



PLANET BIDS

CENTRAL FLORIDA TOURISM OVERSIGHT DISTRICT FINDS *TRANSPARENCY AND EASE OF USE WITH PLANETBIDS*

HOW PLANETBIDS HELPED



Transparency

All open solicitations and contracts are publicly available without login requirements.



Ease of Use

Simplified workflows for procurement staff and an intuitive vendor registration experience for suppliers.



Local Vendor Network

Centralized access to government agency bids across five counties through the Buy Local Now portal.

OVERVIEW

When the Reedy Creek Improvement District, once managed by the Walt Disney World Co., was restructured into the state-run Central Florida Tourism Oversight District (CFTOD), the new leadership faced an urgent challenge: build a modern, fully transparent public procurement process from the ground up.

For decades, purchasing decisions had been made behind closed doors. Now, with public scrutiny high and new procurement laws in place, Contracting Officer Tiffany Kimball needed to create a system that was not only transparent and publicly accessible but also easy for vendors and staff to use.

"I was tasked with drafting and getting approved a procurement policy approved right away and finding a procurement software system to use," Kimball said. "I had some hard requirements, and one of them was we were told to make sure that everything was 100 percent transparent."

That's where PlanetBids came in.



THE CHALLENGE

For years, Reedy Creek operated as a private purchasing department. Vendors were hand selected, and contracts were awarded behind closed doors based on unknown criteria. There was no formalized public bidding process, no competitive solicitations, and no external oversight. Instead, procurement processes flowed through Disney's internal purchasing team, lacking transparency and competition.

However, under new leadership, the CFTOD had to meet public procurement standards focused on complete transparency and accessibility for local vendors. What had once been an internal, discretionary process now fell under the scrutiny and regulation of public procurement laws, with strict requirements for fair competition, transparency, and accountability.

For the new CFTOD, this was a fundamental transformation that introduced some immediate issues:

Full Transparency

Previous processes were hidden from public view. The new requirement was to ensure full visibility of bids, contracts, and vendor data to the public without barriers – a stark contrast to privately awarded contracts with no public record.

Vendor Accessibility and Inclusion

Many long-time Reedy Creek vendors had never worked with a public entity or navigated a government procurement processes before. The CFTOD had to ensure that this transition didn't shut out long-standing vendors who needed a seamless registration experience, while also creating pathways for new businesses to compete.

Open Bidding

Instead of direct negotiations and select vendor relationships, contracts now had to be awarded through a structured, competitive bidding process that allowed any qualified business to participate.

Ease of Use for Staff

The procurement team, used to the streamlined efficiency of a private purchasing department, now had to work within new regulatory constraints, documentation requirements, and oversight procedures. For a team that also included members with varying levels of tech expertise, the software had to be intuitive and easy to adopt so they could stay efficient while meeting new compliance standards.

For Kimball, the challenge was clear: to implement a procurement system that meets the highest standards of public transparency without creating unnecessary barriers for vendors and staff.



BEFORE, EVERYTHING RAN THROUGH DISNEY. THERE WAS NO PUBLIC BID PORTAL, NO OUTSIDE VISIBILITY. WE NEEDED A SYSTEM WHERE THE PUBLIC COULD SEE EVERYTHING IN REAL TIME.

– Tiffany Kimball, Contracting Officer, CFTOD



THE SOLUTION: PLANETBIDS PROCUREMENT PLATFORM

Transforming procurement at CFTOD meant more than just adopting a digital tool. It required a complete shift in how bids were managed, vendors were engaged, and contracts were awarded.

The district needed a platform that didn't just meet public procurement regulations but actively empowered vendors, increased competition, and simplified internal processes.

After evaluating multiple solutions, Kimball and her team selected PlanetBids, a platform designed to maximize transparency, simplify vendor engagement, and create a seamless, efficient procurement experience.

"We have vendors that have been with us since Disney opened, and almost their entire business was taking care of Disney," she said. "I needed a software that I knew the vendors could easily register in without feeling like it was a huge hassle."

Kimball implemented the PlanetBids System to address the District's procurement lifecycle from start to finish.

VENDOR MANAGEMENT

Expanding access and simplifying registration

- **Challenge:** Before the transition to CFTOD and the adoption of PlanetBids, there was no centralized vendor registry for suppliers to find all available and open solicitations. Instead, vendors had to be in the know or have an existing relationship with Reedy Creek Improvement District to get an opportunity to bid on a project, and small businesses often missed out.
- **Solution:** A new, easily accessible vendor portal features every open bid opportunity with the District, allowing the public to see open solicitations and any qualified vendor to register and submit a bid. Standardized vendor profiles make prequalifying vendors easier and lowers the barrier for local, small business, and veteran-owned organizations to participate, ensuring inclusivity. And automated notifications for bid updates, Q&As, and clarifications improve communication and eliminate incomplete or inaccurate bids.

IMPACT

Nearly all existing vendors, as well as new suppliers, onboarded the new portal quickly and with minimal support.



THE SOLUTION (CONT'D)

BID MANAGEMENT

Creating comprehensive solicitations, releasing them to bid, and managing associated documentation

- **Challenge:** Prior to adopting PlanetBids, formal procurement processes didn't exist for Kimball's office. Now, the CFTOD procurement staff had to create new solicitations from scratch, building in specifications and scope of work to ensure that bidders were provided with the right information to submit an accurate bid.
- **Solution:** PlanetBids allowed the District to import solicitation templates for quick bid creation, with a Bid Spec Library of specifications and scopes used by other client agencies to use as examples for their own bids and RFPs. For smaller requisitions, departments outside of purchasing can even create and release their own quick bids without the cumbersome approval process. Documentation for all bids and contracts is stored in a central repository for easy auditing and reporting, and Kimball can build new reports on the fly as needed by the District's board of supervisors.

IMPACT

Everyone in the CFTOD was able to get up and running quickly, with minimal delay to any outstanding projects waiting to be tendered for bid.

BUSINESS CERTIFICATION & CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

Ensuring transparency and compliance with strict regulations

- **Challenge:** By being required to operate as a public agency, the CFTOD also had new requirements for vendor business certifications, environmental regulations, and insurance qualifications. The District needed a way to easily intake, track, and manage this documentation for public access and board review, as well as to mitigate risk and meet state and federal requirements.
- **Solution:** PlanetBids allows vendors to automatically upload any business or insurance certification documentation directly into the system along with their bid, or after the bid has been awarded. The system notifies the District when a vendor's certification is close to its expiration date so they can reach out for updated documentation and maintain compliance.

IMPACT

The CFTOD can ensure they always have the most up-to-date documentation on hand, keeping the District safe from safety or regulatory issues.



THE SOLUTION (CONT'D)

PROJECT EVALUATION

Awarding the contract to the best bidder

- **Challenge:** With a private purchasing department, the evaluation process was secretive and subjective. But as a public procurement team, the CFTOD had to provide clear and transparent evaluation criteria that ensured that all bidders were judged equitably. Evaluators, as well as the public, had to know what they were judging bids and vendors on to avoid bid protests and ensure fairness.
- **Solution:** PlanetBids allows the District to set up clear criteria for evaluators, whether they are members of the CFTOD staff or independent of the District. Evaluators can make comments and collaborate with each other to explain their thought processes and decisions, and potential vendors can see their evaluation score against other bidders.

IMPACT

The CFTOD has not had a valid bid protest while using PlanetBids, and they can ensure transparency in decision making and budget spending for the public and the District's board of supervisors.

If you're doing what you're supposed to be doing as a public agency, there's no reason to hide," Kimball said. "The public should be able to see what you're doing. It's their money."

RESULTS

RAPID VENDOR ADOPTION

When CFTOD introduced PlanetBids, Kimball expected a flood of vendor support calls—after all, many of them had never worked with a public procurement system before. But instead, something surprising happened.

"I hardly got a phone call at all," Kimball said. "That's huge. Vendor adoption is usually the hardest part of software transitions."

Within weeks, longtime vendors had **seamlessly registered**, allowing them to bid on projects without delays. The system's intuitive interface and **self-guided registration process** removed the usual barriers, making participation **easier than ever**.



THE RESULTS (CONT'D)

A NEW STANDARD FOR PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY

Before PlanetBids, procurement in this district was a **black box**. Bids weren't public, contracts weren't visible, and vendors had no insight into the selection process. Now, for the first time, anyone – from local business owners to journalists – could see exactly where public money was going.

"Before, everything was handled behind closed doors," Kimball said. "With PlanetBids, transparency isn't just a policy. It's built into the system itself."

The shift was more than procedural – it fundamentally changed how the public engaged with CFTOD's procurement process. And even better, the District has saved nearly **\$15 million dollars on 60 awarded or pending bids** since adopting PlanetBids.

EMPOWERING LOCAL VENDORS WITH BUY LOCAL NOW

PlanetBids supports the CFTOD's **Buy Local Now** initiative, which connects local businesses to bid opportunities in **five Central Florida counties**: Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk, and Seminole. Participating agencies represent a combined **\$14.5 billion budget**, giving local vendors unprecedented access to business opportunities.

Kimball highlighted the system's **powerful search capabilities and collaborative features**, which helped bring new agencies into the Buy Local Now network.

"We signed up almost all of the entities in this area, and I believe we're going to get all \$14 billion worth of spend shared in this network," she said.

WHY PLANETBIDS?

PlanetBids end-to-end procurement platform helps procurement professionals in the public, private, education, and non-profit sectors streamline their purchasing operations and improve vendor and supplier relationships for better budget and resource management.

- **Transparency First:** For the first time, all bids and contracts are available to the public without a login, ensuring total visibility and accountability.
- **Vendor-Friendly Registration:** Vendors quickly onboarded with minimal support, reducing administrative burden and improving vendor satisfaction.
- **Ease of Use for Staff:** Even non-tech-savvy team members found the system easy to navigate, accelerating adoption and reducing training time.

ABOUT CENTRAL FLORIDA TOURISM OVERSIGHT DISTRICT

- Founded in 1967 as the Reedy Creek Improvement District
- Covers 25,000 acres in Orange and Osceola counties, serving **68 million tourists** and more than **100,000 employees and residents**
- Supports 24 landowners, including Walt Disney Co. and its affiliates