OHLONE COLLEGE'S PROCUREMENT EVOLUTION AIDED BY PLANETBIDS' EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

HOW PLANETBIDS HELPED

Vendor Communication
Vendors access and update bid forms online, cutting calls to the College's procurement office.

Budget
Bid advertising costs dropped by moving all bids online to a vendor portal.

Transparency
Putting purchasing online lets the community view opportunities, awards, and public spending.

Tracking & Reporting
Documents and certifications are centralized with alerts for expirations and missing info.

OVERVIEW

Ohlone College, an ethnically diverse community college, utilized a manual, paper-based procurement process that included several steps and created multiple bottlenecks.

When the College, which serves more than 15,000 students across two campuses in the San Francisco Bay Area, wanted to incorporate more local and diverse suppliers into its vendor pool, they knew they needed a massive process upgrade.

THE CHALLENGE

The Ohlone College procurement team managed all bids and vendors manually, releasing new solicitations in the local newspaper and requiring paper bid submissions. When a vendor wanted to be added to the College's qualified vendors list, they would have to call the College, and the procurement team would send out a vendor package by mail.

The vendor would have to complete and mail back the package forms, which would then be entered manually by the procurement team into the vendor database. All future updates to vendor profiles were also done manually, meaning a lack of real-time data and potentially outdated information.

When the purchasing team was tasked with including more local and diverse vendors, including minority owned, women-owned, and disabled veteran-owned enterprises, they realized manual procurement was no longer an option.

THE SOLUTION

Ohlone College turned to PlanetBids to digitize their procurement processes, streamline bid creation and management, and move vendor submissions and management online.

THEY QUICKLY RESPOND TO REQUESTS, AND CLOSURE ON OUTSTANDING ITEMS IS PROVIDED WITH EXCELLENT FEEDBACK REGARDING THE RESOLUTION. IT HAS MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE.

– Alex Lebedeff, Director of Purchasing.

The College implemented PlanetBids to optimize Bid Management, Vendor Management, Business Certification, and Insurance Certificate Management resulting in increased outreach to local businesses. Plus, with the available vendor database of vendors being utilized by other PlanetBids client agencies, the College's network of local vendors expanded by 300 percent.

System capabilities were the main focus for Ohlone College at the start of their procurement software selection journey. But as they analyzed different software providers and their systems, customer service became the key differentiator. Knowing that ease of transition would be important for their vendor community, the College understood the need for a partner that would provide outstanding support and fast response times.

PlanetBids' end-to-end procurement platform, designed and supported by procurement professionals, met that need.

PlanetBids' support staff is U.S.-based and available Monday through Friday, 5 AM – 5 PM PST (8 AM – 8 PM EST). The customer support team averages a 15-minute response time for agencies and vendor support tickets.

BID MANAGEMENT

Simplifying Bid Creation, Release, and Award

- **Challenge:** Ohlone College was struggling with manual processes that slowed down the procurement lifecycle and made bid solicitations difficult and expensive. Bids were difficult to track across teams, departments, and the two campuses, and paper bid responses were received by hand and reviewed in public bid openings.

- **Solution:** PlanetBids allowed the College to create more comprehensive bids faster with an easy-to-use, automated platform. Bid responses are now collected and reviewed digitally, improving transparency and fairness in the evaluation process.

VENDOR MANAGEMENT

Maintaining Successful, Compliant Relationships with Vendors

- **Challenge:** Manual vendor management meant a small supplier pool and outdated information, thanks to a mail-in vendor registration process and manual data entry. This caused bottlenecks, slowed down important projects, and hampered the College's diversity initiatives.

- **Solution:** PlanetBids gives vendors the ability to register for Ohlone College in a custom vendor portal and update their information as needed, automating the vendor management process for Ohlone. The College can also take advantage of a wide vendor pool from other suppliers in the PlanetBids member agency network, expanding their reach and giving them more diverse, competitive bids.

BUSINESS CERTIFICATION/PREQUALIFICATION MANAGEMENT

Building a More Compliant Procurement Process

- **Challenge:** Manual vendor management limited Ohlone College's vendor pool, stifling diversity initiatives and often leading to expired or missing certifications and pre-qualifications.

- **Solution:** PlanetBids allows the College to manage small business, minority, and diversity programs as well as contractor pre-qualifications automatically. Vendors can directly upload their certifications, and the College gets notifications of expiring or missing documentation. Registered vendors also have access to view certified and pre-qualified vendors for potential subcontracting opportunities.

INSURANCE CERTIFICATE MANAGEMENT

Minimizing Risk while Ensuring Compliance

- **Challenge:** Manual data entry put Ohlone College at risk of non-compliance, fines, and even emergencies. Because the procurement team had to upload insurance certificates by hand or store them in filing cabinets, missing or expired certifications were a constant issue.

- **Solution:** Insurance Certificate Management in PlanetBids enables College administrators to automate, maintain, and retrieve up-to-date and relevant information regarding vendor or contractor insurance certificates and allows the College and its vendors to conduct all insurance-related tasks virtually within the software.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

Since implementing PlanetBids, Ohlone College's vendor network experienced 3x growth, with more efficient management of certifications and pre-qualifications.

Improved Vendor Communication

Vendors can access all bid forms online and update their data directly, reducing the number of phone calls to the College's procurement office.

More Transparent Processes

Moving the College's purchasing operations online allows the entire community to view opportunities, see awards, and understand public spending.

More Cost Savings

Bid advertising costs drastically decreased as all bids were moved online to a vendor portal.

Better Tracking and Reporting

Documents and certifications are centralized for easy access and auditing, with automatic notifications for upcoming expirations or missing documentation.

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.

ABOUT OHLONE COLLEGE

Ohlone College is an ethnically diverse community college within the California Community College System, with two campuses in the southern San Francisco Bay area. Named for the native population living in the area, the college enrolls more than 15,000 students a year in Newark and Fremont and online and offers 192 associate degrees and certificates. Ranked 17th of 922 community colleges in America, Ohlone employs 650 faculty and support personnel. Its Center for Deaf Studies, established in 1972, serves approximately 200 deaf and hard-of-hearing students a year.

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PLANET BIDS