

# CITY OF SAN DIEGO FINDS EFFICIENCY, AUTOMATION WITH PLANETBIDS

## HOW PLANETBIDS HELPED



### Efficiency

Shifting from manual, paper-based processes helped release and manage solicitations more efficiently.



### Vendor Communication

An online vendor portal helps improve bid responses and preventing protests.



### Transparency

Clear, weighted scoring streamlines evaluation, offers insight into decisions, and highlights responsible use of public funds.

## OVERVIEW

The City of San Diego, the eighth-largest city in the United States and the second-largest in California, has been using PlanetBids' end-to-end digital procurement system for more than a decade to create and release Requests for Proposal, Invitations to Bid, Requests for Supplier Qualifications, and Requests for Quotation.

They've seen a myriad of changes and updates to the system, including improvements to bid creation and the evaluation process, and when the time came to renew the City's contract or put out solicitations for a new software provider, they renewed using a cooperative agreement through the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority to continue using the PlanetBids system.

The Goods and Services Division of the City's Purchasing and Contracting Department utilizes PlanetBids for all formal solicitations, as well as many informal solicitations, running any contracts worth more than \$150,000 through the system. This totaled 64 RFPs, 54 ITBs, 7 RFQs, and 1 RFSQ in 2024.

## THE CHALLENGE

At one point, the Goods and Services Division was only utilizing Bid Management and Vendor Management in PlanetBids to create and release solicitations via the City's vendor portal and accept bids and proposals digitally.

The manual bid evaluation process the City was using to award contracts slowed down the entire process and often confused both the evaluators and the procurement team.

"The evaluation committee members would submit their scoring, and if they needed to make a change, it wasn't easy for us to go back in and unlock it so that they could rescore," said Vanessa Delgado, City of San Diego Procurement Program Manager. "The weighted scoring was so difficult to explain to evaluators that we had to create a spreadsheet so they could convert their raw numbers into the weighted score. We were always having to convert their numbers for them."

## THE SOLUTION

Once the City of San Diego began utilizing the Project Evaluation module of the PlanetBids system to provide scoring metrics to evaluators, allow them to collaboratively score and make comments, and submit their evaluations directly into the system, awarding contracts became much more streamlined and efficient for the Goods and Services team.



**WE'VE ACTUALLY BEEN  
GETTING MORE AND  
MORE VENDORS TO  
REGISTER BECAUSE  
THEY CAN SEE WHAT  
OPPORTUNITIES THE  
CITY HAS ONLINE**

– Vanessa Delgado, City of San Diego  
Procurement Program Manager

"Now that we have a rubric for weighted scoring, it's improved significantly," Delgado said. "The evaluators know that whatever raw score they're putting in will be weighted correctly without having to do math or convert it by hand."

In addition to ease of use for the purchasing team and evaluators, PlanetBids has proven easy to navigate for the City's vendors and suppliers.

Delgado said businesses still occasionally reach out to ask how to register as a vendor with the City, and all she has to do is direct them to the City's vendor portal.

"When we do have vendors reach out to us to see what opportunities we have, we always refer them to PlanetBids," she said. "We've actually been getting more and more vendors to register because they can see what opportunities the city has online versus reaching out to different departments or the purchasing team."

PlanetBids never charges agencies, their vendors and suppliers, or the public to see open solicitations, bid on projects, or view awarded contracts.

## THE RESULTS: 100% AUTOMATION

The City of San Diego's procurement process is currently almost completely digital, with new RFPs and bid templates being created to require 100 percent automation and online operations.

Other California agencies have reached out to the City of San Diego to ask what procurement software they are using, and Delgado has consistently referred them to PlanetBids. One highlight Delgado has consistently cited? PlanetBids' world-class customer support.

"We've been pleased, and the customer service has always been 100 percent," Delgado said. They've been absolute responsive. Any time we have an issue or a question, I will reach out directly to Ria Diaz (Vice President of Customer Service) and she responds very, very quickly.

In addition to PlanetBids' customer support, which averages a 15-minute response time for agency and vendor support tickets, Delgado said the system is functional and intuitive, with continuous improvements making work easier every day.



**IT'S FUNCTIONAL AND ISN'T OVERLY COMPLICATED AT ALL.  
IT REALLY IS JUST AS EASY AS IT SEEMS.**

– Vanessa Delgado, City of San Diego Procurement Program Manager

## BID MANAGEMENT

### *Simplifying Bid Creation and Solicitation*

- **Challenge:** Manual bid processes like spreadsheets and word documents created bottlenecks, slowed down the bid lifecycle and caused unnecessary headaches for busy procurement teams.
- **Solution:** PlanetBids allows the City to build unlimited bid and RFP templates and select specifications and scope of work from a library of other agency specifications for quick, comprehensive solicitation creation.

## VENDOR MANAGEMENT

### *Encouraging Vendor Participation with Ease of Use*

- **Challenge:** The City fielded constant phone calls about available contracts and open solicitations and had to accept paper bid responses by hand, with in-person evaluations and awards.
- **Solution:** PlanetBids' vendor portal allows the public to see any open solicitations or past contract awards and allows potential suppliers to register with the City online to begin bidding right away. The City receives more competitive bid responses, and the public gets transparency into awards and public spending.

## PROJECT EVALUATION

### *Streamlining Bid Scoring and Awarding*

- **Challenge:** The City's bid evaluators had to manually convert raw scores to weighted formulas, and there was little to no collaboration and clarity in scoring metrics.
- **Solution:** PlanetBids provides clear and consistent metrics for evaluators to score against and automatically performs advanced calculations to adjust raw scores to weighted formulations. Evaluators can collaborate and leave notes to explain their reasoning or adjust scoring until the evaluation is closed.

## RESULTS AND IMPACT

PlanetBids has helped the City of San Diego move to complete automation, helping the City more effectively manage over \$1 Billion in contracts annually, while making the bidding process easier for vendors and suppliers.

### Faster Bid Creation

Moving from manual and paper-based processes to digital bid creation and comprehensive templates helped the City release more solicitations and manage them more efficiently.

### Improved Vendor Communication

An online vendor portal allows the City to communicate directly with prospective suppliers and ensure that important information is never missed, improving bid responses and eliminating bid protests.

### More Transparent Evaluation

Clear and collaborative scoring metrics and weighted scoring streamline evaluation and provide insight into evaluators' decision making, while showcasing responsible use of public funds.

### 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.

- Built and supported by procurement experts, for procurement professionals.
- Created to be feature-rich and powerful, while also easy to use.
- Designed to support sustainability and community empowerment.

### ABOUT THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO PURCHASING & CONTRACTING DEPARTMENT, GOODS & SERVICES DIVISION

The Goods & Services Division of the City of San Diego's Purchasing & Contracting Department is responsible for shepherding City staff, contractors, suppliers, and vendors through the City's procurement and contracting processes related to goods and services. The Goods & Services Division has awarded \$400,000 in contracts this year, in addition to \$482,888,198 in A&E and Consulting contracts and \$536,518,080 in Construction contracts.

The City of San Diego is a top tourist destination and home to more than 1.37 million people, making it the eighth-largest city in the United States and the second-largest in California. More than 100 languages are spoken by San Diego residents, and the city is a major hub for military activity as it is home to Naval Base San Diego, Point Loma, and Coronado; Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Base Camp Pendleton, and Air Station Miramar; and U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Diego.