SENATE, No. 826



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE



PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Senator JOSEPH A. LAGANA

District 38 (Bergen and Passaic)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Stack and Sacco

SYNOPSIS

 Requires local contracting unit to award local public contract to most responsible bidder.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

 Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



An Act establishing a most responsible bidder requirement for local public contracts and amending various parts of the statutory law.

 Be It Enacted by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

 1. Section 2 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-2) is amended to read as follows:

 2. As used herein the following words have the following definitions, unless the context otherwise indicates:

 (1) "Contracting unit" means:

 (a) Any county; or

 (b) Any municipality; or

 (c) Any board, commission, committee, authority or agency, which is not a State board, commission, committee, authority, except as provided pursuant to P.L.2013, c.4, or agency, and which has administrative jurisdiction over any district other than a school district, project, or facility, included or operating in whole or in part, within the territorial boundaries of any county or municipality which exercises functions which are appropriate for the exercise by one or more units of local government, including functions exercised in relation to the administration and oversight of a tourism district located in a municipality in which authorized casino gaming occurs, and which has statutory power to make purchases and enter into contracts awarded by a contracting agent for the provision or performance of goods or services.

 The term shall not include a private firm that has entered into a contract with a public entity for the provision of water supply services pursuant to P.L.1995, c.101 (C.58:26-19 et al.).

 "Contracting unit" shall not include a private firm or public authority that has entered into a contract with a public entity for the provision of wastewater treatment services pursuant to P.L.1995, c.216 (C.58:27-19 et al.).

 "Contracting unit" shall not include a duly incorporated nonprofit association that has entered into a contract with the governing body of a city of the first class for the provision of water supply services or wastewater treatment services pursuant to section 2 of P.L.2002, c.47 (C.40A:11-5.1).

 "Contracting unit" shall not include an entity that has entered into a contract for management and operation services with a local hospital authority established pursuant to P.L.2006, c.46 (C.30:9-23.15 et al.).

 (2) "Governing body" means:

 (a) The governing body of the county, when the purchase is to be made or the contract or agreement is to be entered into by, or on behalf of, a county; or

 (b) The governing body of the municipality, when the purchase is to be made or the contract or agreement is to be entered into by, or on behalf of, a municipality; or

 (c) Any board, commission, committee, authority or agency of the character described in subsection (1) (c) of this section.

 (3) "Contracting agent" means the governing body of a contracting unit, or appointed membership of a State authority authorized to enter into a cooperative purchasing agreement pursuant to P.L.2013, c.4, or its authorized designee, which has the power to prepare the advertisements, to advertise for and receive bids and, as permitted by **[**this act**]** P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-1 et seq.), to make awards for the contracting unit in connection with purchases, contracts or agreements.

 (4) "Purchase" means a transaction, for a valuable consideration, creating or acquiring an interest in goods, services and property, except real property or any interest therein.

 (5) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.1999, c.440.)

 (6) "Professional services" means services rendered or performed by a person authorized by law to practice a recognized profession, whose practice is regulated by law, and the performance of which services requires knowledge of an advanced type in a field of learning acquired by a prolonged formal course of specialized instruction and study as distinguished from general academic instruction or apprenticeship and training. Professional services may also mean services rendered in the provision or performance of goods or services that are original and creative in character in a recognized field of artistic endeavor.

 (7) "Extraordinary unspecifiable services" means services which are specialized and qualitative in nature requiring expertise, extensive training and proven reputation in the field of endeavor.

 (8) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.1999, c.440.)

 (9) "Work" includes services and any other activity of a tangible or intangible nature performed or assumed pursuant to a contract or agreement with a contracting unit.

 (10) "Homemaker--home health services" means at home personal care and home management provided to an individual or members of the individual's family who reside with the individual, or both, necessitated by the individual's illness or incapacity. "Homemaker--home health services" includes, but is not limited to, the services of a trained homemaker.

 (11) "Recyclable material" means those materials which would otherwise become municipal solid waste, and which may be collected, separated or processed and returned to the economic mainstream in the form of raw materials or products.

 (12) "Recycling" means any process by which materials which would otherwise become solid waste are collected, separated or processed and returned to the economic mainstream in the form of raw materials or products.

 (13) "Marketing" means the sale, disposition, assignment, or placement of designated recyclable materials with, or the granting of a concession to, a reseller, processor, materials recovery facility, or end-user of recyclable material, in accordance with a district solid waste management plan adopted pursuant to P.L.1970, c.39 (C.13:1E-1 et seq.) and shall not include the collection of such recyclable material when collected through a system of routes by local government unit employees or under a contract administered by a local government unit.

 (14) "Municipal solid waste" means, as appropriate to the circumstances, all residential, commercial and institutional solid waste generated within the boundaries of a municipality; or the formal collection of such solid wastes or recyclable material in any combination thereof when collected through a system of routes by local government unit employees or under a contract administered by a local government unit.

 (15) "Distribution" (when used in relation to electricity) means the process of conveying electricity from a contracting unit that is a generator of electricity or a wholesale purchaser of electricity to retail customers or other end users of electricity.

 (16) "Transmission" (when used in relation to electricity) means the conveyance of electricity from its point of generation to a contracting unit that purchases it on a wholesale basis for resale.

 (17) "Disposition" means the transportation, placement, reuse, sale, donation, transfer or temporary storage of recyclable materials for all possible uses except for disposal as municipal solid waste.

 (18) "Cooperative marketing" means the joint marketing by two or more contracting units of the source separated recyclable materials designated in a district recycling plan required pursuant to section 3 of P.L.1987, c.102 (C.13:1E-99.13) pursuant to a written cooperative agreement entered into by the participating contracting units thereof.

 (19) "Aggregate" means the sums expended or to be expended for the provision or performance of any goods or services in connection with the same immediate purpose or task, or the furnishing of similar goods or services, during the same contract year through a contract awarded by a contracting agent.

 (20) "Bid threshold" means the dollar amount set in section 3 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-3), above which a contracting unit shall advertise for and receive sealed bids in accordance with procedures set forth in P.L.1999, c.440 (C.40A:11-4.1 et al.).

 (21) "Contract" means any agreement, including but not limited to a purchase order or a formal agreement, which is a legally binding relationship enforceable by law, between a vendor who agrees to provide or perform goods or services and a contracting unit which agrees to compensate a vendor, as defined by and subject to the terms and conditions of the agreement. A contract also may include an arrangement whereby a vendor compensates a contracting unit for the vendor's right to perform a service, such as, but not limited to, operating a concession.

 (22) "Contract year" means the period of 12 consecutive months following the award of a contract.

 (23) "Competitive contracting" means the method described in sections 1 through 5 of P.L.1999, c.440 (C.40A:11-4.1 thru 40A:11-4.5) of contracting for specialized goods and services in which formal proposals are solicited from vendors; formal proposals are evaluated by the purchasing agent or counsel or administrator; and the governing body awards a contract to a vendor or vendors from among the formal proposals received.

 (24) "Goods and services" or "goods or services" means any work, labor, commodities, equipment, materials, or supplies of any tangible or intangible nature, except real property or any interest therein, provided or performed through a contract awarded by a contracting agent, including goods and property subject to N.J.S.12A:2-101 et seq.

 (25) "Library and educational goods and services" means textbooks, copyrighted materials, student produced publications and services incidental thereto, including but not limited to books, periodicals, newspapers, documents, pamphlets, photographs, reproductions, microfilms, pictorial or graphic works, musical scores, maps, charts, globes, sound recordings, slides, films, filmstrips, video and magnetic tapes, other printed or published matter and audiovisual and other materials of a similar nature, necessary binding or rebinding of library materials, and specialized computer software used as a supplement or in lieu of textbooks or reference material.

 (26) "Lowest and most competitive price" means the least possible amount that meets all requirements of the request of a contracting agent, including standards determined to be essential by the contracting unit relating to the efficiency and effectiveness of the bid plan and the performance history of the bidder.

 (27) **[**"Lowest**]** "Most responsible bidder or vendor" means the bidder or vendor: (a) whose response to a request for bids offers the lowest and most competitive price and is responsive; and (b) who is responsible.

 (28) "Official newspaper" means any newspaper designated by the contracting unit pursuant to R.S.35:1-1 et seq.

 (29) "Purchase order" means a document issued by the contracting agent authorizing a purchase transaction with a vendor to provide or perform goods or services to the contracting unit, which, when fulfilled in accordance with the terms and conditions of a request of a contracting agent and other provisions and procedures that may be established by the contracting unit, will result in payment by the contracting unit.

 (30) "Purchasing agent" means the individual duly assigned the authority, responsibility, and accountability for the purchasing activity of the contracting unit, and who has such duties as are defined by an authority appropriate to the form and structure of the contracting unit, pursuant to P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-1 et seq.) and who possesses a qualified purchasing agent certificate.

 (31) "Quotation" means the response to a formal or informal request made by a contracting agent by a vendor for provision or performance of goods or services, when the aggregate cost is less than the bid threshold. Quotations may be in writing, or taken verbally if a record is kept by the contracting agent.

 (32) "Responsible" means able to complete the contract in accordance with **[**its**]** the estimated cost and plan of the bid, and all other requirements, including but not limited to requirements pertaining to experience, moral integrity, operating capacity, financial capacity, credit, and workforce, equipment, and facilities availability.

 (33) "Responsive" means conforming in all material respects to the terms and conditions, specifications, legal requirements, and other provisions of the request.

 (34) "Public works" means building, altering, repairing, improving or demolishing any public structure or facility constructed or acquired by a contracting unit to house local government functions or provide water, waste disposal, power, transportation, and other public infrastructures.

 (35) "Director" means the Director of the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs.

 (36) "Administrator" means a municipal administrator appointed pursuant to N.J.S.40A:9-136 and N.J.S.40A:9-137; a business administrator, a municipal manager or a municipal administrator appointed pursuant to the "Optional Municipal Charter Law," P.L.1950, c.210 (C.40:69A-1 et seq.); a municipal manager appointed pursuant to "the municipal manager form of government law," R.S.40:79-1 et seq.; or the person holding responsibility for the overall operations of an authority that falls under the "Local Authorities Fiscal Control Law," P.L.1983, c.313 (C.40A:5A-1 et seq.).

 (37) "Concession" means the granting of a license or right to act for or on behalf of the contracting unit, or to provide a service requiring the approval or endorsement of the contracting unit, and which may or may not involve a payment or exchange, or provision of services by or to the contracting unit.

 (38) "Index rate" means the rate of annual percentage increase, rounded to the nearest half-percent, in the Implicit Price Deflator for State and Local Government Purchases of Goods and Services, computed and published quarterly by the United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

 (39) "Proprietary" means goods or services of a specialized nature, that may be made or marketed by a person or persons having the exclusive right to make or sell them, when the need for such goods or services has been certified in writing by the governing body of the contracting unit to be necessary for the conduct of its affairs.

 (40) "Service or services" means the performance of work, or the furnishing of labor, time, or effort, or any combination thereof, not involving or connected to the delivery or ownership of a specified end product or goods or a manufacturing process. Service or services may also include an arrangement in which a vendor compensates the contracting unit for the vendor's right to operate a concession.

 (41) "Qualified purchasing agent certificate" means a certificate granted by the director pursuant to section 9 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-9).

 (42) "Mistake" means, for a public works project, a clerical error that is an unintentional and substantial computational error or an unintentional omission of a substantial quantity of labor, material, or both, from the final bid computation.

(cf: P.L.2016, c.55, s.8)

 2. Section 4 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-4) is amended to read as follows:

 4. a. Every contract awarded by the contracting agent for the provision or performance of any goods or services, the cost of which in the aggregate exceeds the bid threshold, shall be awarded only by resolution of the governing body of the contracting unit to the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidder after public advertising for bids and bidding therefor, except as is provided otherwise in **[**this act**]** P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-1 et seq.) or specifically by any other law. The resolution shall explain why the vendor selected is the most responsible bidder. The governing body of a contracting unit may, by resolution approved by a majority of the governing body and subject to subsections b. and c. of this section, disqualify a bidder who would otherwise be determined to be the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidder, if the governing body finds that it has had prior negative experience with the bidder.

 b. As used in this section, "prior negative experience" means any of the following:

 (1) the bidder has been found, through either court adjudication, arbitration, mediation, or other contractually stipulated alternate dispute resolution mechanism, to have: failed to provide or perform goods or services; or failed to complete the contract in a timely manner; or otherwise performed unsatisfactorily under a prior contract with the contracting unit;

 (2) the bidder defaulted on a contract, thereby requiring the local unit to utilize the services of another contractor to provide the goods or perform the services or to correct or complete the contract;

 (3) the bidder defaulted on a contract, thereby requiring the local unit to look to the bidder's surety for completion of the contract or tender of the costs of completion; or

 (4) the bidder is debarred or suspended from contracting with any of the agencies or departments of the executive branch of the State of New Jersey at the time of the contract award, whether or not the action was based on experience with the contracting unit.

 c. The following conditions apply if the governing body of a contracting unit is contemplating a disqualification based on prior negative experience:

 (1) The existence of any of the indicators of prior negative experience set forth in this section shall not require that a bidder be disqualified. In each instance, the decision to disqualify shall be made within the discretion of the governing body and shall be rendered in the best interests of the contracting unit.

 (2) All mitigating factors shall be considered in determining the seriousness of the prior negative experience and in deciding whether disqualification is warranted.

 (3) The bidder shall be furnished by the governing body with a written notice (a) stating that a disqualification is being considered; (b) setting forth the reason for the disqualification; and (c) indicating that the bidder shall be accorded an opportunity for a hearing before the governing body if the bidder so requests within a stated period of time. At the hearing, the bidder shall show good cause why the bidder should not be disqualified by presenting documents and testimony. If the governing body determines that good cause has not been shown by the bidder, it may vote to find the bidder lacking in responsibility and, thus, disqualified.

 (4) Disqualification shall be for a reasonable, defined period of time which shall not exceed five years.

 (5) A disqualification, other than a disqualification pursuant to which a governing body is prohibited by law from entering into a contract with a bidder, may be voided or the period thereof may be reduced, in the discretion of the governing body, upon the submission of a good faith application under oath, supported by documentary evidence, setting forth substantial and appropriate grounds for the granting of relief, such as reversal of a judgment, or actual change of ownership, management or control of the bidder.

 (6) An opportunity for a hearing need not be offered to a bidder whose disqualification is based on its suspension or debarment by an agency or department of the executive branch of the State of New Jersey. The term of such a disqualification shall be concurrent with the term of the suspension or debarment by the State agency or department.

(cf: P.L.1999, c.440, s.8)

 3. Section 3 of P.L.2018, c.156 (C.40A:11-4.9) is amended to read as follows:

 3. As used in P.L.2018, c.156 (C.40A:11-4.7 et al.):

 "Director" means the Director of the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs;

 "Electronic procurement" means the use of computer technology and the Internet for the advertising and submission of public bids, providing notice of revisions or addenda to advertisements or bid documents, the receipt of proposals and quotations, competitive contracting, the use of reverse auctions, and related practices to assist in determining the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidder or proposer who is most advantageous, price and other factors considered, as appropriate, for goods and services, the sale of personal property, and other public procurement-related activities and services as may be determined appropriate by the director;

 "Goods and services" means any work, labor, commodities, equipment, materials, or supplies of any tangible or intangible nature, except real property or any interest therein, provided or performed through a contract awarded by a contracting agent, including goods and property subject to N.J.S.12A:2-101 et seq.;

 "Local unit" means a school district as defined in the "Public School Contracts Law," N.J.S.18A:18A-1 et seq., or a contracting unit as defined in the "Local Public Contracts Law," P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-1 et seq.);

 "Public works construction" means any contract that is subject to the "New Jersey Prevailing Wage Act," P.L.1963, c.150 (C.34:11-56.25 et seq.); and

 "Real property" shall include, in addition to the usual connotations thereof, development rights or easements, or any right, interest, or estate in the area extending above any real property, or capital improvement thereon, to such a height or altitude as any title, interest, or estate in real property may extend, commonly known as "air rights," and subject to, but not limited to, the "Local Lands and Buildings Law," P.L.1971, c.199 (C.40A:12-1 et seq.).

(cf: P.L.2018, c.156, s.3)

 4. Section 5 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-5) is amended to read as follows:

 5. Any contract the amount of which exceeds the bid threshold, may be negotiated and awarded by the governing body without public advertising for bids and bidding therefor and shall be awarded by resolution of the governing body if:

 (1) The subject matter thereof consists of:

 (a) (i) Professional services. The governing body shall in each instance state supporting reasons for its action in the resolution awarding each contract and shall forthwith cause to be printed once, in the official newspaper, a brief notice stating the nature, duration, service and amount of the contract, and that the resolution and contract are on file and available for public inspection in the office of the clerk of the county or municipality, or, in the case of a contracting unit created by more than one county or municipality, of the counties or municipalities creating the contracting unit; or (ii) Extraordinary unspecifiable services. The application of this exception shall be construed narrowly in favor of open competitive bidding, whenever possible, and the Division of Local Government Services is authorized to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations after consultation with the Commissioner of Education limiting the use of this exception in accordance with the intention herein expressed. The governing body shall in each instance state supporting reasons for its action in the resolution awarding each contract and shall forthwith cause to be printed, in the manner set forth in subsection (1) (a) (i) of this section, a brief notice of the award of the contract;

 (b) The doing of any work by employees of the contracting unit;

 (c) The printing of legal briefs, records, and appendices to be used in any legal proceeding in which the contracting unit may be a party;

 (d) The furnishing of a tax map or maps for the contracting unit;

 (e) The purchase of perishable foods as a subsistence supply;

 (f) The supplying of any product or the rendering of any service by a public utility, which is subject to the jurisdiction of the Board of Public Utilities or the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission or its successor, in accordance with tariffs and schedules of charges made, charged or exacted, filed with the board or commission;

 (g) The acquisition, subject to prior approval of the Attorney General, of special equipment for confidential investigation;

 (h) The printing of bonds and documents necessary to the issuance and sale thereof by a contracting unit;

 (i) Equipment repair service if in the nature of an extraordinary unspecifiable service and necessary parts furnished in connection with the service, which exception shall be in accordance with the requirements for extraordinary unspecifiable services;

 (j) The publishing of legal notices in newspapers as required by law;

 (k) The acquisition of artifacts or other items of unique intrinsic, artistic or historical character;

 (l) Those goods and services necessary or required to prepare and conduct an election;

 (m) Insurance, including the purchase of insurance coverage and consultant services, which exception shall be in accordance with the requirements for extraordinary unspecifiable services;

 (n) The doing of any work by persons with disabilities employed by a sheltered workshop;

 (o) The provision of any goods or services including those of a commercial nature, attendant upon the operation of a restaurant by any nonprofit, duly incorporated, historical society at or on any historical preservation site;

 (p) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.1999, c.440.)

 (q) Library and educational goods and services;

 (r) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2005, c.212).

 (s) The marketing of recyclable materials recovered through a recycling program, or the marketing of any product intentionally produced or derived from solid waste received at a resource recovery facility or recovered through a resource recovery program, including, but not limited to, refuse-derived fuel, compost materials, methane gas, and other similar products;

 (t) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.1999, c.440.)

 (u) Contracting unit towing and storage contracts, provided that all of the contracts shall be pursuant to reasonable non-exclusionary and non-discriminatory terms and conditions, which may include the provision of the services on a rotating basis, at the rates and charges set by the municipality pursuant to section 1 of P.L.1979, c.101 (C.40:48-2.49). All contracting unit towing and storage contracts for services to be provided at rates and charges other than those established pursuant to the terms of this paragraph shall only be awarded to the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidder in accordance with the provisions of the "Local Public Contracts Law," P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-1 et seq.) and without regard for the value of the contract therefor;

 (v) The purchase of steam or electricity from, or the rendering of services directly related to the purchase of steam or electricity from a qualifying small power production facility or a qualifying cogeneration facility as defined pursuant to 16 U.S.C. s.796;

 (w) The purchase of electricity or administrative or dispatching services directly related to the transmission of purchased electricity by a contracting unit engaged in the generation of electricity;

 (x) The printing of municipal ordinances or other services necessarily incurred in connection with the revision and codification of municipal ordinances;

 (y) An agreement for the purchase of an equitable interest in a water supply facility or for the provision of water supply services entered into pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1993, c.381 (C.58:28-2), or an agreement entered into pursuant to N.J.S.40A:31-1 et al., so long as the agreement is entered into no later than six months after the effective date of P.L.1993, c.381;

 (z) A contract for the provision of water supply services entered into pursuant to P.L.1995, c.101 (C.58:26-19 et al.);

 (aa) The cooperative marketing of recyclable materials recovered through a recycling program;

 (bb) A contract for the provision of wastewater treatment services entered into pursuant to P.L.1995, c.216 (C.58:27-19 et al.);

 (cc) Expenses for travel and conferences;

 (dd) The provision or performance of goods or services for the support or maintenance of proprietary computer hardware and software, except that this provision shall not be utilized to acquire or upgrade non-proprietary hardware or to acquire or update non-proprietary software;

 (ee) The management or operation of an airport owned by the contracting unit pursuant to R.S.40:8-1 et seq.;

 (ff) Purchases of goods and services at rates set by the Universal Service Fund administered by the Federal Communications Commission;

 (gg) A contract for the provision of water supply services or wastewater treatment services entered into pursuant to section 2 of P.L.2002, c.47 (C.40A:11-5.1), or the designing, financing, construction, operation, or maintenance, or any combination thereof, of a water supply facility as defined in subsection (16) of section 15 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-15) or a wastewater treatment system as defined in subsection (19) of section 15 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-15), or any component part or parts thereof, including a water filtration system as defined in subsection (16) of section 15 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-15); or

 (hh) The purchase of electricity generated from a power production facility that is fueled by methane gas extracted from a landfill in the county of the contracting unit.

 (2) It is to be made or entered into with the United States of America, the State of New Jersey, county, or municipality, or any board, body, officer, agency, or authority thereof, or any other state or subdivision thereof.

 (3) Bids have been advertised pursuant to section 4 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-4) on two occasions and (a) no bids have been received on both occasions in response to the advertisement, or (b) the governing body has rejected the bids on two occasions because it has determined that they are not reasonable as to price, on the basis of cost estimates prepared for or by the contracting agent prior to the advertising therefor, or have not been independently arrived at in open competition, or (c) on one occasion no bids were received pursuant to (a) and on one occasion all bids were rejected pursuant to (b), in whatever sequence; a contract may then be negotiated and may be awarded upon adoption of a resolution by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the authorized membership of the governing body authorizing the contract; provided, however, that:

 (i) A reasonable effort is first made by the contracting agent to determine that the same or equivalent goods or services, at a cost which is lower than the negotiated price, are not available from an agency or authority of the United States, the State of New Jersey or of the county in which the contracting unit is located, or any municipality in close proximity to the contracting unit;

 (ii) The terms, conditions, restrictions, and specifications set forth in the negotiated contract are not substantially different from those which were the subject of competitive bidding pursuant to section 4 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-4); and

 (iii) Any minor amendment or modification of any of the terms, conditions, restrictions, and specifications, which were the subject of competitive bidding pursuant to section 4 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-4), shall be stated in the resolution awarding the contract; provided further, however, that if on the second occasion the bids received are rejected as unreasonable as to price, the contracting agent shall notify each responsible bidder submitting bids on the second occasion of its intention to negotiate, and afford each bidder a reasonable opportunity to negotiate, but the governing body shall not award the contract unless the negotiated price is lower than the lowest rejected bid price submitted on the second occasion by a responsible bidder, is the lowest negotiated price offered by any responsible vendor, and is a reasonable price for goods or services.

 Whenever a contracting unit shall determine that a bid was not arrived at independently in open competition pursuant to subsection (3) of this section it shall thereupon notify the county prosecutor of the county in which the contracting unit is located and the Attorney General of the facts upon which its determination is based, and when appropriate, it may institute appropriate proceedings in any State or federal court of competent jurisdiction for a violation of any State or federal antitrust law or laws relating to the unlawful restraint of trade.

 (4) The contracting unit has solicited and received at least three quotations on materials, supplies, or equipment for which a State contract has been issued pursuant to section 12 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-12), and the **[**lowest**]** most responsible quotation is at least 10 percent less than the price the contracting unit would be charged for the identical materials, supplies, or equipment, in the same quantities, under the State contract. A contract entered into pursuant to this subsection may be awarded only upon adoption of a resolution by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the full membership of the governing body of the contracting unit at a meeting thereof authorizing the contract. A copy of the purchase order relating to the contract, the requisition for purchase order, if applicable, and documentation identifying the price of the materials, supplies or equipment under the State contract and the State contract number shall be filed with the director within five working days of the award of the contract by the contracting unit. The director shall notify the contracting unit of receipt of the material and shall make the material available to the State Treasurer. The contracting unit shall make available to the director upon request any other documents relating to the solicitation and award of the contract, including, but not limited to, quotations, requests for quotations, and resolutions. The director periodically shall review material submitted by contracting units to determine the impact of the contracts on local contracting and shall consult with the State Treasurer on the impact of the contracts on the State procurement process. The director may, after consultation with the State Treasurer, adopt rules in accordance with the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) to limit the use of this subsection, after considering the impact of contracts awarded under this subsection on State and local contracting, or after considering the extent to which the award of contracts pursuant to this subsection is consistent with and in furtherance of the purposes of the public contracting laws.

 (5) Notwithstanding any provision of law, rule, or regulation to the contrary, the subject matter consists of the combined collection and marketing, or the cooperative combined collection and marketing of recycled material recovered through a recycling program, or any product intentionally produced or derived from solid waste received at a resource recovery facility or recovered through a resource recovery program including, but not limited to, refuse-derived fuel, compost materials, methane gas, and other similar products, provided that in lieu of engaging in public advertising for bids and the bidding therefor, the contracting unit shall, prior to commencing the procurement process, submit for approval to the Director of the Division of Local Government Services, a written detailed description of the process to be followed in securing the services. Within 30 days after receipt of the written description the director shall, if the director finds that the process provides for fair competition and integrity in the negotiation process, approve, in writing, the description submitted by the contracting unit. If the director finds that the process does not provide for fair competition and integrity in the negotiation process, the director shall advise the contracting unit of the deficiencies that must be remedied. If the director fails to respond in writing to the contracting unit within 30 days, the procurement process as described shall be deemed approved. As used in this section, "collection" means the physical removal of recyclable materials from curbside or any other location selected by the contracting unit.

 (6) Notwithstanding any provision of law, rule, or regulation to the contrary, the contract is for the provision of electricity by a contracting unit engaged in the distribution of electricity for retail sale, for the provision of wholesale electricity by a municipal shared services energy authority as defined pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2015, c.129 (C.40A:66-3), or for the provision of administrative or dispatching services related to the transmission of electricity, provided that in lieu of engaging in public advertising for bids and the bidding therefor, the contracting unit shall, prior to commencing the procurement process, submit for approval to the Director of the Division of Local Government Services, a written detailed description of the process to be followed in securing these services. The process shall be designed in a way that is appropriate to and commensurate with industry practices, and the integrity of the government contracting process. Within 30 days after receipt of the written description, the director shall, if the director finds that the process provides for fair competition and integrity in the negotiation process, approve, in writing, the description submitted by the contracting unit. If the director finds that the process does not provide for fair competition and integrity in the negotiation process, the director shall advise the contracting unit of the deficiencies that must be remedied. If the director fails to respond in writing to the contracting unit within 30 days, the procurement process, as submitted to the director pursuant to this section, shall be deemed approved.

(cf: P.L.2017, c.131, s.174)

 5. Section 6 of P.L.1975, c.353 (C.40A:11-6.1) is amended to read as follows:

 6. All contracts enumerated in this section shall be awarded as follows:

 a. For all contracts that in the aggregate are less than the bid threshold but 15 percent or more of that amount, and for those contracts that are for subject matter enumerated in subsection (1) of section 5 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-5), except for paragraph (a) of that subsection concerning professional services and paragraph (b) of that subsection concerning work by employees of the contracting unit, the contracting agent shall award the contract after soliciting at least two competitive quotations, if practicable. The award shall be made to a vendor whose response is most advantageous, price and other factors considered. The contracting agent shall retain the record of the quotation solicitation and shall include a copy of the record with the voucher used to pay the vendor.

 b. When in excess of the bid threshold, and after documented effort by the contracting agent to secure competitive quotations, a contract for extraordinary unspecifiable services may be awarded upon a determination in writing by the contracting agent that the solicitation of competitive quotations is impracticable. Any such contract shall be awarded by resolution of the governing body.

 c. If authorized by the governing body by resolution or ordinance, all contracts that are in the aggregate less than 15 percent of the bid threshold may be awarded by the contracting agent without soliciting competitive quotations.

 d. Whenever two or more responses to a request of a contracting agent offer equal prices and are the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bids or proposals, the contracting unit may award the contract to the vendor whose response, in the discretion of the contracting unit, is the most advantageous, price and other factors considered. In such a case, the award resolution or purchase order documentation shall explain why the vendor selected is the most advantageous.

(cf: P.L.1999, c.440, s.11)

 6. Section 15 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-15) is amended to read as follows:

 15. All contracts for the provision or performance of goods or services shall be awarded for a period not to exceed 24 consecutive months, except that contracts for professional services pursuant to subparagraph (i) of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 5 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-5) shall be awarded for a period not to exceed 12 consecutive months. Contracts may be awarded for longer periods of time as follows:

 (1) Supplying of:

 (a) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.1996, c.113.)

 (b) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.1996, c.113.)

 (c) Thermal energy produced by a cogeneration facility, for use for heating or air conditioning or both, for any term not exceeding 40 years, when the contract is approved by the Board of Public Utilities. For the purposes of this paragraph, "cogeneration" means the simultaneous production in one facility of electric power and other forms of useful energy such as heating or process steam;

 (2) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.1977, c.53.)

 (3) The collection and disposal of municipal solid waste, the collection and disposition of recyclable material, or the disposal of sewage sludge, for any term not exceeding in the aggregate, five years;

 (4) The collection and recycling of methane gas from a sanitary landfill facility, for any term not exceeding 25 years, when the contract is in conformance with a district solid waste management plan approved pursuant to P.L.1970, c.39 (C.13:1E-1 et seq.), and with the approval of the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs and the Department of Environmental Protection. The contracting unit shall award the contract to the highest responsible bidder, notwithstanding that the contract price may be in excess of the amount of any necessarily related administrative expenses; except that if the contract requires the contracting unit to expend funds only, the contracting unit shall award the contract to the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidder. The approval by the Division of Local Government Services of public bidding requirements shall not be required for those contracts exempted therefrom pursuant to section 5 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-5);

 (5) Data processing service, for any term of not more than seven years;

 (6) Insurance, including the purchase of insurance coverages, insurance consulting or administrative services, claims administration services and including participation in a joint self-insurance fund, risk management program or related services provided by a contracting unit insurance group, or participation in an insurance fund established by a local unit pursuant to N.J.S.40A:10-6, or a joint insurance fund established pursuant to P.L.1983, c.372 (C.40A:10-36 et seq.), for any term of not more than three years;

 (7) Leasing or servicing of (a) automobiles, motor vehicles, machinery, and equipment of every nature and kind, for a period not to exceed five years, or (b) machinery and equipment used in the generation of electricity by a municipal shared services energy authority established pursuant to section 4 of P.L.2015, c.129 (C.40A:66-4), or a contracting unit engaged in the generation of electricity, for a period not to exceed 20 years; provided, however, a contract shall be awarded only subject to and in accordance with the rules and regulations promulgated by the Director of the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs;

 (8) The supplying of any product or the rendering of any service by a company providing voice, data, transmission, or switching services for a term not exceeding five years;

 (9) Any single project for the construction, reconstruction, or rehabilitation of any public building, structure, or facility, or any public works project, including the retention of the services of any architect or engineer in connection therewith, for the length of time authorized and necessary for the completion of the actual construction;

 (10) The providing of food services for any term not exceeding three years;

 (11) On-site inspections and plan review services undertaken by private agencies pursuant to the "State Uniform Construction Code Act," P.L.1975, c.217 (C.52:27D-119 et seq.) for any term of not more than three years;

 (12) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2009, c.4).

 (13) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.1999, c.440.)

 (14) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.1999, c.440.)

 (15) Leasing of motor vehicles, machinery, and other equipment primarily used to fight fires, for a term not to exceed ten years, when the contract includes an option to purchase, subject to and in accordance with rules and regulations promulgated by the Director of the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs;

 (16) The provision of water supply services or the designing, financing, construction, operation, or maintenance, or any combination thereof, of a water supply facility, or any component part or parts thereof, including a water filtration system, for a period not to exceed 40 years, when the contract for these services is approved by the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs, the Board of Public Utilities, and the Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to P.L.1985, c.37 (C.58:26-1 et al.), except that no approvals shall be required for those contracts otherwise exempted pursuant to subsection (30), (31), (34), (35) or (43) of this section. For the purposes of this subsection, "water supply services" means any service provided by a water supply facility; "water filtration system" means any equipment, plants, structures, machinery, apparatus, or land, or any combination thereof, acquired, used, constructed, rehabilitated, or operated for the collection, impoundment, storage, improvement, filtration, or other treatment of drinking water for the purposes of purifying and enhancing water quality and insuring its potability prior to the distribution of the drinking water to the general public for human consumption, including plants and works, and other personal property and appurtenances necessary for their use or operation; and "water supply facility" means and refers to the real property and the plants, structures, or interconnections between existing water supply facilities, machinery and equipment and other property, real, personal, and mixed, acquired, constructed, or operated, or to be acquired, constructed, or operated, in whole or in part by or on behalf of a political subdivision of the State or any agency thereof, for the purpose of augmenting the natural water resources of the State and making available an increased supply of water for all uses, or of conserving existing water resources, and any and all appurtenances necessary, useful, or convenient for the collecting, impounding, storing, improving, treating, filtering, conserving, or transmitting of water and for the preservation and protection of these resources and facilities and providing for the conservation and development of future water supply resources;

 (17) The provision of resource recovery services by a qualified vendor, the disposal of the solid waste delivered for disposal which cannot be processed by a resource recovery facility or the residual ash generated at a resource recovery facility, including hazardous waste and recovered metals and other materials for reuse, or the design, financing, construction, operation, or maintenance of a resource recovery facility for a period not to exceed 40 years when the contract is approved by the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs, and the Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to P.L.1985, c.38 (C.13:1E-136 et al.); and when the resource recovery facility is in conformance with a district solid waste management plan approved pursuant to P.L.1970, c.39 (C.13:1E-1 et seq.). For the purposes of this subsection, "resource recovery facility" means a solid waste facility constructed and operated for the incineration of solid waste for energy production and the recovery of metals and other materials for reuse; or a mechanized composting facility, or any other facility constructed or operated for the collection, separation, recycling, and recovery of metals, glass, paper, and other materials for reuse or for energy production; and "residual ash" means the bottom ash, fly ash, or any combination thereof, resulting from the combustion of solid waste at a resource recovery facility;

 (18) The sale of electricity or thermal energy, or both, produced by a resource recovery facility for a period not to exceed 40 years when the contract is approved by the Board of Public Utilities, and when the resource recovery facility is in conformance with a district solid waste management plan approved pursuant to P.L.1970, c.39 (C.13:1E-1 et seq.). For the purposes of this subsection, "resource recovery facility" means a solid waste facility constructed and operated for the incineration of solid waste for energy production and the recovery of metals and other materials for reuse; or a mechanized composting facility, or any other facility constructed or operated for the collection, separation, recycling, and recovery of metals, glass, paper, and other materials for reuse or for energy production;

 (19) The provision of wastewater treatment services or the designing, financing, construction, operation, or maintenance, or any combination thereof, of a wastewater treatment system, or any component part or parts thereof, for a period not to exceed 40 years, when the contract for these services is approved by the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs and the Department of Environmental Protection pursuant to P.L.1985, c.72 (C.58:27-1 et al.), except that no approvals shall be required for those contracts otherwise exempted pursuant to subsection (36) or (43) of this section. For the purposes of this subsection, "wastewater treatment services" means any services provided by a wastewater treatment system, and "wastewater treatment system" means equipment, plants, structures, machinery, apparatus, or land, or any combination thereof, acquired, used, constructed, or operated for the storage, collection, reduction, recycling, reclamation, disposal, separation, or other treatment of wastewater or sewage sludge, or for the final disposal of residues resulting from the treatment of wastewater, including, but not limited to, pumping and ventilating stations, facilities, plants and works, connections, outfall sewers, interceptors, trunk lines, and other personal property and appurtenances necessary for their operation;

 (20) The supplying of goods or services for the purpose of lighting public streets, for a term not to exceed five years;

 (21) The provision of emergency medical services for a term not to exceed five years;

 (22) Towing and storage contracts, awarded pursuant to paragraph u. of subsection (1) of section 5 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-5) for any term not exceeding three years;

 (23) Fuel for the purpose of generating electricity for a term not to exceed eight years;

 (24) The purchase of electricity or administrative or dispatching services related to the transmission of electricity, from a supplier of electricity subject to the jurisdiction of a federal regulatory agency, from a qualifying small power producing facility or qualifying cogeneration facility, as defined by 16 U.S.C. s.796, or from any supplier of electricity within any regional transmission organization or independent system operator or from an organization or operator or their successors, by a contracting unit engaged in the generation of electricity for retail sale, as of May 24, 1991, for a term not to exceed 40 years, or by a contracting unit engaged solely in the distribution of electricity for retail sale for a term not to exceed ten years, except that a contract with a contracting unit, engaged solely in the distribution of electricity for retail sale, in excess of ten years, shall require the written approval of the Director of the Division of Local Government Services. If the director fails to respond in writing to the contracting unit within 10 business days, the contract shall be deemed approved;

 (25) Basic life support services, for a period not to exceed five years. For the purposes of this subsection, "basic life support" means a basic level of prehospital care, which includes but need not be limited to patient stabilization, airway clearance, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, hemorrhage control, initial wound care, and fracture stabilization;

 (26) (Deleted by amendment, P.L.1999, c.440.)

 (27) The provision of transportation services to an elderly person, an individual with a disability, or an indigent person for any term of not more than three years. For the purposes of this subsection, "elderly person " means a person who is 60 years of age or older. "Individual with a disability" means a person of any age who, by reason of illness, injury, age, congenital malfunction, or other permanent or temporary incapacity or disability, are unable, without special facilities or special planning or design to utilize mass transportation facilities and services as effectively as persons who are not so affected. "Indigent person " means a person of any age whose income does not exceed 100 percent of the poverty level, adjusted for family size, established and adjusted under section 673(2) of subtitle B, the "Community Services Block Grant Act," Pub.L.97-35 (42 U.S.C. s.9902 (2));

 (28) The supplying of liquid oxygen or other chemicals, for a term not to exceed five years, when the contract includes the installation of tanks or other storage facilities by the supplier, on or near the premises of the contracting unit;

 (29) The performance of patient care services by contracted medical staff at county hospitals, correction facilities, and long term care facilities, for any term of not more than three years;

 (30) The acquisition of an equitable interest in a water supply facility pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1993, c.381 (C.58:28-2), or a contract entered into pursuant to the "County and Municipal Water Supply Act," N.J.S.40A:31-1 et seq., if the contract is entered into no later than January 7, 1995, for any term of not more than forty years;

 (31) The provision of water supply services or the financing, construction, operation, or maintenance or any combination thereof, of a water supply facility or any component part or parts thereof, by a partnership or copartnership established pursuant to a contract authorized under section 2 of P.L.1993, c.381 (C.58:28-2), for a period not to exceed 40 years;

 (32) Laundry service and the rental, supply, and cleaning of uniforms for any term of not more than three years;

 (33) The supplying of any product or the rendering of any service, including consulting services, by a cemetery management company for the maintenance and preservation of a municipal cemetery operating pursuant to the "New Jersey Cemetery Act," N.J.S.8A:1-1 et seq., for a term not exceeding 15 years;

 (34) A contract between a public entity and a private firm pursuant to P.L.1995, c.101 (C.58:26-19 et al.) for the provision of water supply services may be entered into for any term which, when all optional extension periods are added, may not exceed 40 years;

 (35) A contract for the purchase of a supply of water from a public utility company subject to the jurisdiction of the Board of Public Utilities in accordance with tariffs and schedules of charges made, charged or exacted or contracts filed with the Board of Public Utilities, for any term of not more than 40 years;

 (36) A contract between a public entity and a private firm or public authority pursuant to P.L.1995, c.216 (C.58:27-19 et al.) for the provision of wastewater treatment services may be entered into for any term of not more than 40 years, including all optional extension periods;

 (37) The operation and management of a facility under a license issued or permit approved by the Department of Environmental Protection, including a wastewater treatment system or a water supply or distribution facility, as the case may be, for any term of not more than ten years. For the purposes of this subsection, "wastewater treatment system" refers to facilities operated or maintained for the storage, collection, reduction, disposal, or other treatment of wastewater or sewage sludge, remediation of groundwater contamination, stormwater runoff, or the final disposal of residues resulting from the treatment of wastewater; and "water supply or distribution facility" refers to facilities operated or maintained for augmenting the natural water resources of the State, increasing the supply of water, conserving existing water resources, or distributing water to users;

 (38) Municipal solid waste collection from facilities owned by a contracting unit, for any term of not more than three years;

 (39) Fuel for heating purposes, for any term of not more than three years;

 (40) Fuel or oil for use in motor vehicles for any term of not more than three years;

 (41) Plowing and removal of snow and ice for any term of not more than three years;

 (42) Purchases made under a contract awarded by the Director of the Division of Purchase and Property in the Department of the Treasury for use by counties, municipalities, or other contracting units pursuant to section 3 of P.L.1969, c.104 (C.52:25-16.1), for a term not to exceed the term of that contract;

 (43) A contract between the governing body of a city of the first class and a duly incorporated nonprofit association for the provision of water supply services as defined in subsection (16) of this section, or wastewater treatment services as defined in subsection (19) of this section, may be entered into for a period not to exceed 40 years;

 (44) The purchase of electricity generated through class I renewable energy or from a power production facility that is fueled by methane gas extracted from a landfill in the county of the contacting unit for any term not exceeding 25 years;

 (45) The provision or performance of goods or services for the purpose of producing class I renewable energy or class II renewable energy, as those terms are defined in section 3 of P.L.1999, c.23 (C.48:3-51), at, or adjacent to, buildings owned by, or operations conducted by, the contracting unit, the entire price of which is to be established as a percentage of the resultant savings in energy costs, for a term not to exceed 15 years; provided, however, that a contract shall be entered into only subject to and in accordance with guidelines promulgated by the Board of Public Utilities establishing a methodology for computing energy cost savings and energy generation costs;

 (46) A power supply contract, as defined pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2015, c.129 (C.40A:66-3), between a member municipality as defined pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2015, c.129 (C.40A:66-3), and the municipal shared services energy authority established pursuant to the provisions of P.L.2015, c.129 (C.40A:66-1 et al.) to meet the electric power needs of its members, for the lease, operation, or management of electric generation within a member municipality's corporate limits and franchise area or the purchase of electricity, or the purchase of fuel for generating units for a term not to exceed 40 years; and

 (47) A contract entered into pursuant to paragraph (2) of subsection a. of section 6 of P.L.2006, c.46 (C.30:9-23.20) between a county hospital authority and a manager for the management, operation, and maintenance of a hospital owned by the authority or the county for a term not to exceed 20 years, provided, however, that a contract entered into pursuant to paragraph (2) of subsection a. of section 6 of P.L.2006, c.46 (C.30:9-23.20) may be renewed for two additional periods, not to exceed five years each.

 Any contract for services other than professional services, the statutory length of which contract is for three years or less, may include provisions for no more than one two-year, or two one-year, extensions, subject to the following limitations: a. The contract shall be awarded by resolution of the governing body upon a finding by the governing body that the services are being performed in an effective and efficient manner; b. No contract shall be extended so that it runs for more than a total of five consecutive years; c. Any price change included as part of an extension shall be based upon the price of the original contract as cumulatively adjusted pursuant to any previous adjustment or extension and shall not exceed the change in the index rate for the 12 months preceding the most recent quarterly calculation available at the time the contract is renewed; and d. The terms and conditions of the contract remain substantially the same.

 All multiyear leases and contracts entered into pursuant to this section, including any two-year or one-year extensions, except contracts involving the supplying of electricity for the purpose of lighting public streets and contracts for thermal energy authorized pursuant to subsection (1) above, construction contracts authorized pursuant to subsection (9) above, contracts for the provision or performance of goods or services or the supplying of equipment to promote energy conservation through the production of class I renewable energy or class II renewable energy authorized pursuant to subsection (45) above, contracts for water supply services or for a water supply facility, or any component part or parts thereof authorized pursuant to subsection (16), (30), (31), (34), (35), (37), or (43) above, contracts for resource recovery services or a resource recovery facility authorized pursuant to subsection (17) above, contracts for the sale of energy produced by a resource recovery facility authorized pursuant to subsection (18) above, contracts for wastewater treatment services or for a wastewater treatment system or any component part or parts thereof authorized pursuant to subsection (19), (36), (37), or (43) above, and contracts for the purchase of electricity or administrative or dispatching services related to the transmission of electricity authorized pursuant to subsection (24) above, contracts for the purchase of electricity generated from a power production facility that is fueled by methane gas authorized pursuant to subsection (44) above, and power supply contracts authorized pursuant to subsection (46) respectively, shall contain a clause making them subject to the availability and appropriation annually of sufficient funds as may be required to meet the extended obligation, or contain an annual cancellation clause.

 The Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs shall adopt and promulgate rules and regulations concerning the methods of accounting for all contracts that do not coincide with the fiscal year.

 All contracts shall cease to have effect at the end of the contracted period and shall not be extended by any mechanism or provision, unless in conformance with the "Local Public Contracts Law," P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-1 et seq.), except that a contract may be extended by mutual agreement of the parties to the contract when a contracting unit has commenced rebidding prior to the time the contract expires or when the awarding of a contract is pending at the time the contract expires.

(cf: P.L.2016, c.55, s.10)

 7. Section 16 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-16) is amended to read as follows:

 16. a. (1) In the preparation of plans and specifications for the construction, alteration or repair of any public building by any contracting unit, when the entire cost of the work will exceed the bid threshold, the architect, engineer or other person preparing the plans and specifications may prepare separate plans and specifications for branches of work in the following categories:

 (1) The plumbing and gas fitting and all kindred work;

 (2) Steam power plants, steam and hot water heating and ventilating and refrigeration apparatus and all kindred work;

 (3) Electrical work, including any electrical power plants, tele-data, fire alarm, or security system;

 (4) Structural steel and ornamental iron work; and

 (5) General construction, which shall include all other work required for the completion of the project.

 (2) With regard to the branch work categories in paragraph (1) of this subsection, the contracting agent shall advertise for and receive, in the manner provided by law, either (a) separate bids for each of said categories, or (b) single bids by general contractors for all the work, goods and services required to complete the public building to be included in a single overall contract, or (c) both. In the case of separate bids under (a) or (c) of this paragraph, contractors for categories (1) through (4) shall not be required to name subcontractors in their bid. In the case of a single bid under (b) or (c), there shall be set forth in the bid the name or names of all subcontractors to whom the general contractor will subcontract for categories (1) through (4). Subcontractors who furnish general construction work pursuant to category (5), or subcontractors who furnish work to named subcontractors pursuant to categories (1) through (4) shall not be named in the bid. Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this paragraph, a contracting unit may choose to require in its bid specification that a subcontractor shall be named in a bid when, in the case of (a) of this paragraph, separate bids for each category, the work of that subcontractor exceeds 35 percent of the contracting unit's estimated amount of value of the work, which shall be set forth in the bid specification.

 (3) The contracting unit shall require evidence of performance security to be submitted simultaneously with the bid. Evidence of performance security may be supplied by the bidder on behalf of himself and any or all subcontractors, or by each respective subcontractor, or by any combination thereof which results in evidence of performance security equaling, but in no event exceeding, the total amount bid.

 b. Whenever a bid sets forth more than one subcontractor for any of the categories (1) through (4) in paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section, the bidder shall submit to the contracting unit a certificate signed by the bidder listing each subcontractor named in the bid for that category. The certificate shall set forth the scope of work, goods and services for which the subcontractor has submitted a price quote and which the bidder has agreed to award to each subcontractor should the bidder be awarded the contract. The certificate shall be submitted to the contracting unit simultaneously with the list of the subcontractors. The certificate may take the form of a single certificate listing all subcontractors or, alternatively, a separate certificate may be submitted for each subcontractor. If a bidder does not submit a certificate or certificates to the contracting unit, the contracting unit shall award the contract to the next **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidder.

 c. Contracts shall be awarded to the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidder. In the event that a contract is advertised for both separate bids for each branch of work and for bids for all work, goods, and services, said contract shall be awarded in the following manner: If the sum total of the amounts bid by the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidder for each branch is less than the amount bid by the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidder for all the work, goods and services, the contracting unit shall award separate contracts for each of such branches to the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidder therefor, but if the sum total of the amounts bid by the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidder for each branch is not less than the amount bid by the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidder for all the work, goods and services, the contracting unit shall award a single overall contract to the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidder for all of such work, goods and services. In every case in which a contract is awarded for a single overall contract, all payments required to be made under such contract for work, goods and services supplied by a subcontractor shall, upon the certification of the contractor of the amount due to the subcontractor, be paid directly to the subcontractor.

 d. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2015, c.201).

 e. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2015, c.201).

 f. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2015, c. 201).

(cf: P.L.2015, c.201, s.2)

 8. Section 24 of P.L.1971, c.198 (C.40A:11-24) is amended to read as follows:

 24. Time for making awards; deposits returned. a. The contracting unit shall award the contract or reject all bids within such time as may be specified in the invitation to bid, but in no case more than 60 days, except that the bids of any bidders who consent thereto may, at the request of the contracting unit, be held for consideration for such longer period as may be agreed. All bid security, except the security of the three apparent **[**lowest**]** most responsible bidders, shall be returned, unless otherwise requested by the bidder, within 10 days after the opening of the bids, Sundays and holidays excepted, and the bids of such bidders shall be considered as withdrawn. Within three days, Sundays and holidays excepted, after the awarding and signing of the contract and the approval of the contractor's performance bond, the bid security of the remaining unsuccessful bidders shall be returned to them.

 b. The contract shall be signed by all parties within the time limit set forth in the specifications, which shall not exceed 21 days, Sundays and holidays excepted, after the making of the award; provided, however, that all parties to the contract may agree to extend the limit set forth in the specifications beyond the 21 day limit required in this subsection. The contractor, upon written request to the contracting unit, is entitled to receive, within seven days of the request, an authorization to proceed pursuant to the terms of the contract on the date set forth in the contract for work to commence, or, if no date is set forth in the contract, upon receipt of authorization. If for any reason the contract is not awarded and the bidders have paid for or paid a deposit for the plans and specifications to the contracting unit, the payment or deposit shall immediately be returned to the bidders when the plans and specifications are returned in reasonable condition within 90 days of notice that the contract has not been awarded.

(cf: P.L.1987, c.48, s.2)

 9. Section 6 of P.L.1985, c.482 (C.40A:11-46) is amended to read as follows:

 6. a. If the contracting agency determines that two bids from qualified small, qualified veteran, qualified minority or qualified women's businesses cannot be obtained, the contracting agency may withdraw the designation of the set-aside contract and resolicit bids on an unrestricted basis pursuant to the provisions of P.L. 1971, c. 198 (C. 40A:11-1 et seq.). The cancelled designation shall not be considered in determining the percentage of contracts awarded pursuant to subsection b. of section 3 of **[**this act**]** P.L.1985, c.482 (C.40A:11-41 et seq.).

 b. If the contracting agency determines that the acceptance of the **[**lowest**]** most responsible bid will result in the payment of an unreasonable price, the contracting agency shall reject all bids and withdraw the designation of the set-aside contract. Qualified small business enterprises, qualified veteran business enterprises, qualified minority business enterprises or qualified women's business enterprises, as appropriate, shall be notified in writing of the set-aside cancellation, the reasons for the rejection and the agency's intent to resolicit bids on an unrestricted basis pursuant to the provisions of P.L. 1971, c. 198 (C. 40A:11-1 et seq.). The cancelled bid solicitation shall not be considered in determining the percentage of contracts awarded pursuant to subsection b. of section 3 of **[**this act**]** P.L.1985, c.482 (C.40A:11-41 et seq.).

(cf: P.L.2013, c.5, s.5)

 10. This act shall take effect immediately and shall apply to local public contracts for which bid requests are made on and after the effective date.

STATEMENT

 This bill would require local contracting units to award a local public contract to the most responsible bidder. Under current law, local contracting units generally have to award these contracts to the lowest responsible bidder. The “lowest responsible bidder” is defined as the bidder who: a) offers a responsive bid at the lowest price; and b) is responsible. The bill would require the award of a local public contract to a bidder based on factors in addition to cost and responsibility, including the efficiency and effectiveness of the bid plan and the performance history of the bidder. Price would remain an integral consideration in selecting winning bidders, but a more holistic evaluation would be required. This bill would give local contracting units the ability to reject impractical low-priced bids, and instead award a local public contract to a low-cost bidder that is best suited to perform the contract.