Bid Express®

Why choose Infotech for Internet Bidding?

+ EXPERIENCED

Since 1997, the Bid Express service has processed nearly a half a million bids worth over $1.4 trillion, with 100% owner-agency satisfaction, serving 20,000+ users and 100+ state, county, and municipal agencies.

+ SECURE

Through Digital Signature and encryption technology, security risks are eliminated ensuring bidder privacy, service provider lockout, and agency accountability.

+ FLEXIBLE

With the Bid Express SmartForm™ technology, owner-agencies customize any type of bid form for all types of solicitations minimizing vendor mistakes and eliminating manual reporting.

+ SIMPLE

Designed for easy use and quick setup, implementations take days to weeks instead of months.

+ AFFORDABLE

Whether you choose an agency-pay or vendor-pay model, the fees for the Bid Express service are affordable for any size budget.

AGENCY BENEFITS: As an owner-agency, you can:

- **+** Assemble and post a custom solicitation in minutes with drag-and-drop selections, and easily save and re-use your templates
- **+** Receive sealed, secure, encrypted bids that are accurate, complete, and consistent
- **+** Minimize discarding responses due to errors or omissions that lead to award delays or disqualifying low/best value bidders
- **+** Eliminate bid bond paperwork and authenticity concerns with online bond verification via S2000, Inc. and Tinubu Surety

- **+** Automatically communicate updates/addenda to your vendor community
- **+** Offer plan sheets and proposal related documents online
- **+** Get better prices when bidders can easily re-submit bids to accommodate last minute price cuts
- **+** Post apparent results and bid tabs minutes after a bid opening
- **+** Increase competition and participation with greater exposure online
- **+** Eliminate redundant data entry and reduce paper and clerical errors

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Vendors use the Bid Express® service to submit bids/proposals, eliminating the expense and hassle of paperwork and travel. The service does all computations and alerts you to errors and omissions, producing virtually error-free proposals. **You can**:

- + Prepare and send a web-based, sealed, secure proposal
- + Eliminate paper bidding costs like hand or hired delivery costs and expenses
- + Eliminate late bids due to weather, traffic, or mail delays
- + Electronically verify bid bonds via S2000, Inc. and Tinubu Surety

- + Submit and resubmit proposals up until the bid opening time
- + View documents online, including plans
- + View apparent results as soon as they are posted
- + Choose to pay-per-solicitation, or subscribe for unlimited bidding and notifications

Online Solicitation Creation

The Bid Express® service is an ideal SaaS solution for construction and general procurement solicitation management, including Requests for Bids (RFB), Proposals (RFP), Information (RFI), or any other solicitation process that requests pricing, product, service information to be digitally signed and delivered in a sealed, secure manner. The system provides the ability to assemble, advertise, and accept solicitations over the Internet. The Bid Express® service offers a simple interface, workflow and low cost options for vendors. This means the City will receive a powerful and effective tool without significant budget or resource expenditures, lengthy installs, or the need to increase staffing and technical resources.

The workflow of the Bid Express® service is largely supported by the Bid Express® SmartForms technology which are essentially custom-built forms to ensure and enforce a pre-defined solicitation structure. Any agency user advertising an electronic solicitation can access the customized library of templates and agency specific vendor forms and select the appropriate template to begin the electronic bidding process. Infotech works closely with each agency in creating customized forms and templates during training. Once live, the agency is able to create new forms and templates as needed with access to customization tools for easy revisions.

Proposals are created through a simple web-based drag-and-drop interface, where components of the bid form can be created and arranged as they will appear in the advertised online bid form. Specific components allow for lump sum and individual item lists, as well as text boxes, attachments, and required document lists. Custom components are available to import or collect whatever information is required for/from bidders, including bid bonds. Components may be used multiple times within the same solicitation to allow slight variations or alternate pricing, or to allow single bidders to fill in separate bid options within the same form. Completed components can then be saved as templates or ready-made components for reuse in future solicitations.

An owner-agency employee can include all information that needs to be sent to potential bidders in the context of a single solicitation. This information can be in the form of components displayed directly on bidders' screens, or as attachments (.pdf, .txt, image, etc.) to the solicitation. The owner-agency also has the ability to create components that clearly define required information to be returned with the bid form as either blank fields in components or as attachments to the submitted bid. Once agreements are in place, the Bid Express® team will activate the service for the agency; at this point, the agency can allow its staff members to register themselves

and join the agency's organization on the Bid Express® service. The Bid Express® service aims to simplify the proposal creation process to the point that any user with basic word processing and web browsing skills could begin advertising bidding opportunities on the system with very little training.

Advertisement

Once the online solicitation has been drafted, the agency advertises the solicitation publicly by setting a deadline or bid opening date, clicking an advertisement button. At this time, the bid is live on the Internet and may be viewed and selected for bidding by registered Bid Express® users. The solicitation may be withdrawn in a similar manner at any point before the bid opening.

Addenda

If a change is required to the solicitation, the owner-agency logs in to the Bid Express® service, navigates to the specific proposal and makes the required changes. The system flags the user that an addendum is needed. At this point, a simple update of the form, with the option to include a comment, applies the changes to the solicitation and will provide a flag for bidders and an instant notification via email so that they know an addendum has been applied to the solicitation.

Security

Security and the protection of bid information are paramount to the Bid Express® service. Bids are stored in the Bid Express digital lockbox and cannot be accessed or decrypted by anyone without the proper credentials. This security is essential in maintaining a fair, competitive environment.

Bid Express offers two options for signing bids securely: e-Signatures and Digital IDs. Each is a method of identity verification that enables contractors to submit secure bids, but there are key differences between the two.

e-Signatures are an open-standard solution with a greater focus on accessibility and ease-of-use. Digital IDs offer users heightened security and built-in bid package validation, but at the cost of convenience.

	Electronic Signatures	Digital IDs
Application Process	No application process	Vendors required to apply by mail and must be registered at least 7 days prior to solicitation deadline
Accessibility	Any member can access a bid or response with login credentials, with the latest draft saved on the server	Drafts are saved locally and can only be exported to other users with an enabled Infotech Digital ID
Security	Transferred via HTTPS and encrypted at rest on the Bid Express servers	Transferred via HTTPS with end-to-end encryption and bid package validation
Browser Requirements	No browser requirements	No browser requirements
Set-Up	No certificate creation or installation required	Requires installation of Infotech Digital ID and Infotech Express Sign Tool

Bidding

Bidders register with the Bid Express® service free of charge. Registered users have the option to subscribe to the service for unlimited bidding on all solicitations in the system or to pay for bidding on a per-solicitation basis. Bidders can navigate to the solicitations area, view active solicitations and select those solicitations for bidding. Once the bid has been selected, bidders fill in online forms with the Bid Express® service informing when bid forms are complete. The bid forms do not allow entering of non-numeric entries into price fields, nor will a bid be marked as complete if a field designated as required by the owner-agency is left empty. Once the bid form is complete, bidders are free to submit, withdraw, and revise and re-submit bids at any time up until the bid opening.

Notifications

By default, bidders are notified when bids are submitted or withdrawn from their account. Bidders are also notified when bids that they have selected are amended or withdrawn. Bid Express also offers Personalized Notifications to vendor subscribers, enabling them to receive notifications about new work opportunities based on custom inputs.

Bid Bonds

The Bid Express® service has a long standing partnership with two entities for the processing of web-based surety bonding. Owner-agencies include bid bond content in a special bid form component. When completing the form, bidders simply enter their bond information and the Bid Express® system validates the bond with the appropriate agency. This validation is then delivered with the bid. Owner-agencies may also include an option for the bidder to send in a certified check, or, if desired, can ask for any bonding information as an attachment to the bid form. Currently, bid bond verification is supported by S2000, Inc. and Tinubu Surety.

Opening Bids

Once the bids due time has passed, the owner-agency logs into the Bid Express® service and fetches, or downloads, the bids. In the Bid Express® system, incomplete bids may be submitted; however, the bid forms are clearly marked as incomplete and a warning is issued to the bidder before submitting the bid. Incomplete bids are marked as such when the owner-agency receives the bids, and the owner-agency may choose not to open those bids. Otherwise, bids can be downloaded individually or all at once. An export of bid totals is available in XML, tab delimited, column delimited, and Excel formats.

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Manual Bid Entry

If bids have been submitted on paper, authorized owner-agency personnel can manually enter those bids using a browser-based electronic form once the bids due time has passed. The owner-agency can fill in bid totals as a lump sum for easy posting of apparent bid totals, or on the item level for more detailed posting, accurate bid tabulations and the checking of a manually submitted bid's calculations and completeness. In addition, any required documents submitted by the bidder can be scanned by the owner-agency personnel and attached to the bid as part of the manual bid entry process.

Posting Apparent Bids

Once bids have been opened and/or manually entered, apparent bids, or bids as read, can be instantly posted to the Bid Express® service so that interested bidders can see the results. The apparent bids may also be exported for posting to another website. When posting apparent bids, the owner-agency has the option of flagging bids as irregular so they are not posted with the rest of the results.

Reporting Options

Upon bid opening, the Bid Express service creates a series of bid reports and data downloads. Standard Reports List:

1. Bid Tabs – Bidders: Displays bid tabulations and shows the item list for the solicitation, what vendors bid for each item, and the total bid amount for each item list.
2. Bid Tabs – Standard: Displays what vendors bid for each item of the solicitation and the total bid amount.
3. Bid Tabs – Multiples: Displays what vendors bid on each item in each item list.4
4. Vendor Bid Reports: The Bid Express service organizes bid tabulation information in easy to read reports allowing the creation of a .PDF file showing bid tabulations or export them into a .XLXS file.
5. Plan holders list.
6. Downloaders list.
7. Solicitation History.
8. Solicitation notification.
9. Export Open Bids – .XML: Export the open bids into an .XML file.
10. Export Open Bids – MS Excel: Export the open bids into a spread sheet. The spreadsheet download provides a sheet showing high level bid information (vendors and prices), another sheet showing each vendor's response for side-by-side comparison, and a separate sheet for each individual submission.

Output format includes .XLXS, .PDF, and .XML. The bid summary/bid tabulations reports are customized by changing or editing the solicitation template used for the project advertised. If further customization is desired, the .XLXS open bid report can be modified in Microsoft Excel.

Customer Support

All Bid Express® support and development teams work from Infotech's Gainesville, Florida office and are available on weekdays from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern for just-in-time, one-to-one or unscheduled support for owner-agencies and vendors. Support is available via email and phone. In addition to regularly scheduled web-based training sessions and on-site visits, the Bid Express support team also provides daily, unscheduled training for our bidding and owner-agency community.

Cost Options

Infotech offers two pricing* options for bidexpress.com

Vendor pay model:

+ Free for agencies to use for unlimited solicitations, free implementation and training, ongoing support and vendor training

+ Vendors register for free, create their digital identification for free, and download procurement documents/plans for free

+ Vendors are only charged when deciding to respond to the solicitation - $40 electronic bidding fee OR $50 monthly subscription for unlimited electronic bidding that can be canceled at any time.

NOTE: The electronic bidding fee is considered a replacement cost as opposed to an added cost for vendors. Vendors are saving money and eliminating paper bidding costs like hired delivery (overnight mail, couriers, etc.) and hand delivery (paid staff time, gas, parking, etc.).

Agency Pay Model:

This model entails in annual license that is calculated based on the estimated average number of solicitations per year and estimated average number of bidders per solicitation. There are no costs for bidders on this model.

*Implementation fee is waived when meeting the threshold for solicitation volume on Bid Express annually or with the purchase of Appia®.

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Three Important Questions To Ask

SECURITY | Does the system employ digital signatures and public-key encryption?

Security is arguably the most important factor in an Internet bidding process, and encryption is at the core. There are two types of encryption: symmetric/secret key encryption and asymmetric/ public key encryption. Symmetric encryption involves distributing a shared key online and is open to vulnerabilities of the key either being intercepted externally or used internally (by the bidding solution or agency) to access and alter bids before being opened.

Asymmetric encryption uses two keys, public and private, to solve the shared key distribution problem and the misuse problem that requires trusting the agency and bidding solution. If you are wondering if this type of security is really vital, just remember that bidding is mission-critical for both your agency and your vendors. Our team believes the most responsible form of security for the bidding process is end-to-end, asymmetric encryption with a digital signature algorithm. You should ask all providers what type of encryption technology they use.

For bidders seeking a flexible option, we also offer e-Signatures. e-Signatures are an open-standard solution with a greater focus on accessibility and ease-of-use. Key differences include: no application process, transferrable login credentials, and no browser requirements.

FLEXIBILITY | Does the system largely rely on uploads or use intelligent forms?

One of the most important advantages of an Internet bidding system is the ability to minimize bidder mistakes and omissions when submitting bids/proposals. When a bidding system largely relies on bidders/vendors to upload responses as attachments, there is no way that system can ensure completeness of those uploaded documents.

Conversely, when you use simple online forms within the Internet bidding system, you can help bidders by noting fields as required and eliminating the need for them to calculate figures. Fields can also be designated as alpha or numeric to further avoid simple errors. Using an intelligent online form helps bidders achieve completeness and accuracy in their bids, which helps agencies avoid the dreaded situation of throwing away the low/best value bidder due to a technicality. This can literally cost your agency thousands on a single bid, and perhaps even millions over time.

SIMPLICITY | Is it simple?

When complexity increases, adoption times increase as well. In short, you want your system to be as easy as possible. Features may sound great on paper, but seeing a system in action is where you can really assess what functionality is key to your agency's success and how easily the system will be adapted by bidders. Agencies may have an Enterprise Resource Planning system that may offer a sourcing/bidding module but agencies will want to ensure a system like that, many times meant for general procurement, can handle highly specialized construction bidding in a simple way.

User friendliness is critical in order to successfully operate important functions like incorporating changing item lists, bid bond verification, large spec/plan uploading, custom intelligent form creation, and best value or qualification based solicitation management. As you move forward with considering Internet bidding, keep these key points in mind.