

**CITY OF ROCHESTER PUBLIC
WORKS DEPARTMENT**

**GUIDE TO ONLINE BIDDING
FOR CITY PROJECTS**

It is the City of Rochester's policy to provide all contractors and subcontractors with equal access to procurement opportunities.

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Section 1 Purpose of Guide to Bidding

Description

This Guide to Online Bidding is designed to lead contractors and subcontractors through the City of Rochester's online bidding process for construction and maintenance projects and answers questions such as: What is required? How do I bid on projects? What happens once the bids are opened? Where can I find online information?

This guide covers only projects that are advertised as electronic bidding and administered by Rochester Public Works Department.

The City advertises its construction projects:

- In Rochester Post Bulletin Newspaper,
- On the City's eGram website: <https://egram.rochestermn.gov/>
- On <https://eadvert.dot.state.mn.us/>

Other government agencies (federal, state, and municipal) also advertise their highway construction and maintenance projects through some of the same resources. These government agencies have their own bidding processes.

How to Electronically Bid City Project

Electronic bidding is the only method accepted for bidding on some of the City of Rochester's construction projects:

1. Electronic Bidding

The City of Rochester's construction projects identified as electronic bidding **must** utilize the "electronic bidding" method described in this guide.

- a. First you will need to set up a User ID and password for your company through ConneX. (see [Process for obtaining access to online plans and electronic bidding](#) for instructions)
- b. Plans and Proposals are downloaded through the eGram web site <https://egram.rochestermn.gov/>

Note: You are only allowed to bid if you have download all plans, specifications, and addendums, and have requested and received notice from the City that you have access rights to eGram.

- c. **Bid is submitted electronically through BidVault**

<https://bidvault.mn.uccs.com/>

- 1) In addition, there are several documents in the Proposal section which are to be downloaded for submission as hard copies. Under the Project Files in the eGram site, the project file titled "**Bid Submittal Documents**" lists the documents that are to be downloaded, filled out, signed and submitted using one of the following methods:
 - Submit the signed original documents to the City of Rochester's Public Works Department. They must be received prior to the bid opening time and date; or
 - Email copies of the signed documents prior to the bid opening time and date. The copies must be emailed to pwpermits@rochestermn.gov and, the originals must be received in the office within three (3) days after bid opening.

- 2) Bid Security (bid bond or certified check) is required. Here are your options for

submitting the bid security:

- Submit an electronic bid bond with your electronic bid for this project using Surety 2000 or InSure Vision; or
 - Submit the original paper bid bond or certified check. It must be received in the City of Rochester's Public Works Department prior to the bid opening time and date; or
 - Email a copy of your original paper bid bond or certified check prior to the bid opening time and date. The copy must be emailed to pwpermits@rochestermn.gov, and, your original signed bid security must be received in the City of Rochester's Public Works Department within three (3) days after bid opening.
- d. Until the time of Bid Opening, your company employee is the only one who can see your bid.

Electronic Bidding - Advantages and Information

Electronic bidding reduces errors in the bidding process. Plus it allows bidders to make changes right up to the last minute prior to the opening of bids.

What kind of computer and software do I need?

The web sites can be accessed from any location via any IBM compatible PC capable of running Windows XP (or newer) or MAC with 28K free space.

Do I need an account with an Internet provider?

Yes, and access to the Internet using Explorer 6, 7 or 8 Browser, Mozilla Firefox Browser, Opera Browser, Safari Browser.

The City of Rochester utilizes the following web sites:

- eAdvert: <https://eadvert.dot.state.mn.us/> – Projects advertised here.
- ConneX: <https://connex.mn.uccs.com/> – To sign up for a Contractor's User ID and password (one for each of the contractor's employees) to access eGram and BidVault.
- eGram: <https://egram.rochestermn.gov/> – For plans, specs, information, addendums, messages.
- BidVault: <https://bidvault.mn.uccs.com/> – For Electronic Bidding (see [BidVault](#)).
- Electronic bids are **date and time stamped** as to when the last submission occurred, and must be signed by the contractor's authorized signer.
- Electronic bids can be withdrawn. This will delete all entries in your bid.
- Only you (the Contractor) can see your Bid until the bid opening.

When a bid is submitted using "Electronic Bidding", the bidder must use an electronic signature (personal identification number/PIN) to submit the bid and conform to [MN Statute § 161.32, subd. 1b](#). The bid must also comply with the requirements of the BidVault web site.

A bidder may submit a bid bond electronically if you use Surety 2000 or InSure Vision. See 1.c.2 above regarding "Bid Security" for other options whereby the City of Rochester receives the bid security prior to the bid opening time and date. Contact Surety 2000 or InSure Vision to obtain bid bond I.D. Bid bond I.D.s are submitted with the electronic bid. Bonding agents can contact <http://www.surety2000.com/> or <http://www.insurevision.com/> for accounts or questions. The bid bond is 5 % of the contract amount or per the project specifications; this helps assure that only legitimate bids are submitted.

Select bid bond option

The screenshot displays the bidVAULT interface. At the top left is the UCCS logo. The main header reads 'bidVAULT' and 'User'. Below this is a breadcrumb trail: 'You are here: Project Listing > My Bids > Project jklhfsa > Bid'. A 'Project Information' section contains a table with the following data:

Project No.	jklhfsa	County/City	RtVision Test County
Description	sjkfd	Bid Date	05/01/2013 12:00 PM

The main content area is titled 'Bid Placement' and features a sidebar with a progress list:

- 1. Accept Terms
- 2. Plans and Proposal
- 3. Base Bid Items
- 4. Bid Bond**
- 5. Approve Bid

The '4. Bid Bond' step is expanded to show 'Verify bid bond information'. The main content area contains a 'Verify Bid Bond' section with a dropdown menu. The dropdown is currently open, showing three options: 'Skip this step', 'Surety 2000', and 'InSure Vision Technologies'. Navigation buttons 'Save', '< Previous', and 'Next >' are visible above and below the dropdown.

Surety 2000 Bond Verification

Project Information			
Project No.	jkjhdsa	County/City	RtVision Test County
Description	sjklfd	Bid Date	05/01/2013 12:00 PM

Bid Placement							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accept Terms 2. Plans and Proposal 3. Base Bid Items <li style="background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;">4. Bid Bond Verify bid bond information 5. Approve Bid 	<div style="text-align: right;"> <input type="button" value="Save"/> <input type="button" value=" < Previous"/> <input type="button" value=" Next >"/> </div> <p>Verify Bid Bond</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Skip this step <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Surety 2000 <input type="checkbox"/> InSure Vision Technologies </p> <p>Please enter your bond information below. The information must match your Surety 2000 bond exactly.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Contract</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contractor ID</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bond ID</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p style="background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;">Verify Bond Information with Surety 2000</p> <div style="text-align: right;"> <input type="button" value="Save"/> <input type="button" value=" < Previous"/> <input type="button" value=" Next >"/> </div>	Contract		Contractor ID		Bond ID	
Contract							
Contractor ID							
Bond ID							

Insure Vision Bond Verification

Project Information			
Project No.	jkjhdsa	County/City	RtVision Test County
Description	sjklfd	Bid Date	05/01/2013 12:00 PM

Bid Placement									
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accept Terms 2. Plans and Proposal 3. Base Bid Items <li style="background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;">4. Bid Bond Verify bid bond information 5. Approve Bid 	<div style="text-align: right;"> <input type="button" value="Save"/> <input type="button" value=" < Previous"/> <input type="button" value=" Next >"/> </div> <p>Verify Bid Bond</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Skip this step <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Surety 2000 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> InSure Vision Technologies </p> <p>Please enter your bond information below. The information must match your InSure Vision Technologies E-bond exactly.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Bond Number</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>User Name</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Password</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Contract/Project Number</td> <td><small>required if present in the bond</small></td> </tr> </table> <p style="background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 2px;">Verify Bond Information with InSure Vision Technologies</p> <div style="text-align: right;"> <input type="button" value="Save"/> <input type="button" value=" < Previous"/> <input type="button" value=" Next >"/> </div>	Bond Number		User Name		Password		Contract/Project Number	<small>required if present in the bond</small>
Bond Number									
User Name									
Password									
Contract/Project Number	<small>required if present in the bond</small>								

For electronic bidding, and all other bidding questions, contact by phone at 507-328-2400 or by email at pwpermits@rochestermn.gov.

Department of Public Works
201 4th St SE, Rm 108
Rochester, MN 55904-3740

Process for obtaining access to online plans and electronic bidding

1. Users with an existing ConneX account and returning Contractors **Log in with User ID & password*** (Skip to step 10).
2. If your previous access to the eGram server (password and ID) was assigned by the City of Rochester they are no longer valid and you will have to sign up through ConneX system.
If your company has never been issued a User ID and password, and wants to bid or download the plans to get on the plan holder's list, you must sign up through the new ConneX system. In ConneX you will be able to set up your company User ID (one per each employee that is added to the system) and each user's own password.

***NOTE: Each password must be at least 7-8 characters in length, and include 1 Capital Letter, 1 lower case letter, and 1 numerical digit.**

3. Enter the ConneX website: <https://connex.mn.uccs.com/>
4. Create an organization and sign up for a user account. The Administrator (first person to set up the company in ConneX) has control over employee access rights and who has authority to sign for the company. The Administrative person can be changed if the Administrator goes into "Founder's Option" and makes the change to another person.
5. Follow the guided interface to set up an account/organization and read the notes under each step for extra information or guidance.
6. Log into your created account
7. Edit any user detail changes – i.e., Password changes, phone number changes, authorization levels, etc.
8. Add Organization Details under **My Organization** – New Contractor or pick existing contractor
9. Save Details at the bottom of My Organization Page
10. Select the Agency or Agencies you wish to have **eGram Access** to: i.e.; City of Rochester (this will be a one-time request for the Agency/Agencies you choose). Your organization must have received approval from each Agency selected to have your company added to their plan holder list.
11. After the Request for Access is sent to The City of Rochester, the Administrator will receive an email from the City granting or denying access to the City of Rochester's eGram site.
12. Contractors that have been accepted will be able to access and download project information from the City of Rochester eGram site.

After downloading specs, plans, and addendums from the eGram server, the Contractor will be added to, and show up on, the Plan Holders list. An approved Contractor will then be able to access and submit a signed bid online through the BidVault server.

Contractors that are added to the Plan Holder's list will be notified via email of any addendums that are issued. Any addendum "unapproves / unsigned" ALL bids already submitted to bidVAULT. The Contractor must acknowledge the addendum, and re-sign the bid before resubmitting.

If the bid remains "unapproved" and "unsigned" it is NOT accepted.

13. You can still download the plans and specifications if you have not set up an account in the eGram system, but your company will not be added to the Plan Holder's list and will not receive any notices of changes by addendums.

Electronic Bidders:

All authorized signers will need a User ID, password, and PIN Number. All other employees who need access to BidVault should get a User I.D. and password. A Bid Key, from BidVault server, will be issued for each project that you bid on. Each project has its own unique Bid Key. All employees will need access to the project specific Bid Key in order to access your company's project specific bid form. **Only the Authorized Representative from the Company should receive a PIN number to sign the Bid.** The Administrator (first person to set up the company in ConneX) has control over employee access rights and who has the authority to sign for the company. The Administrative person can be changed if the Administrator goes into "Founder's Option" and makes the change to another person.

NOTE: It is the Contractor's responsibility to ensure that only authorized employees have access to eGram and bidVault for the company. If anyone leaves employment, it is up to the company's Administrator to remove employee access in ConneX.

Bidding, document, and specification questions should be submitted to the City of Rochester via telephone (507-328-2400), Email (pwpermits@rochestermn.gov).

eGram Telephone support is available between the hours of 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM

Web page questions and problems should be submitted to the service provider United Cloud Computing Services, Inc. (UCCS) by email to support@uccs.com between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

eGram Server

Here the Contractor can:

1. See all project information.
2. Can download plans and proposals.
3. Receive emailed addenda and notices regarding the project (if the Contractor is on the Plan Holder's list).

BidVault

Here the Contractor can:

1. Obtain a Bid Key for project bidding from the BidVault server.
2. Submit an electronic bid bond through Surety2000 or InSureVision.
3. Digitally sign and submit an electronic bid (prior to bid opening date and time).
4. Withdraw their electronic bid, if desired (option when reopening project bid form).

Section 2 Before Bidding

Requirements

The City of Rochester requires that contractors to meet certain requirements to make sure that their bids are acceptable and legitimate.

NOTICE

Businesses debarred under Part 20, Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations are ineligible to bid on, subcontract for, or supply materials or services for any state, county, maintenance, or municipal project. Check the Web site: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/bidlet/howtobid.html> to determine if there are any debarred businesses.

Business Registration

All businesses must comply with the requirements of doing business in Minnesota as directed by the Office of the Secretary of State.

Out-of-state businesses must obtain a “Certificate of Authority” from the Office of the Secretary of State to conduct business in Minnesota.

Necessary forms and other information can be obtained from the Minnesota Secretary of State:

Web: <http://www.sos.state.mn.us/>

Office of Secretary of State

Retirement Systems of Minnesota Building 60 Empire Dr., Suite 100

Saint Paul, MN 55103

In the Metro Area 651-296-2803 (9:00 AM to 4:00 PM) In Greater MN 1-877-551-6767 (9:00 AM to 4:00 PM)

Fax: 651-297-7067

Bid Bonds

All bids must be accompanied by a proposal guaranty (bid bond or certified check) of 5% of the bid price. Bid bonds assure that only legitimate bids are submitted.

The proposal guaranty may be either a bid bond or certified check made out to the City of Rochester. Bid bonds can be submitted electronically with electronic bids using Surety2000 or InSureVision or paper copies can be submitted to City offices at or before the time of bid opening.

Federal Tax ID

All contractors doing business in Minnesota must have a Federal Tax Identification Number. To obtain a number, contact the Internal Revenue Service at:

<https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/employer-id-numbers-eins>

Wage Rates

Prevailing wage rate is defined as the hourly basic rate of pay plus the employer’s contribution for health and welfare, vacation, pension, and other economic benefits paid to workers engaged in the same class of labor in the same geographic area.

If a project is financed with both state and federal funds, workers must be paid the higher of the two wage rates for an individual classification as listed in the contract’s state and federal wage determinations.

Proposals contain prevailing wage information. Should wage rates change between the time the proposal is posted and the letting date, plan holders will be sent an addendum showing the new wage rates. You must comply with the most current wage rates.

State prevailing wage information can be found at: http://workplace.doli.state.mn.us/prevwage/highway_data.php?region=06

Federal prevailing wage information can be found at: <http://www.wdol.gov/dba.aspx>

Read the labor provisions in your proposal.

WARNING

Both the federal government and State of Minnesota require contractors who are awarded government funds for public works projects pay their employees the prevailing wage for the locality where the project is located.

Section 3 How Do I Sign Bids And Ensure That They Are Secure?

How do I sign my bid?

All access rights and users for your company are under your company's control. You set up your company and users on the ConneX website. Each person authorized to sign the Bid for your company will be issued a PIN Number along with a User ID and password. For your protection you should not share your PIN Number with others as **the PIN number identifies who signed and submitted your bid.**

How do I ensure that my bids are secure?

The issue of security and data privacy is addressed by data encryption, digital signatures and redundant backup systems.

Who can read my bid?

Until the bids are opened at the specified time on bid day, only your authorized personnel can see the bid. The software program uses an encryption code and other security methods which prohibit anyone, including the City and the service provider, from reading your bid. At the bid opening the bids are released so that the City can read the bid, but cannot alter the bid in any way. When the bids are opened on bid day you will receive an email. Your bid will remain confidential until award of the project.

When the time on the BidVault server reaches the specified bid opening time on bid day the City will proceed to open the bids. The server time on the BidVault server will be shown in the upper right hand corner on all screens.

Can I make changes to my bid and submit a bid more than once?

Yes. When you make changes to your bid the company's authorized signer must re-sign the bid using their PIN. This ensures that the changes to your bid are accepted. If the contractor (or employee) does not re-sign the bid with their PIN, the bid is now unapproved and unsigned. Even though the intent was to bid "as is" or with revisions, because no one re-signed the bid using a PIN the bid would not be accepted.

If you submit a bid multiple times before the deadline, **only the last signed submission** will be retained and passed on to the City.

Can I withdraw a bid?

Yes. You may withdraw (option when reopening project bid form) your electronic bid on the BidVault web page. If you request to have your bid withdrawn before the bid opening deadline, your bid will be deleted and not be passed to City.

Could my bid be lost?

No. The data is backed up on multiple servers.

Is the System reliable?

The City requires that the bid submittal service is always accessible. To accomplish this, the service provider will have redundant servers, access lines, backups, and backup power sources.

Will support for the electronic bid system be available?

Yes. You will have access to telephone and E-mail support from the City of Rochester. Presently telephone service is provided between the hours of 8:00AM and 4:00 PM. (Refer to [Electronic Bidders](#) section).

NOTE: If you lose your Bid Key and have to request a new one, your previous Bid will be voided and deleted. All bid information must be re-entered, re-signed, and resubmitted.

Section 4 What Happens Once Bids Are Opened?

1. At bid opening, the user who signed the bid will receive an email that your Bid has been opened. At this point your bid is now closed and no further changes can be made to it.
2. The bid time and date on the BidVault server screen is the official time of the Bid Opening. Your Bid is date and time stamped to the last time your signed bid was submitted. If you change your bid and do not re-sign and resubmit it, the changes will not be accepted. You can make changes to your bid (and save it) as you are developing your bid. Your Bid is not officially submitted until you sign your bid.
3. Bid totals are posted within 24 hours on the eGram site under Bid Abstract / Project Bid Summary.
4. Detailed Bid Abstract is not posted until the project is awarded.

“eGram” – City of Rochester’s Bid Information Web Site

<https://egram.rochestermn.gov/>

Contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, and plan rooms can find the following bid information on the eGram web site.

HEADING	WHAT YOU FIND
Projects in Bidding	Current Projects as Advertised / By Project Number
	Project Information
	Ad for Bid Document
	Plan Holders
	Messages
	bidVAULT access
	Reference Data
	Project Files
	Released Plans / Specifications / Proposal
	Addendum Files
Projects in Construction	Current Awarded Projects / By Project Number
	Project Information
	Messages
	Plan Holders
	Bid Abstract
	Project Bid Summary (as read bids)
	Project Bid Abstract (details - after bid is awarded)
	Reference Data
	Project Files
	Released Plans /Specifications / Proposal
	Addendum Files
Planning Projects	Tentative 6-Month Letting Schedule / By Project Number
	Preliminary project information subject to change

Also, there is a Help / FAQ section in addition to general bidding requirements, forms, and project notices.

Section 5 Other Information Contractors Should Be Aware Of

Advertisements for Bids

Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) advertises County and City construction projects for agencies on their bid letting web site at: <https://eadvert.dot.state.mn.us/>.

Tentative Letting Schedule

The City may provide a schedule of tentative future projects (for about a six-month period). Listed projects are for informational and planning purposes only and may change over time. The tentative letting schedule is available on the eGram web site under Planning Projects at: <https://egram.rochestermn.gov/>.

WARNING

Bidders should log into eGram under their own names to ensure that they receive all documents and addenda issued after the project ad date. Bidders are responsible for acknowledging all addenda. Failure to acknowledge addenda may cause the rejection of your bid. The City of Rochester will not be responsible for bidders receiving addenda unless they appear on the City's official plan holders list.

Plan Holder Lists

Plan holder lists show all businesses that have signed their company up through the ConneX system and downloaded plans and proposals for particular projects; or companies that have been manually added by request to the plan holder list. To obtain plan holder lists check the web site at: <https://egram.rochestermn.gov/>

WARNING

Contractors should be familiar with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) Standard Specifications for Construction and Project Special Provisions prior to submitting a bid.

Mn/DOT's Standard Specifications for Construction

The Plan and Proposal will indicate which edition of the Minnesota Department of Transportation's Standard Specifications for Construction will govern the project. The Standard Specifications for Construction can be viewed at: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/pre-letting/spec/index.html>

Copies may be purchased from Mn/DOT by mail or in-person at:

Map and Manual Sales Counter Room 110 Transportation Bldg. Mail Stop 260
395 John Ireland Blvd. St. Paul, MN 55155