



OUTREACH SERVICES

A Guide To Doing Business With **COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS**

COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS supports initiatives that are inclusive of the diversity within our communities while enhancing student success. Therefore, we actively seek **Local Economically Disadvantaged Enterprises (LEDEs)** to participate in all contracting and procurement opportunities.



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COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS is proud to serve as a leader in our community and we are committed to being good neighbors. We believe that holding ourselves to the highest standards possible is an obligation that extends beyond our children and into the entire community. As we grow, we want the community to grow with us. One way that we can accomplish this is by partnering with small local businesses.



BOARD OF EDUCATION (left to right): Dr. Tina D. Pierce, Ramona R. Reyes, Sarah Ingles, Michael Cole (President), Brandon Simmons, Jennifer Adair (Vice President), and Christina Vera

Our Community Inclusion Policy is an example of our commitment to the local small business community. Developing mutually beneficial relationships with local suppliers helps us ensure that local economically disadvantaged enterprise vendors build economic vitality in our community.

We have a 20% LEDE participation goal on an annual basis with our LEDE business community to reflect the thousands of children we serve every year, as well as the community where Columbus City Schools has a presence. Our Community Inclusion Program is comprehensive in its approach and makes good business sense.

Columbus City Schools' commitment to diversity and inclusion allows us to cast the widest net when seeking suppliers and professionals to support and complement the great work of our students.

We invite you to use this guide as a reference when seeking opportunities with our district.

Sincerely,

Columbus Board of Education
COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS

We Appreciate Your Interest In Partnering With **COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS**

Columbus City Schools, established in 1845, is the state of Ohio's largest school district, serving the needs of more than 46,000 students in 113 schools.

Our teachers, administration, and staff are committed to providing a world-class model of public education. The vision is to prepare all students to reach their full potential.

The groundwork being laid to equip students with the tools needed to succeed cannot be done alone. Harnessing the Power of One, a collective of students, teachers, staff, families, and partners are working together to ensure each student is highly educated, prepared for leadership and service, and empowered for success in a global community

Mission Statement:

Each student is highly educated,
prepared for leadership and service, and empowered
for success as a citizen in a global community.



District At-A-Glance...

- **COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS** is the largest school district in Ohio.
- The district covers an area of more than 220 square miles.
- The district operates more than 110 different school buildings.
- There are more than 100 different spoken languages in the district with the most frequent being Arabic, English, French Creole, Nepali, Somali, and Spanish.
- Student enrollment is over 46,000.



The Procurement Process

Prior to being awarded a contract with Columbus City Schools, vendors must register by going to the district's [Vendor Page](#) and clicking on [Vendor Registration](#). For step by step instructions, please reference our [Vendor Registration Instructions](#). After completing vendor registration, you will receive an email notification providing your vendor number, solicitation instructions and invoicing information.

Columbus City Schools utilizes many different procurement methods, depending on the expected cost and needs, including catalog/list pricing, informal solicitations and formal solicitations (request for proposal, invitation to bid, request for qualifications, etc.). The district uses Public Purchase for formal solicitations and bids to ensure transparency and accuracy of the procurement process. For detailed instructions on registering for Public Purchase, please view [Public Purchase Registration](#). Instructions are also included in this guide. Once registered, vendors can begin responding to solicitations.

The **Purchase Order** is Columbus City Schools reply to your bid award and serves as the "authorization" to begin work. If the information outlined in the Purchase Order does not match what you submitted in your bid:

- Contact the Purchasing Department at purchasing@columbus.k12.oh.us to review options for moving forward.
- Do not begin working without a copy of the Purchase Order. This is Columbus City Schools' acknowledgement, contract and commitment for the work.

For more information regarding the procurement process, vendor registration, Public Purchase, or access to bids and solicitations, please visit the Columbus City Schools [Vendor Page](#).



Upon completion of work (or at previously agreed upon intervals) you must submit an invoice to be paid. Be sure to reference the Purchase Order number on all invoices. Unless another arrangement has been made between you and the department, all invoices should be submitted directly to Accounts Payable.



COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS

Attn: Accounts Payable
270 E. State St.
Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: 614.365.6473
Fax: 614.365.5628

LEDE Registration

The Office of Outreach Services is committed to ensuring that Columbus City Schools has access to the highest-quality supplies, equipment, and services needed to achieve exceptional results across the District. We encourage businesses to review the various procurement and contracting functions outlined in the following pages to identify how your company’s products or services align with the District’s needs.

A vital first step in doing business with Columbus City Schools (CCS) is to register and complete the LEDE Vendor Application if you qualify as a local, economically disadvantaged enterprise. The application requires detailed information about the business, including ownership, management, services provided, and location. To qualify, businesses must be located within the boundaries of the Columbus City Schools District or have at least 50% of their employees residing within the district. Additionally, the majority owners of the business must have a personal net worth that does not exceed \$750,000, as established under the District’s Community Inclusion Policy 6400.

Applicants are required to submit supporting documentation such as proof of business registration, tax identification information, financial statements, organizational documents, and any applicable certifications (such as EDGE, DBE, or SBA 8(a)). This documentation helps verify that the business meets both the local and economic eligibility criteria.

Once the completed application and documents are received, the Office of Outreach Services will schedule an on-site visit to confirm the business’s operational status, management structure, and alignment with program requirements. This visit is to verify that the company is actively conducting business and that the ownership and control structure reflect the information provided in the application.

After the site visit, a recommendation is submitted for consideration of certification. The committee evaluates the application package and determines whether the business meets all requirements for LEDE certification. If approved, the company receives an official LEDE Certificate issued by the Purchasing Department, which includes the business name and vendor number.

Certified vendors are then listed in the CCS LEDE Vendor Directory, a public resource updated monthly and available on the district’s website. This directory serves as a key tool for identifying qualified, ready, and capable LEDE-certified firms available for contracting, subcontracting, and joint venture opportunities.



To maintain certification, businesses must promptly notify the Office of Outreach Services of any changes in ownership, control, or location. Through this structured process, Columbus City Schools promotes inclusion, supports economic growth within the community, and ensures that local, disadvantaged businesses are well-positioned to compete and succeed in District procurement opportunities.

Identify Which Departments Buy What You Sell

Columbus City Schools is seeking businesses that can meet our contracting and procurement needs of quality, service, and value. Below is a list of areas that you might consider as potential opportunities. While many of these areas have primary contracts and a few perform much of the work in-house, we do contract with vendors to meet our service and overflow needs.

WHAT DO YOU SELL?	CORRESPONDING DEPARTMENT
Architect & Engineering Services	Capital Improvements, 889 E. 17 th Ave.
Building & Grounds	Buildings & Grounds Dept., 889 E. 17 th Ave.
Custodial Services	Custodial Services Dept., 889 E. 17 th Ave.
Information Technology	MIS Department, 1091 King Ave.
Transportation Services	Transportation Dept., 1560 Moler Rd.
Media Relations & Communications	Media Relations & Communications, 270 E. State St.
Food Services	Food Services Production Center, 450 E. Fulton St.
Supplies	Purchasing, 889 E. 17 th Ave.
Office Supplies	Purchasing, 889 E. 17 th Ave.
Printing	Purchasing, 889 E. 17 th Ave.
Audio Visual	Purchasing, 889 E. 17 th Ave.
Safety & Security	889 E. 17 th Ave.
Athletics	3201 Allegheny Ave.
Academic Achievement Support	270 E State St.

The Office of Outreach Services:

How We Can Help You

The **Office of Outreach Services** at Columbus City Schools plays a vital role in connecting local and small businesses with contracting and procurement opportunities within the district. The office is dedicated to fostering inclusion, equity, and community engagement through meaningful vendor participation.

Here are several ways the Office of Outreach Services can assist vendors:

- **Certification Assistance** - The office guides businesses through the **Local Economically Disadvantaged Enterprise (LEDE)** certification process, helping eligible companies understand requirements, complete applications, and prepare supporting documentation.
- **Vendor Registration Support** - Outreach staff can help vendors navigate the Vendor Self-Service (VSS) registration system, ensuring businesses are properly set up to receive bid notifications and participate in upcoming opportunities.
- **Access to Contracting Opportunities** - The office provides information about current and upcoming bids, including Requests for Proposals (RFPs), Invitations to Bid (ITBs), and Requests for Qualifications (RFQs). Vendors are encouraged to visit <http://www.ccssoh.us/Vendors.aspx> regularly for updates.
- **Networking Events** – Through outreach events such as vendor meet-and-greets and outreach forums, the office helps connect LEDE-certified and prospective vendors with District departments, project managers, and prime contractors to explore collaboration opportunities.
- **Education and Capacity Building** - Outreach Services offers workshops and resources that help businesses strengthen their capabilities, improve proposal responses, and better understand public procurement processes.
- **Vendor Advocacy and Relationship Building** - The office serves as an advocate for local and diverse businesses, ensuring they have fair access to opportunities and that their voices are represented in District contracting decisions.
- **Data Management and Vendor Updates** - The office maintains the LEDE Vendor Directory and actively verifies vendor information to ensure certified companies remain visible and accessible for District projects.
- **Workforce and Community Participation Guidance** - For construction and facilities projects, the office helps contractors understand and meet Workforce Participation goals, encouraging the hiring of Columbus City Schools District residents.

The Office of Outreach Services is your partner in doing business with Columbus City Schools, offering support from certification to contract engagement. Whether you are a new vendor seeking certification or an experienced supplier looking to expand your opportunities, the Outreach Services team is here to guide, connect, and support your success.

For assistance, contact the **Office of Outreach Services** at **614-365-5603** or visit <http://www.ccssoh.us/Vendors.aspx>.

Public Purchase Instructions

Columbus City Schools manages bidding and solicitation activities through Public Purchase, an online e-procurement system designed to make the bidding process simple, transparent, and accessible. The following steps will guide vendors through registration and participation:

1. Visit the Columbus City Schools' Public Purchase website at:
<https://www.publicpurchase.com/gems/columbus,oh/buyer/public/home>
2. Create a free account with Public Purchase. Click the "Register" button under *"Register to become a Vendor."* Follow the on-screen instructions to complete your account setup.
3. After registration, use the "Select Region" and "Select Agency" menus located in the upper-right section of the page to choose:
 - Region: Ohio
 - Agency: Columbus City SchoolsThis will allow you to view all open bids from the District.
4. The District no longer accepts paper bid submissions. Bids must be submitted electronically through the Public Purchase system.
5. During registration, identify the products and services your company provides. This ensures you receive automatic bid notifications for opportunities that match your business offerings.
6. Please allow approximately one hour for Public Purchase to process your initial registration before attempting to access bid opportunities.
7. If you experience issues with the Public Purchase website, click the "Chat" button located in the upper-left corner of the page for direct assistance from Public Purchase support staff.
(District personnel are unable to resolve technical issues related to the software.)
8. All questions regarding a specific bid must be submitted through the Public Purchase platform before the stated deadline. Questions sent directly to District staff will not be addressed.
9. Award results and related updates are posted directly on the Public Purchase website. Vendors are responsible for checking the site regularly for updates.
10. Upon receiving a Notice of Award, vendors must also register in the District's MUNIS Vendor Self-Service (VSS) system and provide proof of insurance (if required) within two (2) business days. Failure to complete this step may result in being declared unresponsive. Access the MUNIS Vendor Self-Service system here: <https://columbusvendors.munisselfservice.com/>

Need Assistance?

For questions regarding certification, vendor registration, or general contracting opportunities, contact the Office of Outreach Services at 614-365-5603.

Good Faith Guidelines

The following list includes good faith efforts that vendors may make in obtaining LEDE participation. It is not intended to be mandatory, exclusive, or exhaustive. Other factors or types of effort may be relevant.

In determining whether a vendor has made a good faith effort, Columbus City Schools will examine not only the various kinds of efforts but also the quantity and intensity of those efforts. The Columbus City Schools may require vendors to provide supporting documentation as to their good faith effort.

To award a contract to a vendor that has failed to meet LEDE participation goals, Columbus City Schools must be convinced that the vendor's efforts were those that, given all relevant circumstances, a vendor aggressively seeking to meet the goals would have made.

Attempts that are merely pro forma are not considered good faith efforts. Efforts to obtain LEDE participation are considered inadequate, even if they are sincerely motivated, if given all relevant circumstances, they could not reasonably be expected to produce a level of LEDE participation sufficient to meet the goals.

A vendor that fails to meet these requirements will be considered non-responsive. In evaluating a vendor's good faith efforts, Columbus City Schools may consider whether the vendor:

1. Attended any pre-bid meetings that were scheduled by Columbus City Schools;
2. Advertised in general circulation, trade association, and minority-focused media concerning subcontracting opportunities;
3. Provided written notice to a reasonable number of specific LEDEs that their interest in the contract is being solicited, in sufficient time to allow the LEDEs to participate effectively;
4. Followed initial solicitations of interest by contracting LEDEs to determine with certainty whether the LEDEs were interested;
5. Partitioned the work to increase the likelihood of meeting the LEDE goals, including, where appropriate, breaking the contracts into economically feasible units to facilitate LEDE participation;
6. Provided interested LEDEs with adequate information about the plans, specifications, and requirements of the contract;
7. Negotiated in good faith with interested LEDEs based on a thorough investigation of their capabilities, not rejecting LEDEs as unqualified without sound reasons;
8. Made efforts to assist interested LEDES in obtaining bonding, lines of credit, or insurance as required by Columbus City Schools;
9. Effectively used the services of available minority community organizations; minority vendors groups; local, state and federal minority business assistance offices; and other organizations that help in the recruitment and placement of LEDEs.

Helpful Tips for Doing Business with Columbus City Schools

Columbus City Schools values partnerships with businesses that are professional, prepared, and committed to contributing to the success of the district and its students. The following tips will help your company stand out and build lasting relationships.

1. Communicate Your Value. Be clear about what makes your company unique. Identify your competitive advantages—such as specialized expertise, superior service, or proven results—and be ready to articulate how these qualities bring value to the district. Clearly communicating your added value helps distinguish your business from others.

2. Be Flexible and Responsive. Small businesses often have the advantage of being agile. Demonstrate your ability to adapt and customize solutions to meet project requirements and timelines. Responsiveness and reliability are key traits that build trust with District departments and contracting officers.

3. Get Certified. Certification is an essential step in doing business with Columbus City Schools. Local, small, and economically disadvantaged businesses are strongly encouraged to apply for LEDE (Local Economically Disadvantaged Enterprise) certification through the district. Additional certifications—such as the State of Ohio's EDGE Program, the SBA 8(a) Program, and the DBE program under the Unified Certification Program—can further strengthen your company's competitive position. Visit <http://www.ccsch.us/Vendors.aspx> to learn more about the LEDE Program.

4. Partner Strategically. If your business is not yet ready to serve as a prime contractor, consider partnering with larger firms on major contracts. Subcontracting, teaming agreements, and joint ventures provide valuable experience and visibility. Columbus City Schools encourages collaboration between prime contractors and certified small or disadvantaged firms. The Outreach Services Department can provide guidance and introductions to potential partners.

5. Innovate and Offer Solutions. Bring creative, solution-oriented ideas to the table. Departments value vendors who can think strategically and propose innovative approaches to improve efficiency, enhance services, or solve problems effectively.

6. Demonstrate Capacity and Readiness. Before bidding, ensure your business has the experience, staff, and resources to meet the project's requirements. The district values vendors who can demonstrate both capacity and flexibility to manage project scope and deliver consistent quality.

7. Be Thoroughly Prepared. Your first impression matters. Present professional, error-free marketing materials, proposals, and presentations. Keep your company website up to date, showcasing your capabilities, certifications, and past performance. Preparation reflects credibility and commitment.

8. Research and Understand the District. Familiarize yourself with Columbus City Schools' structure, priorities, and procurement processes. The more you understand the district's goals and challenges, the better you can tailor your solutions. Demonstrating knowledge of the district's environment shows initiative and strengthens your position as a qualified and trusted vendor.

If you have questions or need guidance on getting started, contact Outreach Services at 614-365-5603 or visit <http://www.ccsch.us/Vendors.aspx> for more information on current opportunities and upcoming outreach events.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I become a LEDE Vendor with Columbus City Schools?

You can obtain a LEDE Application on the Columbus City Schools' Website or request one by contacting the Outreach Services Department at 614-365-365-5603. You must also go online to www.ccsch.org, click on Vendors at the top of the page, click on Vendor Registration and follow the instructions to register as a vendor with Columbus City Schools. Please also provide a W-9 and Certificate of General Aggregate Liability Insurance. You will be given a vendor number by the district.

What is a Local Economically Disadvantaged Enterprise (LEDE)?

An enterprise that is local and economically disadvantaged as outlined in Community Inclusion Policy 6400.

What other types of certifications may be considered for obtaining LEDE status?

If your business is located in Franklin County, and you currently possess an EDGE Certification issued by the State of Ohio Department of Development (DOD). US SSBA 9(a) may be given consideration if your business is located in Franklin County.

What if my company is located outside of Franklin County?

If your company is based outside of Franklin County but more than 50% of your employees reside within the school district boundaries, you must submit proof of payroll records to validate the locality of your employees.

What if I have not been through the certification process with a certifying agency?

You will be asked to complete the LEDE Vendor Application and supply all supporting documentation. Once received, you will be contacted by the district's third-party certifier who will perform an on-site visit at your business. After the visit, a recommendation will be made by an external Certification Committee.

Will I be notified once my LEDE Vendor Application is approved?

If you meet the criteria for LEDE Certification, you will receive a Certificate, issued by Columbus City Schools. Your name and vendor number will appear on the certificate. If there is any change in ownership, control, or address, you must notify the Outreach Services Office immediately.

Does the District have a goal for contracting with LEDE Vendors?

The district has an overall goal of 20% for all contracting and procurement dollars spent on an annual basis.

How do I participate in contracting and procurement opportunities?

Visit ccsoh.us for opportunities. A "Vendor" link has been added to assist vendors in locating opportunities. Columbus City Schools utilizes many different procurement methods, depending on the expected cost, including catalog/list pricing, informal solicitations and formal solicitations (request for proposal, invitation to bid, request for qualifications, etc.). The district uses Public Purchase for formal solicitations and bids to ensure transparency and accuracy of the procurement process.

How do I participate in new construction?

The Facilities Master Plan program maintains an Outreach goal of 20%. In addition, the program includes a Workforce Participation goal established by the Board of Education, which aims for at least 25% of all on-site labor hours on construction projects to be performed by School District residents. Under the Workforce Participation Program, contractors are required to make good faith efforts to employ District residents for on-site labor and to actively support the achievement of the program's participation goals.

As a small company, how can I participate in larger procurement opportunities?

LEDE companies are strongly encouraged to attend all pre-bid conferences related to projects within their area of expertise or interest. These meetings often present valuable opportunities to explore subcontracting, joint ventures, and strategic partnerships. Sign-in sheets from pre-bid meetings may be requested as part of participation documentation.