

## Certified Purchasing Office Polices and Procedures

As per Section 31-7-1(i) Certified Purchasing Office shall be defined as any purchasing office wherein 50% or more of the purchasing agents hold a certification from the Universal Public Purchasing Certification Council or other nationally recognized purchasing certification. For the purposes of this policy purchasing agent shall be defined using the general meaning set forth in section 31-4-1(c) "Purchasing agent" shall mean any administrator, superintendent, purchase clerk or other chief officer so designated having general or special authority to negotiate for and make private contract for or purchase for any governing authority *or state agency*. (State agency is not included in the statute related to Purchasing Agent.) Generally speaking, if a person has the authority to issue purchase orders, issue invitations to bid, receive and accept bids, negotiate contract clauses, etc., they should be considered a purchasing agent for the purposes of this policy.

An entity may apply to become a Certified Purchasing Office by completing an application and submitting with appropriate documentation to the Office of Purchasing and Travel. The application will require the name of the agency, address, phone number and e-mail address of person submitting the application. In addition the application will require that all purchasing agents for the entity be listed with phone numbers, e-mail addresses and certifications. Proof of certification must show the name of the certification holder, the entity issuing the certification, the issue date and the expiration date of the certification. The proof of certification must be submitted with the application. (A copy of the certificate will be accepted provided that the required information is included.)

Upon receipt of the application, the Office of Purchasing and Travel will verify that 50% or more of the purchasing agents are certified by a qualified entity (UPPCC or other nationally recognized certification) and if properly documented will issue a certificate to the entity which shall be good for a twelve (12) month period. If a purchasing agent's certification expires prior to the twelve (12) month period, and if this change would reduce the number of qualified purchasing agents below 50%, the Office of Purchasing and Travel may issue a Certified Purchasing Office certificate for a period of less than twelve (12) months.

The Certified Purchasing Office will then be legally eligible to purchase from Cooperative Purchasing Agreements that qualify under the statute as follows:

(xxviii) Purchases made pursuant to qualified cooperative purchasing agreements. Purchases made by Certified Purchasing Offices of state agencies or governing authorities under cooperative purchasing agreements previously approved by the Office of Purchasing and Travel and established by or for any city, county, parish, or state government or the Federal Government, provided, however, that the notification to potential contractors included a clause which set forth the availability of the contract to other governmental entities. Such purchases shall only be made if the use of such contract is determined to be in the best interest of the government entity.

State Agencies should note that this authority does not allow them to purchase outside the terms of the statewide competitive bid contracts unless the contract document specifically says that state agencies may use the contract or choose to purchase from a qualified cooperative purchasing agreement. The current state contracts provide the assurance that all state agencies will purchase from the contract and it would be unfair to those vendors to remove that volume without proper notification. Future contract invitations may include a clause which notifies vendors of the availability of cooperative agreements and at that time agencies would have the option.

A qualified cooperative contract is one that has been submitted to and approved by the Office of Purchasing and Travel after careful consideration of the process used to establish the contract, the products covered and the available prices. Vendors will not be allowed to submit contracts to OPT for approval. The Office will only consider contracts submitted by Certified Purchasing Offices. In practical terms this means that a vendor may approach the Certified Purchasing Office of any city, county, or state agencies. If the Certified Purchasing Office feels that the products/prices available under the cooperative agreement would be advantageous, they would then submit a request to the Office of Purchasing and Travel, advising the office of the name of the contract, the vendor, copies of applicable web sites/price lists, etc. The Office will review the documents and may contact the originating purchasing entity for additional information prior to making a decision concerning the acceptability of the contract. Upon approval or disapproval the Office will notify the Certified Purchasing Offices and will maintain a list of all approved contracts. Once approved, all Certified Purchasing Offices may purchase off of the approved cooperative contract.

State agencies with certified purchasing office would, most cases, be exempt from bidding requirements when they purchase from a qualified cooperative contract. The exception would be that if a commodity is covered by a competitively bid contract, the state agencies will be required to purchase from that contract unless the contract specifically allows purchases made from cooperative contracts.

Cities and counties (Governing Authorities) with certified purchasing officers will be exempt from bidding requirements when purchasing from a qualified cooperative contract.

Renewal - it will be the responsibility of the Certified Purchasing Office to be aware of the expiration date of their certification and to submit a new application not more than four (4) months and not less than one (1) month prior to the expiration date. The Office of Purchasing and Travel will not be responsible for notifying the Certified Purchasing Office.