

CALTRANS PROCUREMENT FAIRS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS SUMMER 2017

1. What is a procurement fair?

A procurement fair is an event that provides a forum for small businesses to meet face-to-face with Caltrans buyers and contract managers from various functional areas. Attendees will learn about the types of goods and services Caltrans procures, upcoming procurement opportunities, upcoming statewide contract opportunities, and requirements and procedures for doing business with Caltrans. In some cases, other public agencies and/or private entities may participate, and there could be supplemental activities offered, such as workshops.

Although billed as a “procurement” event, no purchases and/or contracts are executed during a procurement fair.

2. Where are procurement fairs held?

Procurement fairs are held throughout the state in each Caltrans district.

3. Who organizes procurement fairs?

Each of Caltrans’ 12 district offices has a designated District Small Business Liaison, or DSBL, who is often tasked with organizing procurement fairs. For Caltrans headquarters, the Office of Business and Economic Opportunity (OBE0) takes the lead.

4. When, and how often, are procurement fairs held?

Procurement fairs are typically held early in the state fiscal year—late summer or early fall—after budget allocations have been finalized, or in early spring, as the end of the state fiscal year approaches. The state fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.

Procurement fairs are typically held once a year. Scheduling of procurement fairs may vary by district, due to availability of resources and/or needs for supplies and/or services.

5. How can I find out about upcoming procurement fairs?

Visit Caltrans’ “CT Event Calendar” at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/bep/calendar2.htm>, or contact any of Caltrans’ DSBLs for more information. A full DSBL contact list is available at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/obeo/docs/dsbl-contact-list.doc>.

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6. Who is eligible to attend a procurement fair?

Procurement fairs are open to the public. All businesses, regardless of certification status, are invited to attend.

Caltrans has overall annual participation goals for dollars awarded to certified Small Business (SB), Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise (DVBE), and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) companies. We encourage you to attend if your company is certified in one or more of these areas.

7. Would my company benefit from attending a procurement fair?

As a business owner, you must determine whether a procurement fair is right for your company. Attending a procurement fair does not guarantee that Caltrans will buy from you, or that your company will be successful in competing for a contract, but it does create opportunities for you to connect with Caltrans buyers and contract managers and learn about their needs. Introducing yourself to Caltrans staff affords you the chance to explain who you are, what you do, and how your company stands apart from other businesses in the marketplace. Plus, it's free to attend.

Procurement fairs are primarily geared toward businesses who are engaged in the supply of materials; however, all business types are invited to attend. When evaluating the potential benefits of attending a procurement fair, consider the relevancy of your company's products and/or services to the work for which Caltrans is primarily responsible, which includes designing, building, and maintaining the state's highway system and related administrative tasks.

8. Is there a cost to attend a procurement fair?

No.

9. Is there a limit on the number of people I can bring to a procurement fair?

Unless otherwise specified, there is no limit on the number of company representatives who can attend a procurement fair. In certain situations, such as when a venue's capacity is likely to be exceeded, limitations may be imposed by the event organizer.

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10. Am I required to register in advance to attend a procurement fair?

This is largely at the discretion of the event organizer, but in most cases, advance registration is not required. Attendees are permitted on a walk-in basis and are free to come and go throughout the event. If advance registration is required, details will be included in official announcements and promotional materials distributed by Caltrans.

11. What should I expect when I show up to a procurement fair?

Attendees will be expected to stop at a check-in table and provide basic information on a sign-in sheet including, but not limited to, business name, contact name, e-mail address, and phone number. Caltrans may use this information to distribute a post-event evaluation survey, supplemental event materials (if applicable), and/or related announcements.

Room layout may vary, but the most popular layout involves seating Caltrans buyers at tables with signage to denote the functional areas they represent and/or the types of products they are looking to purchase. Attendees are free to navigate the room at their leisure and interact with Caltrans staff.

Attendees should be prepared to answer questions about product specifications, performance, cost, and the like.

12. What should I bring to a procurement fair?

At a procurement fair, your goal is to network with as many Caltrans buyers and contract managers as possible. Therefore, it is important to bring with you information and materials that best represent who you are, the products and/or services you provide, and the value you can add to Caltrans. Sample materials include: business cards, line cards, statements of qualification, capability statements, and informational brochures. SB/DVBE/DBE-owned companies should prominently display their current certification information on all materials.

13. Is Caltrans prepared to make purchases on the spot?

No. Administrative constraints found in the State Administrative Manual and State Contracting Manual preclude Caltrans from executing purchases on the spot. However, because many Caltrans representatives in attendance are looking to identify vendors for specific items, information exchanged during procurement fairs may lead to successful transactions within days or weeks of the event.

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14. What types of goods and/or services is Caltrans looking for?

Caltrans purchases a variety of non-information technology (IT) and IT-related goods and/or services. For a complete list, visit <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dpac/selltoaltrans.html>. Sample items include:

- Office supplies
- Hand tools
- Fabricated metal
- Heavy equipment
- Laboratory testing equipment
- Safety clothing (e.g., jackets, electrical clothing, rubber boots, hard hats, gloves)
- First aid supplies

15. Where can I find information about how to sell goods and/or services to Caltrans?

Caltrans' Division of Procurement and Contracts publishes an informational brochure that provides an overview of how to do business with Caltrans. View a copy at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dpac/doc/sellinggoodsandservices.pdf>.

Caltrans recommends creating an account with Cal eProcure, California's online marketplace portal, which provides access to state government bidding and contracting resources, including the California State Contracts Register (CSCR). Caltrans uses the CSCR to post solicitations, Request for Proposals (RFPs), Invitation for Bids (IFBs), etc. Cal eProcure also provides a venue for suppliers to participate in online networking. Suppliers can place vendor advertisements seeking work and communicate information about the type(s) of services offered, free of charge. Visit <https://caleprocure.ca.gov/pages/index.aspx> for more information.

In addition, each Caltrans district office has a DSBL who functions as an advocate for small businesses, including certified SB, DVBE, and DBE firms. Contact DSBLs to learn about procurement and contracting opportunities in a particular district and connect with local buyers and/or contract managers. A list of DSBLs and their contact information can be found at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/obeo/index.html>.