

How to Sell Your Goods and Services to the Nova Scotia Government



Did you know that the provincial government spends more than a billion dollars on goods and services each year? We get roofs repaired, we have websites designed, we lease trucks, and thousands of other things. We buy most of these goods and services from Nova Scotia businesses. If you own or operate a business, you may want to do business with us. This booklet will help you find out how.



How do I find out what you need to buy?

That depends upon the cost of what we need. The rules we must follow in government depend upon the dollar value. We have two main categories—low value purchases and high value purchases.

Low value purchases

- goods under \$5,000
- services or construction services under \$10,000

Low value purchases are usually handled directly by departments and agencies. If you want to be considered for the many small purchases that we make every day, you can make your business known to the people who make these buying decisions.

For low value purchases, departments have three choices:

- **Go directly to a business that has a standing offer.**
Businesses on a standing offer have gone through a public tender process. They have agreed to offer a particular good or service at a set price for the time period covered by the standing offer, often one year.
- **Get three or more quotes from known suppliers to get a competitive price.**
Departments approach three businesses that they know offer the goods or services they need. They ask for a price and a timeline and anything else that may be important to meeting their needs. For goods, they might ask for a particular quality or standard. For services, they might ask the qualifications of the service provider.

The key to getting an opportunity to bid on this type of government contract is to make your business known to the people in government who might need what your business has to offer. They must know about you before they can approach you for a quote. The key to getting repeat business is to offer excellent value. Your price should be competitive and your quality high.



- **Go directly to a supplier that they know will offer good value.**
In some cases, departments can go directly to a supplier that they know will offer good value. They find what they need, they get it, and they pay for it by government purchase order or by the new procurement card. The procurement card is a government credit card that makes doing business with us more convenient for you—you get paid right away.

High value purchases

- goods over \$5,000
- services or construction services over \$10,000

High value purchases usually go through a formal tendering process. All high value tenders must be publicly advertised. The tender process is open to all businesses. You may also hear it called the bidding process. The process is designed to be fair. The rules are strictly adhered to.

Each tender is available for a specific number of days, allowing time for it to be advertised and giving business owners time to prepare their bids. The timeframe often depends on the complexity of the tender.

Sometimes conditions change after a tender has been advertised. If this happens, we post the fact that an addendum has been issued at www.gov.ns.ca/tenders. If the changes are major, the bid closing date may be extended to give bidders time to complete the bids.



How can I find out when new tenders are issued?

Visit our homepage on the Internet—all current opportunities are listed

Your first resource is the **Tender Opportunities and User Resources (TOUR)** homepage at www.gov.ns.ca/tenders. This page lists tenders that are currently posted by government departments, agencies, boards, commissions, and the MASH sector. MASH is short for municipalities, academic institutes, school boards, and hospitals. The site also provides links to policies and guides that can help you understand how we operate. You can download these from the website.

If you are not connected to the Internet, you can access the Internet at most provincial libraries, offices of Access Nova Scotia, Community Access Point (CAP) sites, Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centres, or by visiting the Nova Scotia Procurement office at 6176 Young Street in Halifax.

Tip: *New tenders are issued daily. Bookmark www.gov.ns.ca/tenders for easy reference.*

Read the Classified ads—major opportunities are listed

Some high value tenders are also advertised province-wide in the Classified section of *The Chronicle Herald/Mail-star*, or locally in regional newspapers.

Sign up for the Tender Opportunities Notification Service (TONS).

This free service is offered by the Nova Scotia Business Registry. You can receive e-mail notices that let you know when new tenders become available. See the back page for more details.

When I see a tender that I am interested in, how do I respond?

Tender documents come in a number of different formats, such as request for quotation, request for proposal, request for information, request for construction, and request for standing offer. Our website has a guide to preparing responses to tenders opportunities. You can also contact the Nova Scotia Procurement office for help. Explain that you are new to the process and someone will guide you through it.

Tender documents can range from one page to hundreds of pages. They describe the goods or services to be purchased and the conditions you need to meet to be an eligible bidder. Tender documents also tell you the due date and time, along with how and where to submit your bid. They show when and where the tenders will be publicly opened and give contact details in case you need more information.

When completing a tender submission, you should read the document completely from start to finish. Pay close attention to any terms and conditions listed as part of the document. In many cases these terms and conditions are set out in separate documents. When this happens, these other documents will be available on our website.

Tip: *Always pay close attention to the tender closing date, time, and location. Submissions must arrive on time, at the specified location, to be accepted.*

How are tenders awarded?

Tender responses (or bids) are opened at the location, date, and time shown in the tender document. Anyone can attend these tender openings. After the tender closes, you can get a list that shows the names of all the companies that submitted bids. This list is called a bid summary sheet. You can find it on our website.

After the bids have been opened, staff review each submission to ensure it meets the criteria listed in the tender document. The lowest bid does not automatically mean the corresponding company will be awarded the tender. Rather, each bid is evaluated against all the criteria outlined in the tender documents, including cost.

After an award has been made—which means a successful bid has been identified and a contract made with the bidding company—the award information is posted on our website. You may be able to get more specific details about the awards under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.



Four ways to improve your chances of doing business with us

- 1 Ask us for suggestions for next time.** If you bid on a project but were not successful, ask us how you could have made a stronger bid. We call this a debriefing. We can help you better understand the tendering process and how to prepare for future submissions.
- 2 Get a copy of the Public Sector Purchasing Contacts Directory.** This guide lists the purchasing staff for all government departments and agencies, as well as the MASH sector. You can download and print a copy from our website. You can also contact the Nova Scotia Procurement office at (902) 424-3333 or 1-866-399-3377 to request a copy. Then make your business known to the staff who might need your goods or services.
- 3 Attend our Nova Scotia Supplier Development Reverse Trade Shows.** These shows give business owners an opportunity to visit display booths to learn more about the government's need for products and services and how to participate in the process. The dates and locations for Reverse Trade Shows are posted on our website.
- 4 Join the Tender Opportunities Notification Service (TONS) of the Nova Scotia Business Registry.** Provided at no charge by the Nova Scotia Business Registry, this service allows you to receive e-mail notification about any new tenders posted on our website that match pre-selected categories. You need to subscribe to the Nova Scotia Business Registry to access this service. This service can be found at www.nsbr.ca or call (902) 424-5200 or toll-free 1-800-670-4357.

If you need more information or have questions about the purchasing process, please contact the Nova Scotia Procurement office at:

6176 Young Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3K 2A6
Telephone: (902) 424-3333
Fax: (902) 424-0622
Toll free voice: 1-866-399-3377
Email: ptenders@gov.ns.ca
Website: www.gov.ns.ca/tenders

If you have any comments about this publication or notice some way to improve it, please let us know.



How can I find the Nova Scotia Procurement Policy?

This document is available online at www.gov.ns.ca/tenders or by contacting us at the Procurement office. See our contact information below. The objective of this policy statement is to establish and maintain a high level of confidence in the procurement process by ensuring that all public sector procurement is carried out in an open, fair, consistent, efficient, and competitive manner.

What are trade agreements?

Nova Scotia has two main trade agreements in place—the Atlantic Procurement Agreement and the Agreement on Internal Trade. These agreements ensure certain rules and principles are followed whenever a request for goods, services, or construction are put out for tender. You can find more information about these trade agreements on our website.

What are standing offers?

Standing Offers are public tenders that are used to create a list of vendors with known experience and prices to provide a variety of goods and services. Standing Offers may be government wide or restricted to a single department or agency.

How can I get on a standing offer list?

Standing offers are posted on our website. Some are also advertised in *The Chronicle-Herald/Mail-Star*. Tenders for standing offers to supply goods and services are advertised. Like other tenders, you must respond during the specified timeframe to be eligible. Anyone who replies to these tenders and meets the published requirements may be considered for standing offers.

If you are placed on a standing offer list, it means you have offered to provide your product or service at an agreed-upon price for a specific period of time.

How do I get on your vendor list for tenders?

We have no list of “authorized vendors.” You can bid on any tender, as long as you meet the published requirements.

Does the Nova Scotia Government post its tenders on other similar sites?

Our information is available to the public. Because of this, a number of similar sites will read our information and post it to their sites. If you find a provincial tender opportunity available through another site, verify the information before you work on a bid. You can either check our site or contact the tendering agency to confirm the information.