

## What is Prequalification? How will it work?

**Definition:** Prequalification is a new statewide system designed to facilitate prompt contracting. As of May 15, 2013, when the Prequalification Questionnaire is fully functional and online, interested vendors will be asked to submit commonly requested documents, and answer frequently asked questions, *once*. Not-for-profits will be able submit their responses online, and, once reviewed and approved, all information will be stored in a virtual, secured vault.

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, NY State will open its new Grants Gateway, allowing not-for-profits to register with the system, fill out a basic profile, and store organizational documents. State agencies can have ready access to the vault, thereby eliminating redundant submissions of such information. The Grants Gateway website will announce the release of the Prequalification Questionnaire and will invite not-for-profits to begin the prequalification process. Not-for-profits will only have to prequalify once every three years, with responsibility to keep their information current throughout the three year period.

**Advantage:** Almost all of the documents and information requested in this prequalification system are the same documents asked for on a contract by contract basis under the former system. Instead of gathering all of this information every time a not-for-profit applies for an RFP, the not-for-profit will gather it once, place it in the vault, and move on to apply for any published RFP. The prequalification process also positions the not-for-profit as a high performing competitor, demonstrating its competence in the areas of Compliance, Capacity, and Integrity.

- Compliance will be affirmed by asking each interested vendor to upload into the vault core organizational documents such as: certificate of incorporation, bylaws, an IRS 501(c) determination letter, a Form 990, audited financial statement or financial review, the CHAR 410 or CHAR 500, and current list of board members and officers.
- Capacity will be evidenced by documents such as resumes of the senior leadership team, specifically the CEO, COO, CFO, director of development, president or other named officers. Further evidence of capacity will be shown by the submission of such things as a copy of the organization chart, a list of the policies and procedures for the organization, and a description of the organization's staff performance review and development plan, among other things.
- Integrity will be evidenced throughout all the required documents and responses. In addition there will be questions from the NYS Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire requesting information about such things as problems with past or existing government

contracts, investigations, indictments, or individuals convicted of business-related conduct constituting a crime.

**Review Process:** Each State agency has designated a Prequalification Specialist whose responsibility will be to review and evaluate each vendor prequalification application. Evaluation will be performed according to a standardized set of guidelines that will assist agency staff in evaluating the application questions. If questions or documents are missing, for example, Specialists will contact the nonprofit and work closely with them to make every effort to round out the file.

**Access to Vaulted Information:** All State agencies will have access to the information stored by the not-for-profit in its vault, and the not-for-profit will be able to access the information for submission to any State agency or other funding source. In addition, the not-for-profit may access its vault at any point for purposes of updating or amending its documents and adding other information.

**External Authorities:** Until further notice, not-for-profits must still complete the NYS Vendor Responsibility Form for each contract.

**State Agency Authority:** Prequalification is not meant to replace or detract from the agency responsibility determination process during an RFP review. Instead, the hope is that the prequalification system will allow not-for-profits to get a head start on addressing concerns before they apply to State agencies for a contract, and that it will streamline the proposal process for not-for-profits by minimizing redundant submissions.