

Municipal Partnership Guide

Unlocking Faster, Smarter Service Delivery Through Piggybacking

Presented by SAFEbuilt[®]



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Get the Services You Need — Without Starting From Scratch

Staffing shortages. Tight budgets. Rising service demands.

If that sounds familiar, you're not alone. For city managers, procurement officers, and newly elected officials, the need for fast, compliant solutions has never been more urgent.

That's where piggybacking can help.

Also known as *cooperative purchasing* or *contract adoption*, piggybacking is a smart strategy that lets you tap into an existing, competitively awarded contract, saving time, reducing administrative burden, and accelerating results.

This guide is designed to help you explore how piggybacking works, when it's a smart strategy, and how to use it confidently to support your community's goals.

Note: While this approach may be available in other areas, this guide focuses on communities in Florida, Georgia, and Texas. Always consult your local procurement laws and contract requirements before moving forward. Piggybacking must meet specific legal and procedural standards to be valid—what works in one jurisdiction may require additional steps or approvals in another.

SECTION 1:

What Is Piggybacking?

Piggybacking is a public procurement strategy that allows one municipality to use another's competitively awarded contract, without launching a new RFP or public bid.

It's fast, compliant, and often underused by communities that need help the most.

While the concept is simple, how it is applied can vary. Some communities require council approval or have unique procurement thresholds that impact how and when piggybacking can be used, so please check your local and state ordinances before proceeding.

How It Works

- A neighboring jurisdiction awards a contract through a competitive bid process.
- The contract includes language allowing other entities to “piggyback” on its terms.
- If the contract scope fits your needs—and your procurement rules permit it—you can adopt the agreement and move forward quickly.

SAFEbuilt has helped communities use piggybacking to bring in inspectors, plan reviewers, engineers, planners, and code enforcement officers in a matter of days, especially in moments of transition, unexpected staff turnover, or urgent service needs.

Piggybacking vs. Traditional Procurement

Here's a quick look at how the two approaches compare, especially when time, staffing, and flexibility are on the line:

Traditional Procurement

RFP process required

May take 4-6 months

New vendor selection

Piggybacking

Uses existing contract

Can take days or weeks

Vendor already vetted

When used strategically, piggybacking helps municipalities fill gaps fast, avoid service delays, and move projects forward—without the red tape. And most importantly, while keeping your residents happy.



SECTION 2:

When Piggybacking Makes Strategic Sense

Piggybacking isn't just convenient—it's often the fastest, most practical solution when your community is under pressure. From staffing gaps to urgent deadlines, here are the common scenarios where piggybacking delivers immediate value:

Common Use Cases

Staffing shortages or sudden vacancies

When internal roles go unfilled, piggybacking gives cities access to certified professionals without the delay of hiring or onboarding.

Development surges and permit backlogs

Rapid growth often creates more work than your team can keep up with. Piggybacking helps you scale inspections, plan reviews, or code enforcement quickly.

Leadership transitions and department turnover

New leadership often inherits immediate needs. Piggybacking provides access to proven vendors without waiting for a full procurement cycle.

Emergency needs or time-sensitive projects

During declared emergencies, local and state ordinances often allow more flexibility to accelerate recovery, but that window is usually short. Piggybacking helps you act quickly while staying compliant.

Tight budgets and limited procurement capacity

When every resource counts, piggybacking reduces administrative burden and accelerates access to services, without starting from scratch.

Who's Involved— and How They Benefit

Piggybacking typically involves collaboration across municipal departments. At SAFEbuilt, we make that easier by assigning a dedicated account manager to your city, someone who knows your priorities and helps you navigate every step of the process.

City Managers

Immediate relief for critical service gaps—without overloading internal teams.

Finance Directors

Improved cost control, fewer unplanned expenses, and clearer budget forecasting.

Building Officials

Quick access to certified inspectors and reviewers without the delay of recruitment.

Elected Officials

Deliver visible, early wins and demonstrate responsive leadership from day one.

Leaders in Small or Rural Communities

Tap into expert support without the cost or complexity of hiring full-time staff.

Community & Economic Development Directors

Show investors your city can move fast and speed up revenue for both sides.

“[SAFEbuilt] provided us with superior services and their staff have been excellent at communicating with us every step of the way. They have gone above and beyond the call of duty.”

— Engineer, City of Pompano Beach, Florida

SECTION 3:

The Business Case for Piggybacking

Piggybacking isn't a workaround—it's a strategic, fully compliant approach to service delivery that saves time, reduces costs, and minimizes disruption. When municipalities face urgent needs, lean budgets, or limited procurement bandwidth, piggybacking offers a fast, effective path forward, without compromising standards or oversight.

Cost and Resource Efficiency

Launching a new procurement process requires time, staffing, and budget. Piggybacking helps municipalities avoid that lift by using an existing, competitively awarded contract from a regional neighboring city or county.

Direct savings

Traditional RFPs require legal review, advertising, bid evaluation, and vendor onboarding. Piggybacking removes those steps by adopting pre-approved pricing and terms.

Indirect savings

Administrative delays, interdepartmental coordination, and staffing hours all add up. Piggybacking minimizes these burdens, allowing teams to stay focused on critical operations.

Opportunity savings

When procurement delays stall inspections, permits, or plan reviews, the cost isn't just internal—it affects community growth, revenue generation, and public trust. Piggybacking keeps projects on track and revenue flowing.

Note: While piggybacking can streamline the process significantly, internal approvals—such as council or commission review—may still apply. Always confirm your city's procurement thresholds and legal procedures before proceeding.

Speed to Service

Traditional procurement can take 4–6 months or longer, especially if legal reviews, commission approvals, or committee evaluations are required. With piggybacking, many cities can start services in days or weeks, when conditions align.

Here's why:

- No need to draft or publish a new RFP
- No separate vendor reviews or interviews
- No new evaluation or negotiation process
- Scope, pricing, and contract terms are already established

When urgency is high, piggybacking offers a fast track from approval to implementation, particularly for roles like inspectors, plan reviewers, or code enforcement officers.

Built-In Assurance

Because piggybacking uses a previously awarded competitive contract, cities benefit from an added level of due diligence. The vendor has already been vetted and selected by a peer municipality, which helps reduce the risks commonly associated with onboarding a new partner.

Key benefits

- **Prequalified vendors:** Services and pricing already reviewed and approved
- **Defined deliverables:** Clear expectations and scope
- **Performance-ready partners:** Faster onboarding and better outcomes

The result is a smoother path to service, with less red tape, lower risk, and stronger confidence.

SAFEbuilt partners with over 2,000 communities across the U.S., so when you piggyback with us, you're not starting from scratch. You're building on *proven experience* and *existing trust*.

Long-Term Value

While often used for urgent needs, piggybacking also brings lasting benefits. Cities that use this method strategically report fewer procurement bottlenecks, reduced overhead, and better outcomes for residents.

When used wisely, piggybacking becomes more than a short-term fix—it's a long-term tool for staying agile, compliant, and fiscally responsible.

SECTION 4:

What You Can (and Can't) Piggyback

Contract adoption can be a powerful tool—but only when the contract, services, and circumstances align. Not every situation qualifies, and using the wrong contract can create legal or operational challenges. The key is understanding what qualifies, what doesn't, and where extra diligence is required.

Common Services That Work Well for Piggybacking

This approach is most often used to address staffing shortages and immediate service gaps in community development services departments. These are operational services—clearly scoped, frequently needed, and ideal for fast deployment under an existing agreement.

Commonly piggybacked services include:

- Building inspections
- Plan review
- Permitting support
- Code enforcement
- Zoning and planning application reviews

SAFEbuilt has helped cities successfully activate these services within a short period of time—particularly during transitions, backlogs, or high-volume seasons.

When Piggybacking May Not Be Allowed—or Advisable

Even when the need is urgent, some services or contract situations fall outside the scope of what piggybacking permits. Here's where municipalities should proceed carefully—or explore an alternate procurement method.

The contract doesn't include cooperative use language

If the original agreement doesn't include assignability, interlocal, or cooperative purchasing clauses, it may not be legally extendable to other jurisdictions.

The scope or volume differs significantly

Substantially increasing the workload or changing the deliverables can invalidate the terms. Any deviation from the original intent can trigger compliance issues.

The services aren't comparable

Piggybacking is intended for “like-for-like” services. If the service type, purpose, or delivery method differs from the original contract, piggybacking may not apply. Your SAFEbuilt Account Manager can help you identify if it is a good fit for your city.

Pricing can't be justified

You'll need to confirm the pricing is still competitive and appropriate for your region and scope. Without documentation—like rate sheets, cost comparisons, or recent usage—approval may be delayed or denied.

The originating city doesn't approve

You must notify (and receive written consent from) the city or county that holds the original contract. This is a legal requirement in most jurisdictions and helps avoid misunderstandings around contract use.

Specialized or professional services are involved

Certain creative, advisory, or consulting services often require their own competitive process. If the value lies in unique expertise or individual qualifications, piggybacking may not apply.

CASE STUDY:

A Scalable Solution for a North Miami-Dade Municipality

In 2023, a leadership transition left a municipality in north Miami-Dade County with unexpected vacancies and no time to issue a new RFP. To avoid permit delays and resident frustration, the municipality explored cooperative purchasing.

By using an active agreement between SAFEbuilt and a city nearby, the municipality was able to engage SAFEbuilt under a \$25,000 contract for immediate inspection support.

Over five months, the partnership expanded to cover:

- Approximately 75% of building department operations
- Building Official Services
- Permit technician support
- Plan review services

This example shows how flexible this method can be, allowing a municipality to begin with a focused scope and scale services over time as needs evolve, while ensuring uninterrupted service delivery and maintaining resident satisfaction.



SECTION 5:

Implementation Roadmap: Getting Started

Once you've confirmed piggybacking is a viable option, the next step is execution. This chapter walks through how to move from identification to implementation—with confidence, clarity, and compliance.

Step 1: Define Your Need

Start by pinpointing exactly what your city needs and why. Being clear upfront helps you find the right contract fit and streamline internal approvals.

Clarify the scope

- What specific service(s) are needed, and why now?
- Is this a short-term fix or part of a broader staffing strategy?
- How much support do we need (e.g., full-time, part-time, on-call)?
- Are we replicating another city's model or adapting it to our own?

If you're unsure what's possible, SAFEbuilt can help evaluate whether an existing contract fits your needs, and if so, how to move forward.

Step 2: Identify Eligible Contracts

If another city in your state already holds a SAFEbuilt contract (or any of our subsidiaries*) for the services you need, you may be able to piggyback—if certain conditions are met.

Look for alignment

- The contract includes piggybacking or cooperative use language
- The scope of services and pricing are a close match
- Both the originating city and vendor are willing to authorize participation

SAFEbuilt maintains a growing network of contracts across Florida, Georgia, and Texas that may be available to other municipalities, depending on need and fit.

* SAFEbuilt operates under the name of Calvin, Giordano & Associates, Interwest Consulting Group, PMCA, Weintraub Engineering, Winston Services in certain states. For a full list, please consult our website.

Step 3: Coordinate Internal Approvals

Even with a qualifying contract, you will need internal buy-in to move forward. Your procurement, finance, and legal teams will want to confirm the method aligns with local policy and risk standards and tolerance.

Secure internal support

- Does this approach comply with our procurement policy?
- Can we justify pricing and scope alignment?
- Are there any political, union, or public perception concerns to navigate?
- Your SAFEbuilt representative will help you navigate and ins and out of the process to get your project started.

Build a complete piggybacking packet

To simplify reviews and keep things moving, prepare a full documentation package that includes:

- The original solicitation or RFP (if applicable)
- The fully executed parent contract
- Any relevant addendums or amendments
- A proposed scope of work based on your city's needs

Having this packet ready helps validate compliance, support internal signoff, and avoid delays.

Step 4: Execute and Launch

Once your internal stakeholders are aligned—and the originating city has given formal consent—you're ready to activate services.

Key next steps

- Confirm contract start date, term, and transition plan
- Execute a cooperative agreement between your city and SAFEbuilt
- Align on reporting expectations, billing, and communication
- Brief department staff and stakeholders on how the partnership will work
- Kick-off meeting to meet your Client Success team

SAFEbuilt supports each step of the onboarding process—from contract alignment to kickoff—so your city gets exactly what it needs, without unnecessary complexity.

SECTION 6:

Frequently Asked Questions

Procurement in the public sector can be complex—especially under time constraints or when service continuity is critical. Below are answers to the most common questions cities ask when considering the use of an existing, competitively awarded contract.

Is this approach legal?

Yes, when properly applied. Cooperative purchasing, often referred to as piggybacking, is a recognized and widely used procurement method in many states. Always check your local ordinances, legal team, and procurement policies before moving forward.

Will we lose control over service quality?

Not at all. Your city defines the scope of work, expectations, and oversight. This method simply accelerates the contracting process: you still retain full authority over service scope, performance expectations, and accountability measures.

How do we ensure we're getting competitive rates?

The original agreement was awarded through a competitive process, which typically includes a pricing evaluation. That said, your city can—and should—review SAFEbuilt's current rates alongside internal benchmarks or market comparisons to ensure they align with your project scope and budget.

What if the services we need aren't an exact match?

The contract should closely align with your city's needs. If there are major differences in scope, scale, or deliverables, a new procurement may be required. SAFEbuilt's dedicated account manager can help evaluate contract compatibility and determine if adoption is a viable option.

What happens when the original contract expires or renews?

Your participation is generally tied to the terms and duration of the original contract. If the originating agency renews the agreement, your city may need to confirm continued participation to remain in compliance with local procurement policies. Depending on the location of your city, contract adoption may only be valid during the active term of the original agreement, so it's important to review renewal timelines and consult your legal or procurement team before proceeding. In many instances, a simple amendment is necessary.

Can we customize the level of service?

Yes—within the parameters of the contract. If your city's needs fall within the existing scope, you can define service levels accordingly. For needs outside that scope, a separate agreement may be required.

How long does a piggybacking arrangement last?

That depends on the original contract. Most are structured as multi-year terms (e.g., 3 years with optional renewals), although it varies from one location to another. Your city's participation begins when you execute the agreement.

Can we add piggybacked staff to our internal team later?

No. Piggybacking provides contracted support—not direct hires. However, it's a great interim solution while your city navigates internal hiring, reorganization, or long-term planning. If your city is happy with our services, we can offer a continuing services agreement via a sole proposal approach.

Move Forward With Confidence

Cities today need faster, more flexible ways to deliver essential services—and waiting months for a new RFP isn't always an option.

If you're navigating staffing gaps, stepping into a leadership role, or simply looking to accelerate progress, there's a better way forward. With the right contract in place, your city can activate support quickly, stay compliant, and keep momentum going.

SAFEbuilt has helped dozens of communities do exactly that—by aligning with pre-approved contracts that fill urgent needs without adding complexity.

Our team is here to help you explore your options, assess contract fit, and launch services with clarity and confidence.



Let's move your city forward—faster, smarter, and with less red tape.

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Municipalities and public agencies should consult legal counsel, procurement officials, or governing authorities to determine how local laws, ordinances, or internal policies may impact the use of contract adoption or cooperative purchasing mechanisms.

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