

Electronic Bid Responses Using eMMA



The goal of this course is to provide guidance and instruction on responding to solicitations with electronic bids using the E Maryland Marketplace Advantage (eMMA) system. Solicitations that are posted in eMMA will now be able to have the response submitted through the eMMA system electronically. Not all will utilize electronic responses in eMMA. Some will require the response to be sent through email or in some cases, will required that printed copies are delivered, as well. <u>Each</u> solicitation is different and should be read *thoroughly*.

Please be aware that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), especially the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) and Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), also use <u>BidExpress</u> for <u>some</u> bid letting information. All solicitations are posted in eMMA, but additional information and responses MAY be found in BidExpress. Please navigate to that website, https://www.bidx.com/maryland/main for information on those bid lettings. Vendors are advised to check solicitations in eMMA and BidExpress for all information on MDOT solicitations and lettings.

Below are listed the sections of this .pdf version of the online training module.

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Image of a laptop computer, tablet, and smart phone.

3 Keys to a Successful Response

In eMMA, a Request For Proposal (RFP) and an Invitation For Bid (IFB) are invitations to your organization to enter your "hat in the ring" to win potential business from the State of Maryland and other organizations such as Universities, Community Colleges, Counties, and Cities in Maryland.



In an effort to support our vital vendors, we have put together 3 Keys to a Successful Response and listed them below. This is not everything, but merely some central things that are very important to your success.

1. Vet the Solicitation

Just because you received or found an RFP or IFB, it doesn't mean you absolutely have to respond. As soon as you receive the solicitation, read the entire document line by line. Then, before you begin writing your response, ask yourself two key questions:

- * Would this generate a good Return On Investment (ROI) for my organization?
- * Does the scope of services firmly fall in our territory?

It might seem like you have plenty of time to complete your response, but there's no time for procrastination. Many times, creating a response can take much longer to complete than you originally think, so it's best to start the process early. Plan to submit your response at least 2 days PRIOR to the due date of the solicitation. Remember, stuff happens and due dates are never negotiable.

The deadline is the deadline, and that's that.

3. Follow Every Requirement

The solicitation will ask for very specific information, formatted a specific way (or not), and will state what kind of information is wanted and where to place it. A great response will provide exactly what was asked, concisely, and on time. Do not assume the procurement officer will "know what your organization does" or "know what you mean" or "know your history of great work", etc. Do not use jargon or acronyms.



Solicitation Types

eMMA supports solicitation information of many types used by the State and other related organizations in Maryland. Below are the primary types used currently.

For more information on procurement types, statutory requirements and regulations, please refer to the Code of Maryland Administrative Regulations (COMAR) 21. You can read and search this online at http://www.dsd.state.md.us/COMAR/ComarHome.html at no charge.



Public Notice – This is a notice of an invitation for bids for which the bid amount is reasonably expected to exceed \$50,000 and is published in eMMA. The publication shall be at least 20 days before the bid submission date. The notice is generally used when the solicitation will not be conducted through eMMA, such as solicitations issued by Maryland universities, colleges, counties, and cities as well as other agencies not utilizing eMMA.



Request for Information (RFI) - This is used primarily to determine the level of interest by prospective respondents or to identify industry standards, best practices, potential performance measures, or delivery structures.

An RFI is not a source selection method and cannot be used to procure goods or services.



Invitation For Bids – This is a procurement based on a competitive sealed bidding process. It is used when a contract will be awarded on the most favorable bid price or the most favorably evaluated bid price. It will list a detailed specification of the goods or services to be procured.

IFB's can have multiple steps in which each bidder submits an UNPRICED technical offer, sample, or both (depending on what is requested) which is evaluated by the procurement officer. The technical review is pass/fail based on the contents of the technical offer.

All technical offers deemed acceptable will then have their price submissions publicly opened by the procurement officer at a designated time and place. The bidder with the lowest responsive bid is recommended for award.



Request for Proposals – This competitive sealed proposals procurement method is used where a contract is awarded based on the best value. Best value is determined where the the proposal is determined to be the most advantageous considering the price and any other evaluation factors listed in the Request for Proposals. These proposals are independently evaluated by a committee that advises the procurement officer in determining the most advantageous offer.



Master Contracts - This procurement method provides for the prequalification of bidders and offerors for the services, supplies, or commodities needed. A secondary competition solicitation will be used for awards.

There are three types of secondary competition for all master contractors.

- 1. Task Order Request for Proposal (TORFP)
- 2. Purchase Order Request for Proposal (PORFP)
- 3. Request for Resumes (RFR)

For detailed information on TORFP, PORFP, or RFR, please see the State of Maryland Procurement Manual, Section 3.4.5. It can be found at the Office of State Procurement Website, https://procurement.maryland.gov/maryland-procurement-manual-1-introduction-and-general-overview/ and also linked on the left side navigation menu at https://procurement.maryland.gov.

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Sole Source Procurement – This method is not permissible unless the required service/equipment/product is available from only a single source. If this method is used, the Notice of Award is published in eMMA not more than 30 days after the execution and approval of the contract. All sole source procurements greater than \$50,000 are published in eMMA.

Searching for Solicitations

Searching for open solicitations can be done <u>before</u> logging into eMMA or while logged into eMMA, although the most thorough search is able to be done in eMMA.

Below are directions for searching using both methods.

Searching for Solicitations - Public

Click the Public Solicitations link on the right side of the page for the search dialogue box.

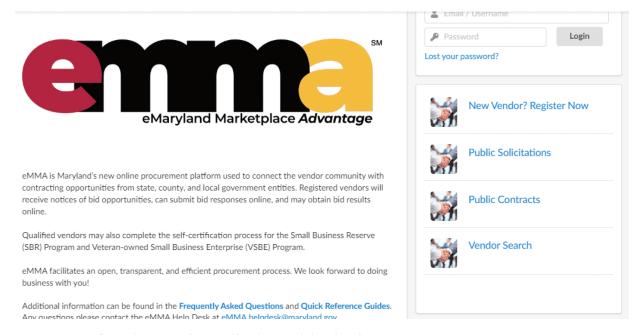


Image of eMMA login screen showing Public Solicitations link on the right.

- Type in information in the Keywords field to begin your search. You can also use the Category search to look up your UNSPSC commodity codes. *The Keywords search is usually the quickest.* Only change the Status field if you wish to look at closed solicitations. The default is to see open solicitations. Click the Search button.
- Results from the search are displayed below the search fields. To view a little more information about the solicitation, click on the solicitation name which is also a link to additional information.
- The title, status, due and/or close date, main category, solicitation type and issuing agency are all listed in the search results for each solicitation. An example screen with that information visible for the first two solicitations found when the keyword "bridge" was searched is shown below.
- You can search multiple times by typing in new search criteria in the keywords or adding commodity codes.
- The search results here can't be exported or printed. For a more in depth search as well as options to save solicitations, etc., see the directions listed the screen shot example to search while logged into eMMA.

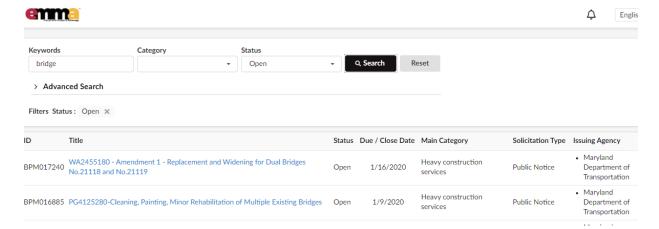
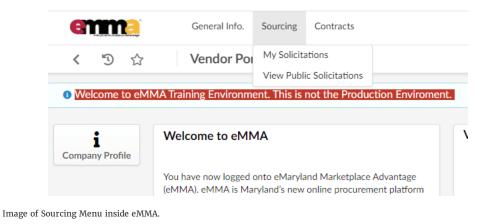


Image showing the title, status, due and/or close date, main category, solicitation type and issuing agency are all listed in the search results for each solicitation.

Searching for Solicitations - Logged into eMMA

To begin a search or continue searching after logging into eMMA, click the Sourcing Menu at the top of the screen.



Sourcing

The Sourcing menu is where you will be able to search for solicitations as well as view solicitations that you have saved and are working to submit a response. All open solicitations are listed in the View Public Solicitations screen and will be until you generate a search, which filters the list of solicitations to your criteria.

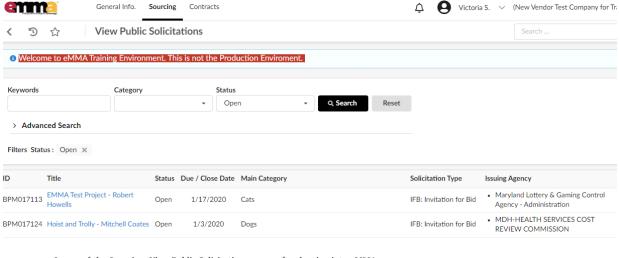


Image of the Sourcing, View Public Solicitations menu after logging into eMMA.

To search the list, type in your Keyword search or other search criteria and click Search.

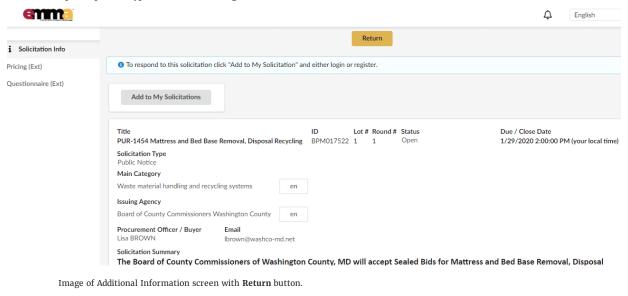
If you wish to filter for other information, click **Advanced Search** and enter other criteria you may wish to use to narrow your search and the click **Search**.

The results will be displayed below the search field from either the regular or the Advanced Search.

Viewing Solicitation Data

In the list of solicitations, you can get additional information on the solicitation by clicking the Title of the solicitation. (It is also blue and underlined to help indicate that it is a link to additional information.)

When you click the title of the solicitation, the screen will change to show additional information about that solicitation. The level of details listed here depend upon the type of solicitation being conducted.



Navigating back to solicitation list

To go back to your list of solicitations, click the ${\bf Return}$ button at the top of the page.



"Each of the titles of the data types displayed about the solicitations (ID, Title, Status, Due/Close Date, Main Category, Solicitation Type and Issuing Agency) can also be used to sort the results. For example, if you click on Due/Close Date the solicitations will be sorted to show by their Due/Close Date. If you click Due/Close Date again, the solicitations will be listed in the reverse date order."

- Advanced Tip-

Adding to My Solicitations

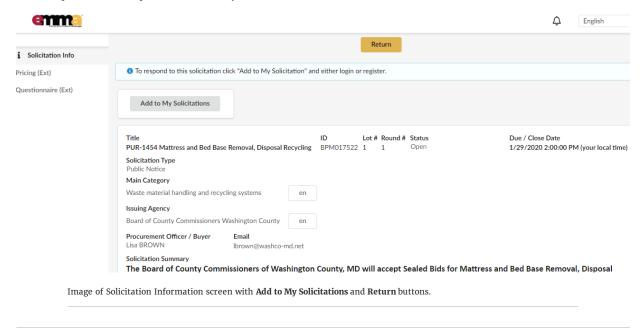
Viewing Solicitations

When you have the list of solicitations showing from your search, you can see additional information on the solicitation by clicking on the **title of the solicitation**. (The title is also shown in a blue font and underlined to help indicate that it is a link to additional information.)

When you click the title of the solicitation, the screen will change to show additional information about that solicitation. The level of details listed here depend upon the type of solicitation being conducted.

If you believe you may want to review this solicitation further to respond, click the **Add to My Solicitations** button. If you do not want to consider responding, click the **Return** button at the top to go back to your list of solicitations.

You can repeat this for multiple solicitations at any time.



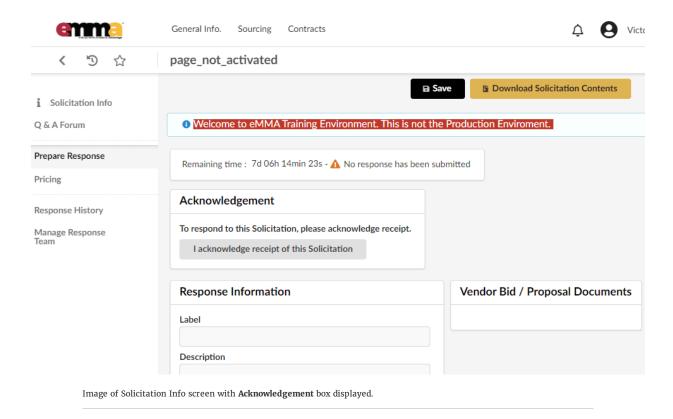


"If you have not logged into eMMA prior to this search, you will be prompted to login before the soliciation can be added to your My Solicitations list."

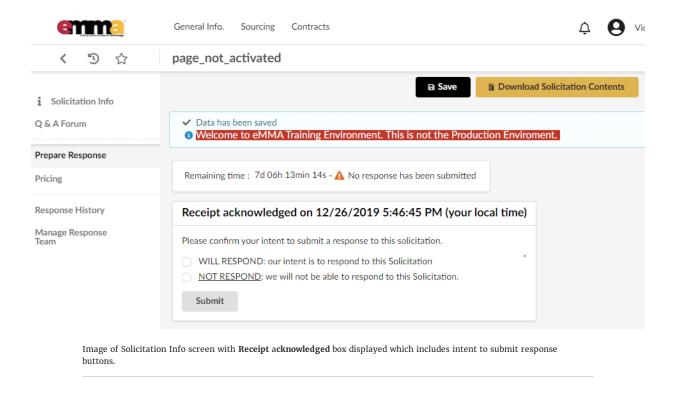
Acknowledging Receipt

To be added to a list of organizations interested in the solicitation or to respond to the solicitation that you have added to your My Solicitations section, you <u>must</u> click on the

I acknowledge receipt of this Solicitation button.



After clicking the I acknowledge receipt of this Solicitation button, a Receipt acknowledged box will appear and request that you indicate your intent to submit a response to the solicitation. Once you have explored the solicitation and have made a decision whether to respond or not respond, then choose one of the radio button intents and click the Submit button. This is VERY IMPORTANT as it makes the procurement officer aware of your interest and intentions for submissions.





"Please notice that when you view information on a specific solicitation, a count down timer to the deadline is displayed as well as the status of your submission."

- Count Down and Submission Status -

Lots and Rounds

"Lots" allow the Procurement Officer (PO) to break up a single solicitation into small groups or subsets What is a "LOT" in eMMA? of items (i.e. functional areas), where vendors may provide responses on one subset of goods or services, but may not be interested in another. A "Round" is the number of times that the solicitation has been updated, amended, changed or clarified. All solicitations are issued in Round 1. If an amendment is needed or any change or clarification has occurred to the solicitation, then eMMA creates Round 2. or additional rounds. What is a "ROUND" in eMMA? Round 1 (or the previous round), which now contains old, inaccurate or incomplete information is closed so that no one uses that information to prepare a response. *PLEASE NOTE - If you have submitted your response in a previous round, you MUST resubmit your response to the current

This is a simple abbreviation used in eMMA for the procurement officer to identify the type of solicitation that they are issuing. The R = Request, the F = For, and the lower case x is a holding place for the specific type of solicitation, such as RFI or RFP, etc.

Solicitation Documents

Document Types

The documents that are posted in eMMA for the solicitation will be determined by the agency issuing the solicitation, the type of solicitation, the round number, and other case by case reasons.

Solicitations in eMMA

If the solicitation type is one that will be using eMMA for managing, issuing and receiving responses, then the documents and all information on the solicitation will be in the solicitation information page for that solicitation.

If the solicitation requires both technical and financial response documents, those documents are to be completely separate and the separate sections where each is to be uploaded are called "Envelopes".



Image of Download Solicitation Contents button.

To download the documents for the solicitation, click the **Download Solicitation Contents** button found in the upper right of the page. (It is usually a gold button at the top of the page.)



Image of Solicitation Download in Windows computer.

Once you click on **Download Solicitation Contents**, a zipped file will download to your computer. The files are zipped to compress their size for decreased download time and to keep all the documents in a single location.

Additional information may be contained in the Solicitation Information screen so please scroll down and across to be sure you have seen all of the information.

Some solicitations will have more information available if they are more complex, require both technical and financial envelopes, have multiple rounds (addendum's issued) and other information.

Be sure to scroll through and expand the page to be sure you see each section!

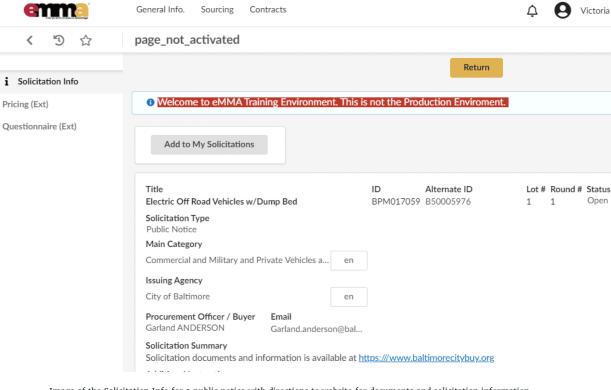
Issuing Agency	
Maryland Lottery & Gaming Cor	ntrol Agency en
Procurement Officer / Buyer Robert HOWELLS	Email robert.howells@maryla
Image of contact information for	Procurement Agency and Procurement Officer listed in eMMA.

HELP!

If at any time you do not see information you believe should be there, you can email the procurement officer directly using their contact information listed in the solicitation. Or if you need support, you can email the eMMA Helpdesk at <a href="mailto:em

Public Notice example

A public notice solicitation will only have links to where to obtain the information for the solicitation and documents will be included. This is common for colleges, universities, counties, and cities. There will not be a link to download the documents from eMMA.



 $Image\ of\ the\ Solicitation\ Info\ for\ a\ public\ notice\ with\ directions\ to\ website\ for\ documents\ and\ solicitation\ information.$

Q&A Forum

The Q & A Forum is a space for communication with the Procurement Officer within eMMA. This is not a replacement for the official questions and answers which should be done through direct email to the Procurement Officer. Additionally, this is not a replacement for issuing an addendum resulting in a new round.

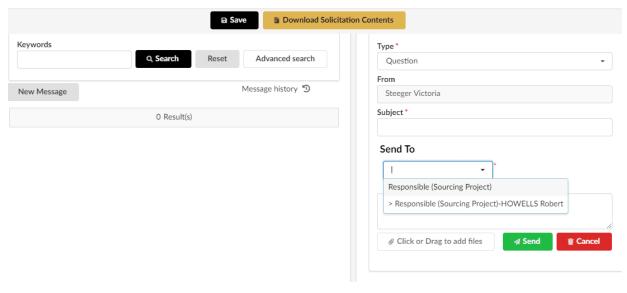


Image of the Q & A Forum page in the Solicitation.

Managing Response Team

Depending on the number of people in your organization that could be working on an individual solicitation response, you could add them to be members of the Response Team. They would receive communications about this solicitation as well as be able to view documents such as an addendum, answers to questions, etc., without needing someone to forward the documents each time one is issued.

You can choose from the contacts already identified in eMMA or easily create a new contact to invite a colleague.

- All selected contacts can modify and submit your answers in this Solicitation.
- They will only have access to this Solicitation.
- New contact creation may require Admin approval depending on your role in eMMA.

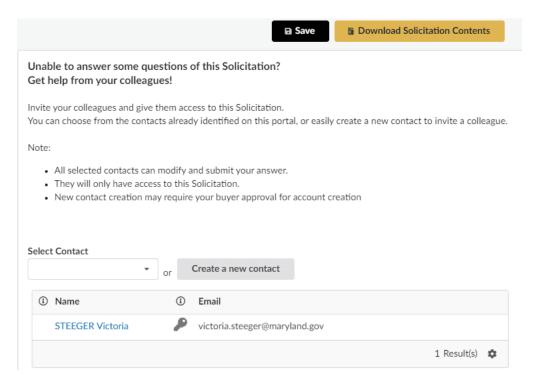


Image of Response Team management screen in a Solicitation in eMMA.

Preparing a Response

You are finally ready to submit your response(s) to the Solicitation. You read it thoroughly, you created the documents needed, used any formatting or templates that were indicated in the solicitation, and you have created and proofed your documents to submit to win the contract! That is indeed a lot of work, so congratulations!

- Navigate to the solicitation in eMMA and click **Prepare Response**.
- 2 Depending on the type of solicitation, different response options will be available.
- For responses that do not require separate technical and financial envelopes (IFB for example), the technical and financial envelope sections will not appear.
- For responses requiring multiple documents, their submission boxes will be available in the screen.
- Type in a description of your response in the **Response Information** box and then either Drag and Drop the response file or click and upload the file to the **Vendor Bid / Proposal Documents** box.
- 6 Click the green Validate & Submit button at the top of screen.

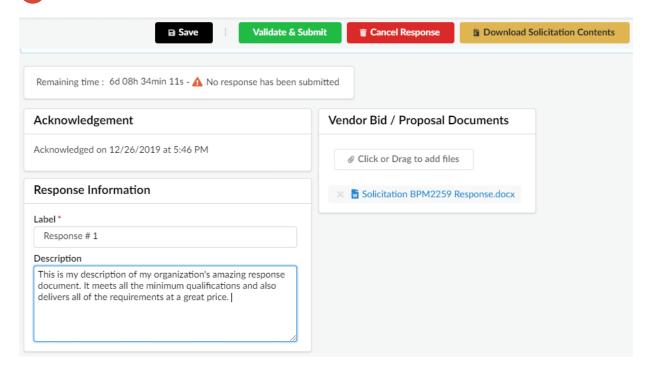
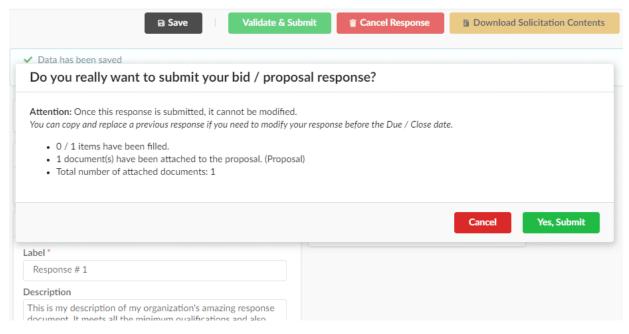


Image of Prepare Response screen without technical or financial envelopes.

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Click the **Yes, Submit** button in the dialogue box that has come up on the screen to confirm and complete your response submission. If you click **Cancel**, you will need to start the submission again.



 $Image\ of\ Confirmation\ Dialogue\ Box\ for\ submission\ of\ response.$

Pricing

Depending on the type of solicitation being issued, the pricing might be required to be entered in the Pricing menu screen. It is <u>very important</u> that you follow the requirements for submitting pricing that are included in the solicitation documents.

If pricing is to be submitted into eMMA, follow these steps.

- Select the **Pricing** link from the menu on the left side.
- 2 See if pricing items are required by their being listed as an Item.
- If an Item is listed, click on the Item to enter the pricing information.

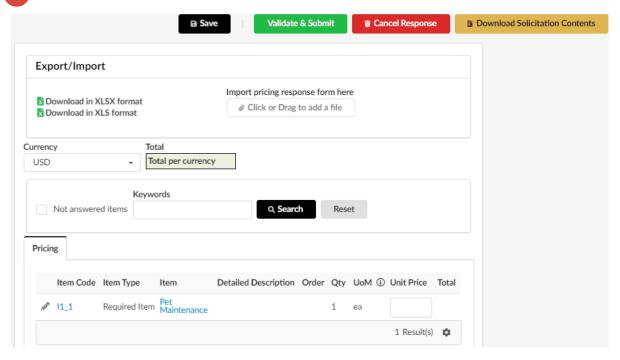


Image of screen for pricing input.

- Enter the price into the dialogue box that opens when you clicked the Item requiring the price to be submitted.
- Click **Save & Close** button to save your pricing. (It can be edited any time prior to the close date of the solicitation by clicking the small pencil beside the Item, making the changes you wish and then clicking **Save and Close**.)

Proposal for item I1_1 - Pet Maintenance

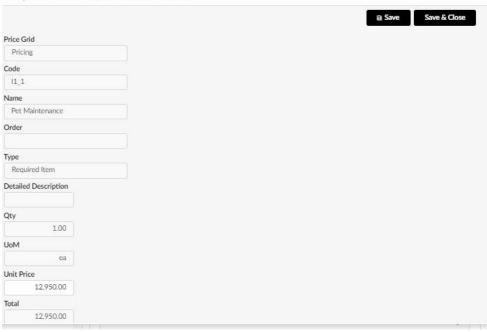
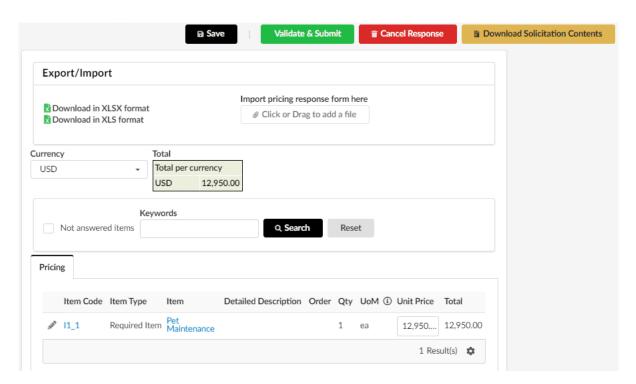


Image of the Unit Price entry screen for an Item.

- The pricing is then listed in the solicitation.
- If a spreadsheet with pricing information was requested or required, or if you wish to submit one in addition to listing the price in eMMA as was requested, either drag the file to the **Import pricing response form here** box or click the box to upload the file from your computer.
- When you have all the pricing information submitted and/or uploaded, click the green **Validate & Submit** button at the top of the screen.



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Click the $\boldsymbol{Yes}, \boldsymbol{Submit}$ button to confirm your pricing submission is complete.

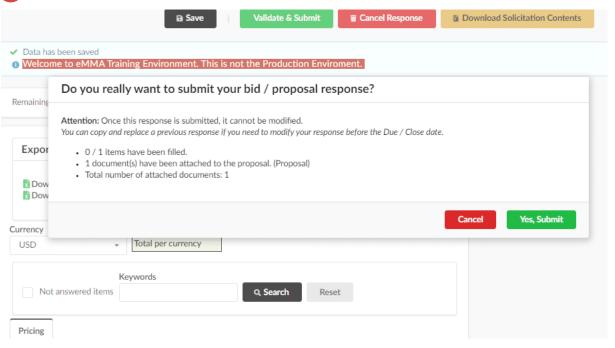


Image of pricing submission confirmation dialogue box.

Response Confirmation and Management

Once you have submitted your required all response documents, you will receive a confirmation in eMMA. You will be able to manage your response, including updating or deleting it, until the due date of the solicitation.

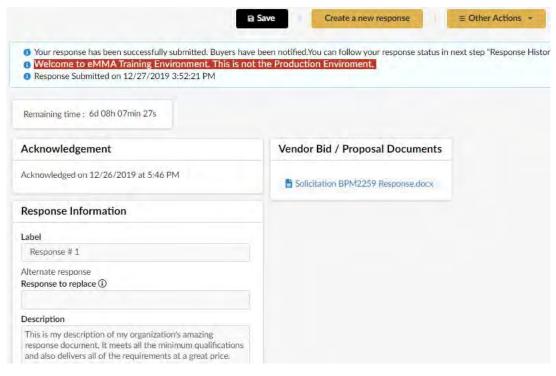


Image of screen showing confirmation of submission of response.

Responding to a new Round

When a new round has been issued for a solicitation, that means an amendment, clarification, or other change to the solicitation has occurred.

You <u>MUST</u> acknowledge the receipt of the new Round. This will be a system message to you similar to the original Acknowledge Receipt for the solicitation.

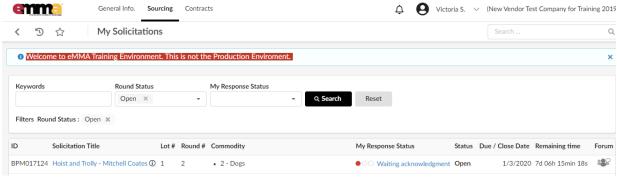


Image of My Solicitation list showing a solicitation with Round 2 listed.

Acknowledge a Round

When a new Round has been issued, you will see the Round # listed under your My Solicitations. Click on the **Solicitation Title** to open the solicitation and then acknowledge the solicitation exactly as you did originally.

To review acknowledging receipt, please navigate to that module in this training.

<u>IF you have already submitted your response</u>, you will need to review any changes that were made in the solicitation in the new round and made a decision on your next steps. You can decide to:

- 1. Keep your response exactly the same, or
- 2. Update your response to meet the new or changed solicitation, or
- 3. Decide to not respond to the solicitation.

Updating Your Response

To change or add a response to a solicitation, click on the **Prepare Response** button.

(You have to acknowledge receipt here if you have not already.)

Since you have already submitted a response, you will see the option to submit Response #2 (or more).

Choose one of the two radio buttons for whether it is an Alternate Response , or you wish to Replace existing response .
Type in the description and add the documents as you did with the previous response.
Click Validate & Submit and confirm as you did with the previous response.

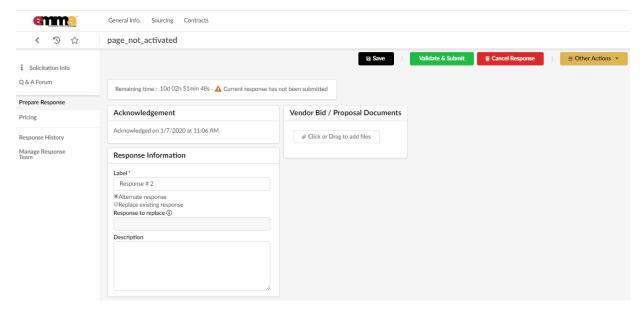


Image of Prepare Response screen in eMMA with options to submit an alternate response of a replacement response.

<u>IF you have not submitted your response</u> at the time of the new round, you do not need to do anything differently, just submit your response!

Response History

The responses that you have submitted will be listed and are available to edit until the due date of the response.

To edit your response, click the **Label** for the response (each label is also underlined and in blue to suggest it is a link) to make the edits you wish and resubmit.

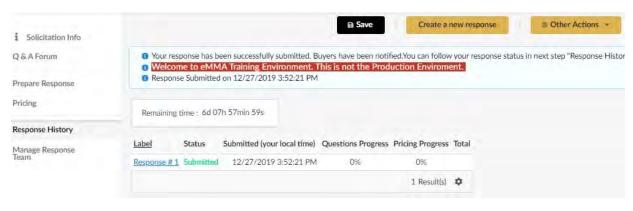


Image of Response History screen in the solicitation.

Award Notifications

Winning vendor notification

If (when) you are named as the apparent winner, you will receive notification in eMMA and email.

BE SURE TO CHECK BOTH!



Image of a very happy business man!

There are documents that $\underline{\text{must be signed and returned}}$ before you can be confirmed as the winner.

IF YOU DO NOT sign and return those documents, or if you decide you do not want to accept, you will be taken out as the apparent winner and the next vendor will be named the apparent winner.

Public Contracts

To see a list of awarded contracts, navigate to the eMMA homepage and click the Public Contracts section. All contracts awarded are listed there once the apparent winner is confirmed.

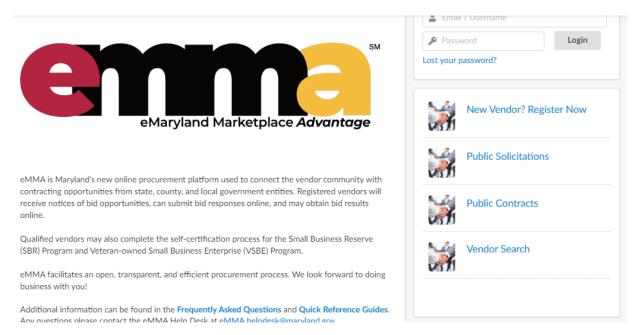


Image of the eMMA Home Screen where Public Contracts are posted.

Support and Resources

eMMA Help Desk

The first stop for support with eMMA is by contacting the eMMA helpdesk. emma.helpdesk@maryland.gov

Procurement Resources

The Office of State Procurement will continue to add training and support resources for our vendors. Please visit our webpage at https://procurement.maryland.gov/business-community/ for information on upcoming webinars, events, and online training and support information.

Business Resources

Some resources for support, training, and information are listed below with contact information. We highly encourage vendors to take advantage of all the resources and support offered for your business or organization!

- Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs Mission: As a coordinating office of Governor Larry Hogan, we connect the small business community to greater economic opportunities in both the public and private sectors, while implementing and monitoring small, minority, and women business inclusion programs across 70 state agencies.

 https://gomdsmallbiz.maryland.gov
- Office of Minority Business Enterprise In 1978, Maryland's General Assembly enacted legislation to create a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) Program to encourage minority-owned firms to participate in the State procurement process. Current MBE law requires agencies to make every effort to achieve an overall minimum goal of 29% of the total dollar value of their procurement contracts directly or indirectly from certified MBE firms.

 http://www.mdot.maryland.gov/newMDOT/MBE/Index.html
 - Maryland Procurement Manual The Maryland Procurement Manual reviews the General Procurement Law of the State of Maryland as set forth in Division II of the State Finance and Procurement Article of the Maryland Annotated Code (SFP) and implemented by Title 21 of the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR). It is intended to give the reader a practical understanding of one of the primary functions of State government that directly impacts virtually every agency and public need. The Manual is not a substitute for the procurement law, regulations or policies, but instead provides a general overview of State Procurement.
 - $\underline{https://procurement.maryland.gov/maryland-procurement-manual-1-introduction-and-general-overview/}$
 - COMAR 21 Maryland State agency regulations are compiled in the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR). COMAR contains 36 Titles, with each Title corresponding to a department or agency. The State Procurement Regulations are in Title 21 and can be search through this online portal. http://www.dsd.state.md.us/COMAR/SearchTitle.aspx?scope=21

End of Instructions.

