



The Interlocal Purchasing System (TIPS)

#	Cooperative Organization Questions	Response
1	Are your organization's cooperative contracts available for use by Arizona public entities? If so, do you have any local representation?	Yes all are available, Zack Buquet
2	What is the legal formation of your cooperative organization (public, non-profit, for profit, etc.)? How long have you been established?	TIPS is a department of the Education Service Center Region 8. It is a governmental public entity created by the Texas Legislature 51 years ago this year. We are authorized by the Texas Government Code §791 found at http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/GV/htm/GV.791.htm to enter into interlocal agreements with other governmental entities for the purpose of performing governmental functions on behalf of the parties to the interlocal agreement.
3	Does your organization conduct its own procurements with in-house personnel or does it enlist a public agency to conduct the procurement? If a public agency is utilized, please identify that agency or agencies and briefly explain how those agencies are selected.	Our organization conducts its own procurements with in-house personnel and legal counsel.
4	If your organization handles all of the contracting functions in-house please explain if you periodically have a 3rd party audit firm review your internal contracting procedures.	Our Public entity is required by law to be audited by an outside CPA Audit firm annually by the Texas Education Agency.
5	What governing procurement laws does your organization follow in the soliciting, evaluating and awarding of cooperative contracts? (Please be specific.) Also, what state is noted as the legal venue within your contracts for dispute resolution?	Texas Education Code §44.031 (goods and services not construction), Texas Government Code § 2269 (Construction- public works), and Texas Government Code §2254 (professional services- not A&E) are the primary codes for procurement compliance. Venue is Texas for litigation with ESC 8/TIPS vs. a Vendor. Venue for litigation between vendor and a TIPS Member may be negotiated with the Vendor at the time of purchase.
6	Does an agency need to register or sign an agreement with your organization in order to purchase from your contracts? If so, please attach the registration form or agreement. Also, is the agency charged a fee to join your cooperative organization?	Yes, IF the Member is required to enter into an interlocal/intergovernmental agreement to be a member, TIPS will comply, if not, the prospective Member may register and agree to our online terms and conditions. See attached. Member may choose venue on the interlocal or online agreement.
7	Where can your organization's cooperative solicitations and resultant contracts be viewed? Describe what documentation is available at this site.	www.tips-usa.com all due diligence is available except pricing that will be provided upon request by the member.

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8	Do you periodically perform audits to ensure your contractors are fulfilling the contracts to include charging the correct price? If so, please briefly describe your internal audit program and explain if that program includes any benchmarking to ensure pricing stays competitive over the term of agreement.	TIPS staff will check pricing for a member on each PO if requested. TIPS staff checks pricing on all POs sent to us for processing. If pricing was proposed as a line item fixed pricing, it must remain the same unless the Vendor proposed a "not to exceed percentage increase" that was accepted by TIPS on subsequent years prices, if so, they must adhere to that maximum percentage. IF the pricing is a discount off the catalog pricing, catalogs must be kept up to date with us and the catalog must be the public list pricing for the vendor's goods and services as defined in the solicitation.
9	What is the total employee count for your cooperative organization? How many employees perform specific contracting functions (solicitation development, bidding, evaluation and awarding of contracts)?	90 employees, 17 contracted personnel, 5 employees perform specific contracting functions
10	Describe your approach to customer service and include any response time commitments.	Customer service is a top priority with TIPS. Most responses are provided same day. The goal is not to have anything go over 24 hours.
11	How do you generate your bidders' list for any particular solicitation and what steps do you take to ensure Arizona companies are included in your notice?	One distribution list is from the registration on the TIPS website for categories of commodities and services that is open to all vendors in the US and Canada. TIPS publishes its advertisements in the USA Today and on the State of Texas Comptrollers website as well as publishing ads in the Pittsburg, Tx paper per state law, and also The Advocate Baton Rouge LA, Daily Journal of Commerce Portland, OR. The RFP's are also posted on the TxSmartBuy website.
12	How do you evaluate contractor performance? Do you have a process that allows agencies to report vendor deficiencies?	TIPS encourages all Members to report to us any problems with TIPS vendors and TIPS will investigate and resolve the issues if possible. One of the evaluation criteria for our non-construction solicitations is "Past history with TIPS" and "Reputation". This criterion is one of several REQUIRED by Texas Education Code 44.031. For construction, reputation is a criterion as permitted by law.
13	Indicate any national cooperative coalitions/associations to which your organization is a member.	TIPS is a member of many state and national public sector trade organizations. Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO), Arkansas School Boards Association, Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators, Louisiana School Board Association, Illinois School Boards Association, NIGP National Institute of Governmental Purchasing. TIPS, a department of Region 8 Education Service Center, a State of Texas public agency, created in 1967 by the Texas legislature, TIPS competitively bids our contracts per the Texas Education Code and Texas Government Code.
14	How do you track the usage of contracts to ensure you are accurately conveying order volume within your solicitations?	Because TIPS does not know the volume of goods and services our Members will purchase as new Members may join at any time, TIPS makes it clear in our solicitations that fact and does not guarantee any specific volume of sales to the proposing vendors. TIPS makes approximate membership numbers available in the solicitation and will provide specific counts if the vendor requests it.