

Dear MSBG Members,

We are writing to inform you of the recent decision regarding the awarding of the grocery bid for our collaborative.

For our 24-25 grocery bid for the West zone, we received submissions from Ace Endico, Thurston and Driscoll, while the East zone had bids from Ace Endico and Driscoll. Our bid specifications and 30B mandate that the bid be awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible vendor. Responsive means that the bid was completed correctly and according to our terms, and responsible means that the vendor has the ability to properly service the award.

Following a detailed review, it was found that Driscoll was the lowest bidder for each zone. We are aware that some districts had NOI billing and crediting issues, and this decision in no way minimizes those issues or concerns. The steering committee had several meetings over the last 2 weeks to discuss whether this issue should make Driscoll a non-responsible bidder, however all components of the vendors' performance for the entire group need to be considered, and when taken as a whole, the committee did not feel Driscoll's performance rose to the level of non-responsibility as outlined in our specifications. The main role of a vendor is to provide our members with food and supplies at the best price, with reliable schedules and professional drivers, and the group's survey responses and communications indicated Driscoll was mostly successful in doing this. Disallowing a vendor due to irresponsibility is a major statement and should not be taken lightly as it will have repercussions on our vendor pool not only this year, but into the future.

Obviously, we need to ensure that these issues are resolved and do not re-occur. The steering committee held a zoom with Driscoll's management on June 17 to start this process, and members of the committee will be meeting in person with them in the near future to ensure all NOI billing issues have been resolved. A group pf committee members will be monitoring NOI on a regular basis, and in conjunction with brokers, ensuring that the system is functioning properly. The committee will communicate with the group as we have these meetings, and we encourage you to reach out to any committee member should the need arise. The complete list of Driscoll contacts is being updated and will be sent out and published on the website this week.

In considering the options for awarding the grocery bid, we faced a significant decision regarding the East zone. If Driscoll had been deemed non-responsive as a bidder, the East zone would have had to go out to rebid, since Ace's submission was non-responsive. This would have placed the East zone in a precarious position, as the only likely potential vendor available for rebid would be Ace, who had already failed to meet the bid requirements in the past. Consequently, the East zone risked being left without a grocery vendor heading into the summer and the next school year. This potential disruption underscored the importance of our decision to award the entire grocery bid to Driscoll, ensuring continuity and stability for our collaborative's food service operations.

We appreciate the efforts and submissions from all the bidders and extend our gratitude for their participation in this process. Moving forward, we are confident that Driscoll will meet our expectations and uphold the standards we require. We, as a steering committee, will take extra steps to be involved in the communication with Driscoll as well as the plan for handling NOI and our bid as a whole.

Thank you for your understanding and your continued commitment to our collaborative's success.

Sincerely, MSBG Steering Committee Members: Jackie Morgan, April Laskey, Gail Koutroubas, Taylor Pirog, Jeanne Johnson, Jeanne Sheridan, Brandon Rabbitt, Sarah Carroll, Jeremy Wells, Julie Dougal, Lori Pahl, and Tim Goossens.