

**Governor's Office of Employee Relations/Statewide Labor-Management Committees  
Policy and Guidelines for Implementing the New York State Procurement Lobbying Law  
Sections 139-j and 139-k of the New York State Finance Law**

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*Revised 2/2015*

## **I. Overview**

Chapter 1 of the Laws of 2005 (the "Law"), which amended the Legislative Law (the "Lobbying Act") and the State Finance Law, was enacted on August 23, 2005 by Governor George E. Pataki. The Law regulates attempts to influence state and local Governmental Entity procurement contracts in order to increase transparency and accountability in New York State's procurement process. The Law was subsequently modified in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009 and 2010.

Generally, the Law:

- Makes the Lobbying Act applicable to attempts to influence procurements and contracts once the procurement process has been commenced by a State agency, unified court system, State legislature, public authority, certain industrial development agencies and local benefit corporations;
- Requires the above-mentioned governmental entities to record all contacts made by lobbyists and contractors about a governmental procurement so that the public knows who is contacting governmental entities about procurements;
- Requires governmental entities to designate the persons who may be contacted relative to the governmental procurement by that entity in a restricted period;
- Authorizes the New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE) (f/n/a the NYS Commission on Public Integrity) to impose fines and penalties against persons/organizations engaging in impermissible contacts about a governmental procurement and provides for the debarment of repeat violators;
- Directs the Office of General Services to disclose and maintain a list of non-responsible bidders pursuant to the Law and those who have been debarred and publish such list on its website;
- Requires the timely disclosure of accurate and complete information from offerers with respect to determinations of non-responsibility and debarment;
- Expands the definition of lobbying to include attempts to influence gubernatorial or local Executive Orders, Tribal-State Agreements, and procurement contracts;
- Modifies the governance of JCOPE to provide that opinions of JCOPE shall be binding only on the person to whom such opinion is rendered;
- Increases the monetary threshold which triggers a lobbyist's obligations under the Lobbying Act from \$2,000 to \$5,000; and
- Establishes the Advisory Council on Procurement Lobbying.

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Primarily, the Law regulates two related aspects of procurements: (i) activities by the business and lobbying community seeking procurement contracts (through amendments to the Legislative Law) and (ii) activities involving governmental entities establishing procurement contracts (through amendments to the State Finance Law).

## **II. Applicability of the Policy and Guidelines (hereinafter "Policy")**

The Governor's Office of Employee Relations, in addition to its own procurement activities, provides administrative and contracting services for the Statewide Joint Labor-Management Committees. This policy applies to all of the above entities (referred to in the policy collectively as "the agency").

In general, this policy applies to every procurement involving an estimated annualized expenditure in excess of \$15,000 for:

- Commodity;
- Service;
- Technology;
- Public work;
- Construction;
- Revenue contract;
- The purchase, sale or lease of real property; or
- The acquisition or granting of other interest in real property.

Procurements under \$15,000 are not covered by changes to the Law or this policy.

Contacts between employees of the agency and an Offerer are restricted at the point in time when the agency issues its first written document soliciting a response from Offerers which is intended to result in a procurement contract (see State Finance Law § 139-j (1) (f)). This is referred to as the "Restricted Period" as used in this policy. Contacts between Offerers and the agency prior to the Restricted Period of procurement are acceptable. Therefore, communications between Offerers and the agency during the preparation of specifications, bid documents, RFPs, IFBs, are not governed by State Finance Law Sections 139-j and 139-k. Communications at this stage, however, are governed by the provisions set forth in State Finance Law Sections 163 and 163-a and other applicable law, including registration and reporting requirements of the Lobbying Act.

Offerers and agency personnel may communicate prior to the Restricted Period in the form of a Request for Information (RFI) by the agency and the response thereto by an Offerer. RFIs are generally used as a means to collect information upon which to base a decision by an agency to proceed with procurement. RFIs are not a tool employed to award a contract.

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The Law and this policy apply to sole source and single source contracts, in addition to competitive procurements. Amendments authorized under the terms of a contract as it was finally awarded or approved by the Comptroller are not subject to the Restricted Period. Supplements to a contract incorporating other amendments, renewals, extensions or any other material change in a contract resulting in a financial benefit to the Offerer are subject to the Restricted Period.

### **III. Permissible Contacts During the Restricted Period**

The "Restricted Period" begins with the earliest written notice, advertisement or solicitation of a request for proposal, invitation for bids, request for services, or solicitation of proposals, or any other method for soliciting a response from Offerers with regard to a procurement opportunity or contract. This period ends with the final procurement decision or contract award and, if applicable, approval by the State Comptroller. However, the negotiation of a contract by an Offerer who has been tentatively awarded a contract is permitted and would need to be recorded as a Contact in the procurement record.

The following represent instances where communication with someone other than the designated Contact person(s) for a procurement may be necessary:

- Submission of a written bid, proposal or response to a solicitation intending to result in a procurement contract;
- Submission of written questions by a method set forth in the solicitation when all written questions and responses are to be provided to all Offerers who have expressed an interest in the solicitation;
- Participation in a conference, demonstration or other means for exchange of information in a setting open to all potential bidders provided for in the solicitation;
- Complaints by an Offerer to office of general counsel of the procuring agency where the designated person for the procurement contract of the agency fails to respond in a timely manner, provided that such written complaints become part of the procurement record;
- Negotiations with the agency after a tentative award;
- Debriefings about a procurement contract award;
- Protests, appeals or other review proceedings to the agency conducting the Governmental Procurement seeking a final administrative determination or in a subsequent judicial proceeding;
- Complaints of alleged improper conduct in a Governmental Procurement to the attorney general, inspector general, district attorney or court of competent jurisdiction;

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- Protests, appeals or complaints to the State Comptroller during the process of contract approval provided that the State Comptroller makes a record of such communications and any responses thereto to keep in the procurement record;
- Communications between Offerers and the agency that solely address a responsibility determination of the Offerer being made by the agency;
- Communications relating to a Governmental Procurement made by certain preferred source providers except for communications which attempt to influence the issuance or terms of the specifications that serve as the basis for bid documents, requests for proposals, invitations for bids, or solicitations of proposals, or any other method for soliciting a response from Offerers intending to result in a procurement contract with the agency; and
- Communications from the agency exercising an oversight role in a Governmental Procurement with Offerers regarding the status of the review, oversight or approval of that Governmental Procurement.

Impermissible contact with the agency occurs when the Offerer contacts a person in the agency who is not the designated contact person for the procurement in an attempt to influence a procurement. The obligations under the Law and this policy are activated when an Offerer or anyone working on behalf of the Offerer has any oral, written, or electronic communication with the agency that a reasonable person would believe is intended to influence a procurement being made by the agency.

#### **IV. Agency Requirements**

This policy has certain requirements that apply to the agency, while other requirements apply to Offerers. The agency will collect certain information about a person or organization contacting us about a procurement in an attempt to influence such procurement during the Restricted Period. In addition, the agency will obtain information from Offerers about any findings by any Governmental Entity of non-responsibility made within the previous four years and if the finding of non-responsibility was due to (1) engaging in impermissible contacts with a Governmental Entity or (2) the intentional provision of false or incomplete information to a Governmental Entity.

This information will be solicited in the initial bid documents on forms developed for this purpose. If any employee of our agency is contacted, that employee must record the contact, obtaining the following specific information for each contact:

- Name of Person and Organization
- Address
- Telephone Number
- Place of Principal Employment
- Occupation

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- Record whether the person/organization making the contact was the Offerer or was retained employed or designated by, or on behalf of, the Offerer to appear before or contact the agency regarding the procurement.

These records of contact will be included in the procurement record for the procurement contract using the agency's "Record of Contact" form, and must be forwarded to the Contract Manager in the agency's Administration Unit.

It is the policy of the agency to make a determination of responsibility before awarding a procurement contract to an Offerer. In addition to responsibility factors such as financial and organizational capacity, legal authority, integrity, and past performance, this policy requires us to take into consideration any violation of the permissible contact requirements of State Finance Law Section 139-j and the disclosure requirements of State Finance Law Section 139-k. A determination of non-responsibility will be made if it is found that the Offerer knowingly and willfully made an impermissible contact or failed to timely disclose accurate and complete information or otherwise cooperate in providing the information required by State Finance Law Section 139-k.

This agency is precluded from awarding a procurement contract to an Offerer that has been determined to be non-responsible because of a knowing and willful violation of the prohibitions of State Finance Law Section 139-j against impermissible contacts during the Restricted Period, unless the agency finds that an award is necessary to protect public property or public health or safety, and that the Offerer is the only source capable of supplying the required Article of Procurement within the necessary timeframe. An Article of Procurement is defined as a commodity, service, technology, public work, construction, revenue contract, purchase, sale or lease of real property or an acquisition or granting of other interest in real property, that is the subject of a Governmental Procurement.

Furthermore, if an Offerer has a second knowing and willful violation within four years of a previous determination of non-responsibility, the Offerer can be debarred for four years.

Communications received by the agency from legislative staff or members of the State Legislature when those persons are acting in their official capacity are not considered "Contacts" during the Restricted Period and thus do not have to be recorded pursuant to the State Finance Law. Also, communications that a reasonable person would infer are not intended to influence a procurement by the agency do not have to be recorded.

For purposes of this policy, the agency will include a record of contacts about a particular procurement and determination of non-responsibility (if any) in the procurement file where it will remain as a part of the procurement record. The procurement file will be retained for that period of time already designated under the

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agency's Records Retention Policy, currently six (6) years after the expiration of the related contract, or final payment, whichever is later.

## **V. Offerers Requirements and Responsibilities**

Offerers have certain requirements under the State Finance Law and under this policy if they, or their designated representative, choose to respond to a Request for Proposals or attempt to influence a procurement. Under the Law and this policy, an Offerer or his/her representative is generally prohibited from contacting anyone other than the designated contact persons at this agency with regard to a procurement during the Restricted Period. Offerers are also required to disclose whether there has been a finding of non-responsibility with regard to their compliance under the law within the past four years. Furthermore, an Offerer must affirm that they understand and agree to comply with this policy relating to permissible contacts during a procurement and certify that all information provided to the agency is complete, true and accurate.

If an Offerer is found to have engaged in impermissible contacts with this agency, the Offerer will be denied a contract under this policy. However, this denial does not preclude the agency from awarding such Offerer another procurement contract if this non-responsibility determination is the first such determination against the Offerer in four years.

## **VI. Violations of This Policy**

Alleged violations of this policy will be reviewed by the agency's Ethics Officer. The Ethics Officer shall immediately investigate the allegation and if sufficient cause exists to believe that the allegation is true, the Ethics Officer shall give the Offerer reasonable notice that the investigation is ongoing and an opportunity to be heard. The Offerer's response to the alleged violation will become a part of the investigative or review record and will be given due consideration by the agency during the review or investigation.

## **VII. Questions About This Policy**

Questions about this policy should be directed to the DFA Contract Manager in GOER's Administration Unit at 518-473-3467.