over the bid document as soon as you receive it, write down any questions and send them in before the deadline. In the interest of fairness and in needing to manage the bid process, once the deadline has passed, it will be difficult to ask a question.

- 8) **Everything in the Response is Important but Some Things Are More Important than Others** – There are four bid document requirements that, if not submitted, will result in a bid disqualification on the opening day. Those are a) a signed certificate of non-collusion, b) a signed certificate of tax compliance, c) pricing information and d) a signed bid (the front page). All other documents still need to be submitted to be evaluated; if clarifications or corrections are needed, MHEC will contact bidders directly.

- 9) **Substituting Forms and Spreadsheets** – The MHEC bid includes required forms, such as the Vendor Information Form, Affidavits, Contract Service Fee Form and Offer Page and Bid Response Form in Excel. Some of the information on these forms is used to populate our database and changing the formatting or using your own home made versions of the forms will complicate and slow down the evaluation process. So bidders are asked to use the forms in the format provided in the bid.

- 10) **Assuming that my company is an MHEC contractor** – Bidders do not automatically receive a contract because they respond to a bid or become prequalified. Once bids are received, the MHEC analyzes the offers and awards a contract to the most responsive and responsible bidder (s) offering the lowest price that meets the needs of our membership. MHEC asks bidders to submit their best and final offer up front. Some bidders assume that MHEC will come back to them and ask for a better and final offer but this is not the case. Not understanding this may result in a bidder submitting a less than competitive bid and not be awarded a contract.