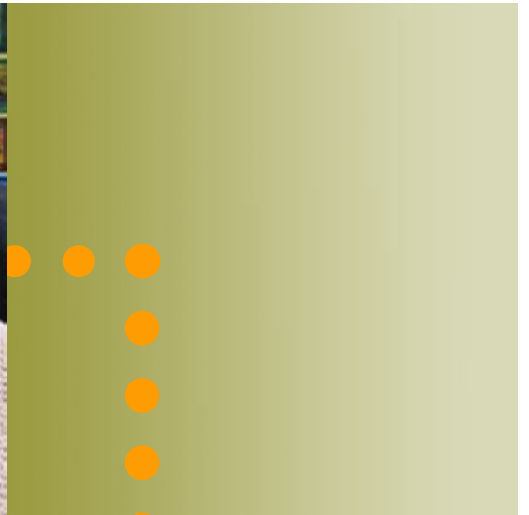


How to do Business with...



a Qualified Rehabilitation Facility

Q: What is a Qualified Rehabilitation Facility “QRF” and what do they do?

A: A Qualified Rehabilitation Facility “QRF” is a non-profit organization that puts Oregonians with disabilities to work. It is a place of business and a training facility; with workshops, equipment, class and meeting rooms, offices and other business necessities. Many QRFs have other business locations as well, such as a downtown office, bakery or mailroom.

The mission of a QRF is to help people with disabilities achieve self-confidence and self-sufficiency by working in the community in which they live and becoming productive citizens. A QRF often has a variety of programs to help people with disabilities achieve maximum economic and personal independence through vocational development. It is “qualified” because its programs are registered and reviewed on a regular basis by the Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS).

Q: What are the reasons to do business with a QRF?

A: As a purchasing agent or buyer for a taxpayer-supported political subdivision, such as a city, county, school district, or an agency of the state of Oregon, there are several reasons to do business with a QRF:

It is the right thing to do. People who work in a QRF business need your help; jobs depend on business orders. There are thousands of Oregonians who are out of work because of a disability. As a public purchasing agent, you can make a difference. Your cooperation and willingness to buy goods and services from QRF businesses puts people with disabilities to work.

It is the smart thing to do. Oregonians with a disability who earn a wage require less taxpayer money. Your participation makes a difference to all Oregon taxpayers.

It puts you in the driver’s seat. A negotiated contract process can allow you to tailor specifications to get exactly the product/service or performance you want. The long-term relationship with a QRF makes contract renewals a breeze. It also reduces the time to establish a contract.

It is the necessary thing to do. In 1977, the Oregon legislature passed the “Products of Individuals with Disabilities” act. This law obliges all state and local governments, school districts, and other tax-supported political bodies in Oregon to purchase goods and services from QRFs when the product or service is listed on the DAS Procurement List

and meets the agency’s requirements.

The details of this act are contained in Chapter 279.835-855 of the Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS 279). This Chapter, “Public Contracts and Purchasing,” spells out to all tax-supported state and local agencies how they are to spend the taxpayers’ money on needed goods and services.

Q: When should you do business with a QRF?

A: Anytime you plan to make a purchase of the types of goods or services listed in the DAS Directory of Qualified Rehabilitation Facilities (Procurement List), you are obliged to procure it from the listed QRF if it meets your specifications and is available when you need to have it.

Q: Who’s in charge of this program?

A: The State Procurement Office (SPO) of the Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS) manages the QRF Program. SPO approves each QRF in Oregon, and manages the list of those goods and services determined suitable for procurement by state and local governments, school districts and other taxpayer-supported agencies. It is the duty of SPO to work cooperatively with the QRF and the agency.

Q: Why doesn’t a QRF have to compete with other businesses for Government Contracts?

A: Taxpayer-supported state and local political subdivisions do business with QRFs on a non-competitive basis. This means a QRF is not required to bid for your purchases in competition with for-profit contractors. Some of the reasons for this special treatment of QRF business enterprises are:

QRFs are non-profit enterprises. They have a mission to provide employment services to community members with disabilities.

QRFs provide special employment support to people with disabilities that cost time and money. Workers with disabilities require accommodations such as special training and job modifications that go far beyond what a commercial business could be required to provide.

The investment in the worker with a disability is high, but in terms of public benefit it is returned many times over



when long-term employment can be provided. Stable employment is critical to the success of these programs.

QRF businesses are self-supporting. Their prices for goods and services have to recover all the costs necessary to train, equip and supervise their workers. They are required by law to pay the prevailing wage in their area for the type and quality of work being done. Plus, the QRF pays for liability and workers' compensation insurance, and all the other overhead expenses any business has.

The purpose of the state "Products of Individuals with Disabilities" law is to encourage and assist people with disabilities to work, and to achieve gainful employment. Employment enhances the ability to be as self-supporting as they can be. They will be less dependent on welfare and costly institutionalization.

Q: How to get started?

A: Once you have established the need to procure a product or service go to the Procurement List, published on SPO's website, to see if the product or service is provided by a QRF. If there is a QRF on the Procurement List, contact the QRF to see if they can meet your specifications and delivery timelines. If they are able to meet your specifications and timelines you may begin negotiating a contract with them.

When looking to procure a product, ask the QRF representative to provide you with samples so you can make sure the products are right for you. Talk with the QRF representative if you need some minor adjustment or changes to suit your particular use of the product. You will find that QRFs have a can-do attitude and are eager to meet your needs.

When looking to procure a service you may find more than one QRF available. Contact as many of those QRFs

as you wish. Inquire which QRF is interested in servicing your needs. Invite those interested QRFs to meet with you and tour your facility. Provide them with your specification draft. You may narrow down your candidates through references, training they provide their employees, and/or by an interview process with the QRF representatives. Price may be used to determine your choice but the final price is determined by DAS/SPO.

If no source is located on the Procurement List for your specific needs, you may move forward with your agency's procurement process.

Q: How to negotiate the deal?

A: If you are purchasing a product, such as plastic bags or blankets, and you are an ORCPP member you may simply make your purchase from the DAS Price Agreement. Nothing could be simpler. If you are purchasing a product or service from a QRF and DAS does not have an established contract for that product or service you may work directly with the QRF to negotiate your own contract. DAS must determine the price of that contract before the contract is initiated.

If the initial price exceeds your budget estimate, let the QRF know and give them a chance to work through the numbers with you a second time. There could be a misunderstanding about your requirements or a mistake somewhere in the figures. It could be that your specifications exceed your budget. make the deal. When the price submitted by the QRF meets the agency's budget the QRF and the Agency may submit that price to DAS on an approved form for final determination.

Sometimes, after both sides have negotiated in good faith, the deal just won't work. Usually, it will be price or specification that will get in the way. As the public purchasing agent, you should know what the limits of the program budget or specification tolerance will be. The QRF can drop the project or perhaps try again later. There have been cases where the agency was able to split up the work into smaller pieces in order to have partial QRF participation.

The point here is to act in good faith towards the QRF. Be open and fair in your dealings with them. QRFs are looking for long-term business partnerships, not advantages.

Q: How to deal with quality assurance and performance problems?

A: One of the biggest advantages of doing business with



a QRF is that it is a relationship, not just a one-time competitive bidding arrangement. QRF businesses are there to provide permanent jobs for Oregonians with disabilities, not to make money by cutting corners. They have a different outlook on your business than the commercial sector. They are in for the long haul. You should expect quality services and products.

As a purchasing agent, you have the capability to make your agency's QRF contract successful. It just takes communication and cooperation. Talk to your QRF counterpart. Make sure your program people are introduced to the QRF representative and that everyone involved in the contract administration process knows what's expected of them. For example, if you have a QRF doing custodial services, plan a joint walk-through on a weekly basis from the beginning of the contract. Spend time talking about performance expectations at the beginning of your relationship and you will each get to know and understand the other.

As your contract relationship settles into a routine, you can cut down on the frequency with which you meet with the QRF contractor. But still plan on regular meetings with the QRF representative to talk about their performance and to make adjustments in the contract as needed. Together, write down any changes you and the QRF agree to make. Amend your contract to reflect the mutually agreed upon changes. This bit of routine "housekeeping" will keep your mutual understanding of what's to be done fresh and current.

If a problem does surface, however, you must tell the QRF management immediately. Don't wait, hoping things will get better. They can't fix the problem if they don't know about it. If you have taken the time to get to know each other at the start of the contract, any issue will be easier to solve.

Again, document any needed changes or complaints and share them with the QRF. Remember the old adage is true; take care of the little things before they get to be big things!

If, after making these efforts, you cannot resolve your problems, remember that you have authority to terminate the contract just as you would with any commercial business. If there seems to be no other way, talk candidly with the QRF about termination. It may be in the best interests of everyone involved.

Q:What is the process for contract renewal with a QRF?

A: Here are a few points to consider when preparing for the renewal process:

Plan your annual renewal process well in advance of the ending date of the contract period. For a large custodial contract, for example, three or four months is not too early to start working with the QRF on the renewal process.

Revise and update your specifications to show any changes made during the contract period. At renewal, the QRF will review its pricing structure, which is to your advantage. Often, they are able to work with the agency to cut prices or costs as they gain experience with you and understand the fine points of the work to be performed.

A quality service or product can potentially be provided to your agency for many years to come, resulting in long-term benefits for Oregonians with disabilities and taxpayers alike.



When was the last time your purchase changed a life?TM