

WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC PURCHASERS

Frequently Asked Questions about Onvia DemandStar Service for WAPP

1. **Why is WAPP offering a free Web-based bidding service?**
 - a. **WAPP'S** Cooperative Purchasing Committee's goal was to develop one Website where vendors could register for state and local bids and where such bids could be posted and shared. That Website was intended to be the State of Wisconsin VendorNet, however that site is scheduled to be replaced with a new product that will be for State agency use only.
 - b. The committee then began evaluating options for local government and public education entities and the contract with Onvia to use its Onvia DemandStar system is the result of several years work.

2. **What services are available?**
 - a. **Services for local Wisconsin units of government:**
 - i. **Vendor self-registration** – self-serviced by Vendors (no manual, paper vendor registration and tracking)
 - ii. **Bid posting** on the Web, with a link on your institution's Website
 - iii. **Automated vendor notification** of bid solicitations (save labor and postage)
 - iv. **Specification and document library** access that includes the entire United States

3. **How do I get my institution started?**
 - a. If you represent a **WAPP** member institution, see the **WAPP** Website (www.wapp.org/members2.htm).
 - b. To become a **WAPP** member, go to the **WAPP** Website (www.wapp.org/membership.htm).

4. **What kind of attachments can DemandStar accept for posting?**
 - a. Plain text, Word, WordPerfect, Excel, Photos, PowerPoint, Plot files, RTF, PDF, JTIF, GIF and JPEG files, CAD drawings, ZIP files, etc.

5. **Why was DemandStar selected? Don't they charge vendors for government solicitations?**
 - a. Onvia has agreed to offer their services for free to all Wisconsin local government and public education units that are **WAPP** members. There will be NO FEE for Vendor access to Wisconsin solicitations. This was a critical point in selecting Onvia for **WAPP** members. Vendors who want access to solicitations outside Wisconsin may be subject to fees from Onvia.
 - b. Cooperative Purchasing Committee (CPC) members evaluated Onvia. The Committee includes **WAPP** representatives from several Wisconsin cities, counties, school districts and technical colleges. Our group believes this is the best product available, based on those evaluated.
 - c. Most agencies have their own financial software system in place. Onvia DemandStar is not meant to replace your financial software, but to provide all the required Web-based services (2.a. above).
 - d. There are numerous bid posting products on the market. Most have a price tag from \$9,999 to \$30,000+ for full purchasing systems. Many products that are free to public sector entities charge fees to the vendors for their services.

6. **What are some agency benefits of using Onvia DemandStar?**
 - a) Retain your current financial software, but offer electronic bid posting, vendor registration and bid notification.
 - b) After initial vendor transition, responsibility shifts to vendors to register and keep their info up-to-date.
 - c) Save clerical labor associated with vendor registration
 - d) Save on postage and labor associated with bid mailings and/or faxing
 - e) Reduce calls for bid tabulations; direct vendors to the Onvia DemandStar Website where your bid tabulations are posted
 - f) Bid activity tracking system, monitors plan holders and the whole bid process
 - g) Onvia DemandStar's extensive library of information and sample documents offers document templates and library will assist local in accomplishing cooperative purchasing goals.

7. Has anyone checked Onvia's references?

- a. Yes, members of Cooperative Purchasing Committee (CPC) contacted references that used Onvia DemandStar.
- b. The references were mostly positive. Those institutions that had not previously used NIGP codes had an adjustment period.

8. Was this agreement publicly bid?

- a. CPC members researched software options, evaluated products and negotiated the Onvia contract.
- b. The Onvia agreement did not result in any purchase and it was not publicly bid.

9. What about VendorNet and the State Bureau of Procurement (SBOP)?

- a. Helen McCain, Director of SBOP, has been supportive of the municipalities using **WAPP** and Onvia for these services.
- b. The SBOP has purchased an enterprise system called PeopleSoft that will eventually provide a replacement for some portions or all of VendorNet.
- c. VendorNet will continue to be available "as is" to municipalities until some time in the future, date unknown. At that time, the VendorNet replacement software will allow local agencies access to view state contracts, however only state agencies may utilize the bid posting and other functions.
- d. The CPC requested the State allow a link to DemandStar on VendorNet (and later on their new bid posting Website).
 - i. Provide a "Button" link for vendors to register for State bids
 - ii. Provide a "Button" link for vendors to register on Onvia DemandStar for local government and public education solicitations

10. SMALLER AGENCIES: We are a small agency and do not post our bids on the Web. Why should we take the time to change over to this? How will it help us now?

- a. If you manually register vendors and send bids via mail or fax now, you can free up clerical staff time by:
 - i. allowing the vendors to register and maintain their vendor information on-line. Vendors are reminded by Onvia DemandStar annually to re-register.
 - ii. allowing vendors to select which bids they get or don't get sent
 - iii. expand your vendor base and increase competition for your agencies tax dollars
 - iv. eliminate or greatly reduce mailing and faxing bids
 - v. gain access to Wisconsin (and many others) sample documents
- b. **WAPP'S** Onvia DemandStar option is an inexpensive way for any agency to transition to the Internet for vendor registration, bid posting and automated bid notifications.

11. LARGER AGENCIES - We are already setup for on-line vendor registration, bid posting and notification. Why should we use DemandStar?

- a. Your agency is welcome to post bids on both Websites. The additional posting requires minimal clerical effort and may net some additional competition for your bids and allows access to the document library.
- b. As more Wisconsin agencies post bids, participation will expand opportunities for cooperative purchasing.

12. Do I need to get approval before signing on with **WAPP'S Onvia DemandStar Web-based bidding service?**

- a. Wisconsin laws require open, fair competition for procurement transactions paid for by public dollars
- b. Each agency is governed by their own laws, policies and procedures
- c. Each **WAPP** member is responsible to verify that this option is allowed and is suitable for their agency

13. Are there benefits for having several agencies in our area sign on at the same time?

- a. If you ever plan to have Web-based bids and vendor registration, you can save time by going live when another agency in your area does so. Multiple agencies can share responsibility for **vendor notification**, registration and **advertising** when they start the process at about **the same time**. This **reduces the work in transitioning the vendors**.
- b. It may be easier to promote this idea to management and local elected officials if several agencies in the area are choosing the same program

- c. Those **WAPP** member agencies who registered “on their own” may receive assistance from Onvia for e-mail vendor notification.

14. IT HELP - What if our IT department does not have time to help with this project?

- a. There is not much assistance needed from your Info Technology department to get started so start talking with your IT folks early, so that they have a “buy-in” to the change.
- b. Browse the Onvia DemandStar Website, and contact Onvia to request a training session.
- c. Keep yourself and your IT staff informed as the early-adopter agencies progress through the transition.

15. NIGP Codes –

- a. **Are we required to use NIGP codes if we use Onvia DemandStar?**
 - i. **YES**, the NIGP code was created specifically for public sector procurement and is a standardized commodity-based system used by over 1,400 public entities (including the State of Wisconsin) including state agencies, cities, counties, universities and school districts, utility districts, and airports.
 - ii. For those agencies not familiar with the NIGP codes, DemandStar has a search capability for use when posting bids.
 - iii. Periscope Holdings, Inc., an NIGP partner and custodian of its NIGP Code software, is offering free informational Webinars about the NIGP Code every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. (CT). The Webinar takes about 30 minutes. Webinar participants receive a temporary ID and password to the NIGP Living Code Website to evaluate the Code firsthand. Call 1-800-757-6064 or e-mail info@nigp.org to register for the next Webinar. Or for more information about the Code, visit www.nigp.org.
- b. **Do we then have to use NIGP codes for our internal financial software or manual systems?** **NO**

16. VENDOR SELECTION – Will we get a larger vendor base? Will Onvia DemandStar post our bids all over the U.S.?

- a. For each solicitation, agencies may either broadcast the bid to ALL registered vendors or agencies set parameters and the broadcast will go to those selected vendors. The parameters may be based on agency approved vendor lists, geographic areas, local preference, MBE, DBE, WBE, etc. Only designated vendors will receive a notification, however other vendors may find the solicitation if they do a search within the Onvia DemandStar system.
- b. It is likely that your vendor base will increase, but our references stated that, for the most part, they mostly receive bids from vendors in their area.

17. VENDOR PREQUALIFICATION:

- a. **Do vendors have to pre-qualify in Onvia DemandStar to obtain our bids?** **NO**, but they do have to register under the **WAPP/Onvia** link to obtain information about solicitations issued by **WAPP** member buyers. Registration can be completed by visiting www.onvia.com/WAPP
- b. What if our agency requires pre-qualification for certain purchases, such as construction?
There are several options to address this:
 - i. Post the solicitation and indicate state the agency qualification process in those documents
 - ii. Post the solicitation and limit the broadcast as per Item 16.a. above
 - iii. Post a Request for Qualifications prior to broadcasting the bid / solicitation

18. SMALL, MINORITY, DISADVANTAGED AND/OR WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES

- a. **Will on-line vendor registration be a problem for small, minority or disadvantaged vendors?**
 - i. The on-line vendor registration may actually be an advantage to large and small companies. Sales support can be very costly for any vendor, but especially for disadvantaged vendors. Web-based vendor registration and bidding may aid development of MBE, DBE, and WBE businesses as they register for bids for multiple agencies on one Website.
 - ii. See the next question for more info.

19. What if a vendor does not have a computer to register and accept bids?

- a. Several options are available for the small number of vendors who are not on-line capable:
 - 1. Your agency may have those vendors register at your office or at the local library to get bids.
 - 2. Your agency may choose to continue sending bids to such vendors via fax, mail or pickup.

3. Onvia may assist these vendors with their registration, and can send solicitation notices via fax.

20. WEBSITE and AGENCY LOGO – Can we put a link to DemandStar on our Website? Can the Website be customized for our agencies?

- a. Yes, each agency will put a link to the software on their Website.
- b. A **WAPP** template is available to be customized with your agency info and logo by your IT staff.
- c. See www.wapp.org/members2.htm for all agency templates.

21. Where should I refer interested vendors?

- a. Interested vendors may visit www.onvia.com/WAPP for registration and service information.

22. FOR MORE INFORMATION - *Where can I get more information about this opportunity offered by WAPP?*

- a. Contact Onvia Agency Services Toll free: 1-800-331-5337 E-mail address: agencyervices@onvia.com
- b. Contact Linda Dupuis, City of Green Bay Purchasing Manager and Chair, **WAPP** Cooperative Purchasing Committee, E-mail address: LindaDu@ci.green-bay.wi.us