

OSC's Guidance on Agency Communication with Their Vendors

In April 2012, New York State (NYS) will be implementing a new Statewide Financial System (SFS). The first stage of the SFS, the Central Vendor Registry File (Vendor File), was implemented in January 2011. The Vendor File will provide a central location to maintain timely and reliable information on entities doing business with or receiving payments from NYS. In anticipation of the SFS go-live, the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) has communicated information to the vendor community in a variety of ways. As the SFS go-live date approaches, OSC is preparing for additional communication with vendors. Furthermore, agencies have expressed that they would also like to communicate with their vendors. This document is designed to help agencies plan an effective communication strategy with their vendors by: (1) outlining OSC's communication with vendors; (2) providing talking points for agencies when communicating with vendors; and (3) providing guidance on topics that agencies should not discuss with their vendors.

OSC's Communication With Vendors

OSC's Vendor Management Unit (VMU) has communicated information to the vendor community in a variety of ways. Specifically, VMU has:

- provided an explanation of the Vendor File as it relates to SFS;
- requested identifying information from each vendor, including Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN), Vendor's Legal Name, Remit to Address, and Contact Person's Name and Email;
- requested banking information from each vendor;
- converted vendors to the Vendor File and subsequently provided vendors with their NYS Vendor ID;
- requested the vendor validate the information converted into the Vendor File; and
- invited vendors to enroll into the NYS Vendor Self-Service Portal (e-Supplier).

Information regarding the Vendor File and the SFS is available to vendors on OSC's website: http://www.osc.state.ny.us/vendor_management/index.htm. The website includes a description of what the SFS go-live will mean to vendors, and important go-live dates and activities. When necessary, OSC plans to communicate information regarding system testing and blackout dates. OSC has also encouraged vendors to begin using their SFS Vendor ID numbers.

OSC is currently preparing communications to targeted vendor audiences, including the Association of General Contractors, Contract Reporter subscribers, Office of General Services (OGS) Preferred Contractors, Department of Economic Development (DED) Minority and Women Owned Business Entities (MWBE), and the Not-For Profit Council. OSC is preparing written texts for publications and website bulletin boards that provide information about the SFS go-live and the Vendor File.

Communicating With Vendors – Talking Points

When communicating with vendors, agencies may wish to include the following talking points:

What is the Vendor File? NYS is in the process of implementing a new SFS. Part of this initiative included the establishment of a new Vendor File in January 2011. The Vendor File provides a central location to maintain timely and reliable information on entities doing business with or receiving payments from NYS.

Who is considered a vendor in the Vendor File? A NYS vendor is any business entity, individual, not-for-profit, municipality/local government, or school district that provides goods or services to, has an ongoing relationship with, or receives payment from NYS.

What is an SFS Vendor ID number? Each vendor on the Vendor File is assigned a new SFS Vendor ID number. Their Vendor ID will be sent to them once they are added to the Vendor File. If a vendor has not received correspondence (via email or letter) containing their Vendor ID, they should contact OSC.

What is e-Supplier? Once the vendor receives their Vendor ID, they will be invited to join the NYS Vendor Self-Service application (e-Supplier) for online access to your information. Vendors can maintain their information for all State agencies in e-Supplier. However, vendors are unable to change their bank account information in e-Supplier, and instead, must fill out the appropriate form and send it to VMU.

How do vendors update their information in the Vendor File? It is the vendor's responsibility to ensure the accuracy of their Vendor File information. There are two ways to maintain Vendor File information: (1) online, using e-Supplier and (2) manually, by submitting the appropriate form(s) to NYS.

How will vendors determine the status of payments and invoices? Vendors will have access to payment and invoice status information through e-Supplier. Please note that the payment inquiry website currently available for vendors to check payment status will only contain data for payments prior to 4/1/12. In addition, effective 3/31/12, vendors will no longer receive an e-mail notification when payments are made to them.

Where will vendor payments be sent? Initially e-Supplier will only include a vendor's default payment address. If the vendor is not using electronic payment, checks will only be sent to the default payment address. If a vendor wants the option of having checks sent to an alternative address, they must enter the address in e-Supplier. Agencies cannot direct a payment to an address unless it has been previously established within e-Supplier. However, if the default remit-to address is incorrect, then the vendor must contact VMU; the vendor is unable to make the change in e-Supplier.

How do agencies process transactions against a DBA? In order to process transactions against a DBA, vendors will need to enter the DBA name as an additional address line through e-Supplier. Agencies cannot direct a payment to a DBA name/address unless the vendor has previously established it within e-Supplier.

Where can I go for more information about SFS and the Vendor File? Please visit OSC's website (www.osc.state.ny.us/vendors/index.htm), email VendUpdate@osc.state.ny.us or call the SFS Helpdesk at 1-855-233-8363 or 518-457-7717.

Topics Agencies Should Not Discuss With Vendors

Go-live dates: Go Live is currently scheduled for April 1, 2012. For additional information and updates to interim activities, agencies should refer vendors to OSC's website: http://www.osc.state.ny.us/vendor_management/index.htm. At this website, the vendor can access current SFS information, including go-live dates.

Blackout Period: We plan to post a message on OSC's website and Vendor Portal during the blackout period. However, we do not intend to send a broad-based communication because the blackout will be noticeable to a small population of vendors and an outreach to all vendors will likely cause confusion.