

TxDOT Bidding Guide

Chapter 1: Getting in the Game

This chapter is written for contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, and newer highway-construction businesses trying to understand how TxDOT bidding works. It is not legal, bonding, accounting, or compliance advice. Always confirm requirements with TxDOT, your bonding agent, your CPA, and the project proposal.

The short version

If you want to bid TxDOT work as a prime contractor, the first gate is usually TxDOT contractor prequalification. TxDOT uses that process to decide whether a company is eligible to receive bid proposals and bid construction or maintenance work.

If you want to work as a subcontractor, you usually do not need to be prequalified with TxDOT. You still need to be set up correctly as a business, including Texas Secretary of State registration where applicable and E-Verify registration, and you need to connect with the prime contractors bidding the work.

That difference matters. A lot of companies ask, "How do I get certified to bid TxDOT work?" In most cases, the better word is "prequalified," not certified.

Certification usually comes up in a different conversation: DBE, SBE, HUB, or other small/disadvantaged business programs. Those programs can matter, especially when a project has DBE goals, but they are separate from the basic question of whether you can bid as a TxDOT prime contractor.

WHITLEY & SIDDON'S

Step 1: Decide where you are entering the work

Before filling out forms, decide which lane you are actually trying to enter.

Prime contractor

A prime contractor bids directly to TxDOT. If awarded the job, the prime signs the contract, provides the required bonding and insurance, manages the work, handles subcontractors, and is responsible for delivery.

If this is your goal, expect to deal with:

- TxDOT contractor prequalification
- Bidding capacity
- iCX access
- Electronic bid bonds
- Project proposals and addenda
- E-Verify
- Insurance
- DBE utilization requirements on applicable federally funded work

Subcontractor

A subcontractor usually does not bid directly to TxDOT. Instead, the subcontractor quotes work to prime contractors who are bidding the job.

If this is your lane, your first job is visibility. You want prime contractors to know who you are, what work you perform, what areas you cover, and how quickly you can quote.

Subcontractors do not need TxDOT prequalification, but TxDOT says subcontractors do need to be registered with the Texas Secretary of State and registered in E-Verify. You should also be ready to provide normal subcontractor documents such as insurance, tax information, safety information, DBE/SBE/HUB status if applicable, and references.

Supplier

Suppliers may be selling materials to a prime contractor, quoting as part of a subcontractor package, or in some cases bidding certain material-supplier work directly. TxDOT has a Materials Supplier Questionnaire for certain material and traffic-control or safety-device projects.

If you mainly supply materials, do not assume the construction prequalification path is the only path. Check whether the Materials Supplier Questionnaire fits the type of work you want.

Step 2: Understand TxDOT prequalification

TxDOT has three main qualification paths, and all of them require annual requalification.

Confidential Questionnaire

The Confidential Questionnaire, often called the CQ, is the full prequalification path. This is normally used for construction projects.

The important practical point: the CQ requires an audited financial statement prepared by an independent CPA firm. TxDOT says the date on the balance sheet of the financial statement must be less than one year old, and qualification is generally valid for one year from that balance sheet date. The company's bidding capacity is tied to the financial information TxDOT reviews. See TxDOT's [Contractor Prequalification](#) page for the current rule.

If a contractor wants to bid regular TxDOT construction work as a prime, this is usually the path to understand first.

Bidder's Questionnaire

The Bidder's Questionnaire, often called the BQ, is for projects where the full CQ requirements are waived. TxDOT describes these as normally smaller construction, routine maintenance, emergency, and specialty projects.

This can be a useful starting point for companies that are not ready for the full CQ path. It is still a TxDOT qualification process, but it is not the same as being fully prequalified for larger construction work.

Materials Supplier Questionnaire

The Materials Supplier Questionnaire, often called the MQ, is for suppliers bidding certain material projects. TxDOT says the MQ does not require financials, and no bidding capacity is assigned for MQ suppliers bidding material projects.

Step 3: Understand bidding capacity

For prime contractors, prequalification is not just a yes-or-no decision. TxDOT also determines bidding capacity.

In plain English, bidding capacity is the maximum dollar value of TxDOT work a contractor may have under contract at one time. If you already have active TxDOT work under contract, that work reduces the amount of remaining capacity available for additional proposals.

That means a contractor may be eligible to bid some projects but not others, depending on the engineer's estimate, current TxDOT work under contract, and the contractor's remaining capacity.

For a new contractor, this is one of the biggest reasons to talk early with a CPA and bonding agent. Your paperwork, financial statement, and bonding support all affect how ready you are to pursue larger work.

Step 4: Do not wait until bid week

TxDOT says prequalification and requalification packets must be received at least 10 days before the project letting so TxDOT has time to review the packet before the letting.

That should be treated as a minimum, not a planning target.

If you are brand new, give yourself more time. A first prequalification package can require financial statements, supporting documents, authorized signer resumes, corrections, and follow-up questions. If something is missing, you do not want to discover that three days before bid opening.

Practical rule: if you want to bid a specific letting, start the prequalification work weeks ahead of that letting, not days ahead.

Step 5: Get ready for iCX

TxDOT uses iCX for bid proposal requests and electronic bid submissions. A new contractor needs to be qualified through contractor prequalification before receiving an iCX administrative account.

Once TxDOT creates the company's iCX administrative account, the company's administrator can create user accounts for employees who need access.

There is another practical detail here: electronic bids require an electronic bid bond. Paper bid bonds and checks cannot be used as bid guaranties on electronic bids. TxDOT notes that initial electronic bonding setup can take as much as a week, and bond clearinghouse companies charge a service fee.

Do not treat electronic bonding as a last-minute detail. Get your surety agent involved early.

Step 6: Handle E-Verify

TxDOT says it will not award a contract to a contractor that is not registered in the Department of Homeland Security's E-Verify Program. Contractors must remain active in E-Verify throughout the life of the contract, and subcontractors must remain active in E-Verify until their work is complete.

This is one of those requirements that can feel administrative until it becomes a problem. If the apparent low bidder has not submitted the proper E-Verify documentation, TxDOT says the bidder can be deemed non-responsive.

For subcontractors, the issue is also real: TxDOT says subcontractors will not be approved to work on TxDOT projects until the documentation has been provided.

Step 7: Know where DBE, SBE, and HUB fit

DBE, SBE, and HUB programs are important, but they are not the same as prime-contractor prequalification.

DBE participation goals are used on federally funded projects to encourage participation by DBE-certified small businesses. On federally funded construction contracts with DBE goals, TxDOT says all bidders must submit a DBE Utilization Plan or document good faith efforts within five calendar days after bid opening, with deadline adjustments when the fifth day falls on a weekend or holiday.

For DBE firms, there is also an important current warning: TxDOT's DBE page currently says all DBE certification-related activities are halted until further notice while reevaluation work is underway. Do not rely on old assumptions about DBE certification timing. Check TxDOT's current DBE guidance before making promises to a customer, prime, or estimating team.

For subcontractors, DBE/SBE/HUB status can help a prime understand where you may fit on goal-oriented projects, but certification alone does not replace good estimating, timely quotes, scope clarity, and the ability to perform the work.

Step 8: Insurance and contract readiness

Bidding is only one part of readiness. Award and execution bring more requirements.

TxDOT's contract letting resources point contractors to required insurance forms, including Form 1560 for construction and maintenance services. TxDOT's certificate-of-insurance page also warns that if insurance lapses during the contract period, TxDOT can issue a cease-work notice and work performed during that period will not be paid.

For a contractor trying to move into TxDOT work, this is another reason to talk early with an insurance agent who understands highway construction work.

WHITLEY & SIDMONS

A practical first checklist

Use this as a starting point, not a complete substitute for TxDOT's instructions.

If you want to bid as a prime

- Confirm your legal business name and registration status.
- Register with E-Verify and save the required documentation.
- Talk to a CPA about whether you need audited financial statements for the Confidential Questionnaire.
- Talk to a bonding agent about bid bonds, performance/payment bonding, and electronic bond setup.
- Decide whether CQ, BQ, or MQ fits the work you plan to pursue.
- Submit the TxDOT questionnaire and supporting documents early.
- Watch for TxDOT follow-up questions or corrections.
- Once qualified, get iCX access set up.
- Learn how to request proposals in iCX.
- Review proposals, plans, addenda, bid items, special provisions, and DBE requirements before bid day.

If you want to work as a subcontractor

- Make sure the business is registered properly.
- Register with E-Verify.
- Prepare a short capability statement: trade, counties/regions, crew capacity, equipment, contacts, insurance, certifications, and recent work.
- Watch letting schedules and project lists for work that fits your scope.
- Find the prime bidders and planholders for those projects.
- Send focused quotes early enough for primes to use them.
- Make your scope clear: what is included, what is excluded, quantities used, addenda reviewed, and quote expiration.
- Follow up after bid day. If your prime did not win, find out who did and whether there may still be subcontracting opportunities.

If you are a supplier

- Identify whether you are selling to primes/subs or trying to bid material work directly.
- Check whether the Materials Supplier Questionnaire applies.
- Track projects where your materials are likely to be needed.
- Make it easy for estimators to request quotes.
- Keep pricing, lead times, freight, exclusions, and addenda status clear.

WHITLEY & SIDDONS

Where Whitley & Siddons can help

Getting qualified is only the first part. The daily work is finding the right projects, tracking who is bidding, watching addenda, organizing outreach, and learning from bid results.

Whitley & Siddons tools are built around that practical workflow. We help contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, and industry partners follow TxDOT opportunities before bid day and understand results after the letting.

If you have questions or would like a walkthrough, fill out the demo request form and tell us what kind of work you pursue: [Request a demo](#).