

Frequently Asked Questions

Houston ISD Purchasing Services Department

Q: How do I find the Board Approved vendor list?

A: The Board Approved vendor list is located on the Houston ISD Purchasing Services Department web page under Board Approved Vendor List: Link: <http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/103941>

Q: If a vendor has a vendor number, are they considered Board Approved?

A: No, a vendor can be assigned a vendor number if they have previously received a payment from HISD or if they have previously been Board Approved. Board Approval should be verified for every vendor as well as the product or service you wish to acquire from the vendor. Vendors are approved once they participate in a solicitation process, submit a proposal and they are selected and awarded by the HISD evaluation committee and approved by the Board of Trustees during a monthly board meeting.

Q: How do I get a Houston ISD vendor number?

A: To become an approved vendor with the district a vendor must first respond to a formal request for solicitation and then be awarded the bid. Having a vendor number does not make a vendor an approved vendor with the district. Vendor numbers are an internal tracking system that allows the district to track payment information. We recommend that the vendor register on the Ion Wave Technologies bidding site: <https://houstonisd.ionwave.net/Login.aspx> to receive courtesy notifications when an RFP that fits their area of expertise is released for public response.

Q: How do I find information about an RFP that has been awarded?

A: Schools and departments should access our internal department website to locate useful resources and tools listed below through our Purchasing Services Department SharePoint Site that may be found by clicking on the link below. Link: <https://houstonisd.sharepoint.com/sites/DEPTS/PDS>

Department Directory – To ensure schools and department are connected with appropriate support our department directory contains a list of all main purchasing categories for the district that are linked to specific category specialist that assist with specific questions regarding purchase order for specific categories.

Board Approved Vendor List – The Purchasing Department maintains a listing of bids and proposals that have been prepared following proper procurement

procedures. A search can be made by typing in the vendor name, keyword search, vendor number, and NIGP codes.

Purchasing Documents & Forms – A list of forms and documents related to purchasing services operation including but not limited to vendor creation / maintenance forms, and project request forms.

Training – Resource training manual relevant to Shopping Carts, ProCard, and Travel.

Vendor Performance Survey – Schools and Departments are encouraged to submit vendor performance survey to enable the Purchasing Services Department provide feedback to HISD vendor community.

E-Contracts Portal – School and Department can access SharePoint E-Contracts portal directly from our Department SharePoint site.

NIGP Crosswalk - A list of approved NIGP codes can be referenced to determine appropriate budget code that be utilized for purchases.

Q: How do I get information about upcoming Houston School District Bids?

A: To get information about upcoming Houston School District bids, please go to the Solicitation of Bids Website: <https://www.houstonisd.org/Page/179249> which will provide step by step instructions on registering for bid notification emails.

Q: How do I find out which vendor is approved to supply a specific commodity?

A: In order to find vendors that have been approved to supply a specific commodity, navigate to the Approved Vendor List Search tool by clicking the below link: <http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/154804>

Using this tool, approved vendors can be found by searching the following criteria:

- Vendor Name
- Vendor #
- NIGP Code Description (Identifies commodity groups)
- Project Number
- Project Keyword

Q: I would like to purchase a product from a specific vendor but do not see them listed as an approved vendor. How do I go about getting this vendor added?

A: Products and services that are currently under contract need to be purchased from one of the vendors that were awarded the bid. In order for a vendor to be added as an approved vendor for a specific commodity, they must respond to the solicitation when it is advertised and be awarded the bid. Upcoming Bid Opportunities can be found here: <https://www.houstonisd.org/Page/179249>

Q: Does Houston ISD accept Sole Source Affidavits?

A: To be a bona fide exemption to the Texas Education Code District purchasing law requirements, there must be no other like items available for purchase that would serve the same purpose or function, and only one price for the product because of exclusive distribution or marketing rights. The fact that a particular item is covered by a patent or copyright is but one factor in determining if the purchase falls under the sole source exemption to the purchase requirements. (§44.031(j)(1), Texas Education Code)

Q: I keep hearing about EDGAR. What is that and how does it affect my campus?

A: EDGAR is the acronym for the Education Department General Administrative Regulations, which is a series of rules and regulations which apply to organizations that receive federal funding. The purpose of EDGAR is to reduce fraud, waste, and abuse by ensuring organizations like HISD are using the proper procedures when approving and using vendors for various services across the district.

Q: I have always used a specific vendor, but now I am being told I cannot use them. Why?

A: Part of EDGAR requirements include ensuring a vendor or business goes through the proper vetting process and RFP procedure to do business with HISD or specific campuses. All approved vendors are in OneSource. If you have a vendor with whom you want to do business, you can encourage them to go through the RFP process when new contracts are reviewed and approved by the Board of Education.

Q: But my vendor payment is less than \$50,000, which means it does not require district-level approval, right?

A: Not exactly. The \$50,000 threshold commonly heard under the Texas Education Code Chapter 44, Section 44.031 applies to the ***amount spent district wide on services or good in a specific category***. With about 215,000 students and 283 campuses – not to mention a \$1.8 billion budget – it is extremely rare that your purchase or contract would not fall into an existing category which does not exceed \$50,000 across the entire district.

Q: What happens if my campus or department continues to use an existing vendor which was not approved by Purchasing Services?

A: Federal regulations must be followed, and if auditors determine HISD is not following the correct rules, federal funding could be withheld. Currently, HISD receives about \$250 million from the federal government.

Q: Why were these rules put into place?

A: In 2014, the federal government issued new regulations regarding the spending of federally administered grants and funds. These new federal regulations are known as the Education Department General Administrative Regulations, also called EDGAR (2 CFR 200). These new Federal regulations govern all federal grant expenditures awarded by the Federal Government on or after December 26, 2014. In 2015, HISD was granted a grace period as the district began to implement the proper procedures to ensure compliance. That grace period expires in July 2017. These new regulations stipulate that if \$1 of federal money is spent on a contract it triggers the new EDGAR requirements. Next year the district expects federal auditors will begin an extensive review of our procurement procedures to see if the district is indeed following these new regulations. HISD must comply with the most restrictive rule, whichever rule is the most restrictive depends on the purchase or contract amount. This means that since our statutes have a baseline of \$50,000, we must stay in compliance with our state regulations at that amount. To ensure HISD is in full compliance Procurement Services has already incorporated these new requirements into our current solicitation documents.

Q: Which funding sources does EDGAR affect?

- A:
- Title I
 - Title II
 - Title III: IDEA – Part B (Special Education)
 - 21st Century Community Learning Centers
 - Child Nutrition
 - HUD and Community Development Block Grants
 - E-Rate (pending further guidance from USAC)
 - Any other USDE Grant (direct or administered through TEA)

Q: Which HISD services are affected?

- A:
- Professional Development/Professional Learning
 - Student Enrichment and After School Programs
 - Special Education Services
 - Technology and Equipment related to Title I and Title II Programs
 - Food Services
 - Certain Technology and Telecommunications Services under E-Rate

Q: Are there ever any exceptions to EDGAR rules?

A: Yes. There are exceptions for example in the case of an emergency which is the result of an unforeseen catastrophe for which the delay posed by competitive procurement would substantially prevent or substantially impair the conduct of classes or other school activities OR if the product or service is only available through a sole source and nothing else is available which would serve the same purpose. It should be noted, however, that EDGAR regulators rarely accept the “sole source” exemption. Contact the Procurement department if you have additional questions about EDGAR exemptions.

Q: So how do I purchase certain goods or services for my department or campus?

A: If your purchase is less than \$1,000, use the department or campus ProCard to make the purchase from an approved vendor, you can find that list at <http://www.houstonisd.org/Page/154804> If it's more than \$1,000, you must create and submit a Shopping Cart through OneSource.