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FROM: Andy Cherullo, Finance Department
COPY: Government Performance and Finance Committee; Patsy Best, Finance, Procurement and Payables Division Manager;
PRESENTER: Tad Carlson, Finance, Purchasing Manager
SUBJECT: Job Order Contracting
DATE: May 19, 2026

PRESENTATION TYPE:

Informational Briefing

SUMMARY:

Job Order Contracting (JOC) is an alternative public work procurement method that eliminates the need for detailed plans to be developed for individual projects. Instead, project scopes are collaboratively developed by the contractor and the City and then project pricing is based on a construction task catalog (CTC) with preestablished rates. This model is best suited for multi-trade or multifaceted projects that do not require significant engineering. JOCs are a valuable tool when timelines are too urgent to allow for a standard solicitation but do not qualify as emergencies and are often leveraged to perform necessary maintenance and repairs which City staff would otherwise not have time to bid and award.

BACKGROUND:

State law generally requires public works projects—construction, repairs, alterations, or improvements funded by public entities—to be procured through a Request for Bids (RFB). An RFB typically requires detailed plans (called specifications) describing all aspects of the project which often take staff many hours to produce. After bids are submitted, generally the contract is awarded to the lowest qualified bidder. While effective for many projects, this process is often inefficient for smaller or less complex work because staff time spent crafting full specifications outweighs cost savings. In practice, the standard bid model also tends to favor larger, established firms, limiting access for historically underutilized contractors.

The legislature provides only a few alternatives to the full RFB process, and JOCs are one of them. JOCs help reduce staff time spent developing detailed specifications and expand opportunities for smaller and historically underutilized contractors. State law requires that 90 percent of JOC work be subcontracted, creating additional pathways for these firms.

JOCs must be carefully managed to ensure compliance with regulation and to ensure the City is getting the best value possible when leveraging the contract. A consultant is strongly recommended when establishing and operating a new JOC program. If implemented, Procurement and Payables staff would assist departments in determining when a JOC is appropriate as well as connecting department staff with a consultant and prime contractor.

ISSUE:

City of Tacoma does not currently have a JOC program, which is a standard component of a comprehensive public works procurement strategy.

ALTERNATIVES:



The City would continue procuring public works through traditional methods, foregoing potential time savings, increased project capacity, and reduced barriers for historically underutilized contractors.

RECOMMENDATION:

This memo serves as an informational briefing.