



Portage County
Purchasing Department
Procurement Manual

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1. Purchasing Department Mission

The mission of the Purchasing Department is to assist all County Departments in the effective and efficient procurement of goods and services that are consistent with quality and delivery needs at the lowest possible cost. The Purchasing Department provides leadership in procurement to ensure the County's process is fair, competitive, efficient, and conducted under strict ethical guidelines.

2. General Information

Fair and open competition is a core principle of public procurement and inspires public confidence that goods and services are procured equitably and economically. Documentation of the acts taken and effective monitoring mechanisms are important means of avoiding improprieties and establishing public confidence in the procurement process. It is the duty of all County staff to maintain the public trust by adhering to County standards of professional conduct and ethical behavior. All County personnel are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the procurement process and will be held accountable for actions taken that do not conform to the established procurement process.

3. Applicable Laws, Codes, and Ordinances

All County purchases shall be made in accordance with all Federal, State, and Local Laws, Codes and Ordinances. Purchasing authority is granted by sections 59.52 (9) and 66.0131 of the Wisconsin Statutes and by [Portage County Ordinance section 3.7](#). Except where more restrictive by Portage County Ordinance or this manual, all procurement functions will follow the laws and guidelines set forth by the [State of Wisconsin State Procurement Manual](#). The Procurement Director along with the County Executive have the authority to require more restrictive requirements over the State Procurement Manual should it be determined it is in the best interest of the County.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The general roles and responsibilities regarding procurement are as follows:

- Procurement Director
 - Provide oversight and leadership for procurement related policies and procedures.
 - Conduct competitive solicitations such as bids, proposals, quotes, etc.
 - Conduct negotiations for professional services.
 - Provide procurement information to County leadership when necessary.
 - Attend oversight committees or County Board meetings when necessary to discuss and advise on purchasing issues and the results of bids and proposals.
 - Delegate procurement authority to departments when appropriate.
 - Approve change orders to contracts up to 10% of original contract value.
 - Approve sole source purchases with assistance of Corporation Counsel.
 - Approve requests to waive the competitive solicitation process when appropriate with written justification from departments.
- Purchasing Staff
 - Provide procurement support to County staff.
 - Assist in conducting competitive solicitations such as bids, proposals, quotes, etc.
 - Process requisitions, purchase orders, and P-Card statements via Munis ERP system.
- Department Heads
 - Identify the needs of the department, develop specifications, scope of work, etc.

- Communicate department needs to the Purchasing Department and plan appropriate procurement methods.
- Approve department purchases for goods within budget authority.
- Approve department purchases for services for \$25,000 or less within budget authority.
- Seek approval from and report purchases to the Department Oversight Committee and County Board when appropriate.
- Create written justifications for sole source purchases or written requests to waive the competitive solicitation process for approval by the Procurement Director.
- Complete any tasks not delegated to department staff.
- Department Staff
 - Identify the needs of the department, develop specifications, scope of work, etc. Communicate those needs to the Purchasing Department.
 - Seek approval from Department Head when appropriate.
 - Review bids for compliance with specifications as needed.
 - Verify delivery of goods and services and if they meet the specifications and/or scope of work.

5. **Purchasing Process Basics ([Procurement Flowchart](#))**

The goal of all successful purchases is to get it right:

Right Goods or Services

Right Quantity

Right Time

Right Place

Right Price

The Process can be broken down into a few basic steps:

Step One - Identify the Need:

This is the most critical step to a successful purchase. All needs must be identified including:

- Determine exact specifications and quantity for products.
- Right sizing for vehicles and equipment
- Does it need to be compatible with current equipment or software?
- Detailed scope of work for services.
- When the product or service is needed.
- Description of how products or services will be delivered and to where.
- Are installation, training, or future maintenance services required?
- Estimated cost and budget availability.
- Secure approvals to proceed with the purchase.

Step Two – Procurement

- Check surplus – does another department have what is needed in surplus or the ability to provide the services?
- Work with the Purchasing Department to identify the correct procurement method – open market, cooperative purchases, quotes, bids, proposals, sole source, etc.
- Conduct the procurement, and if necessary use a competitive process.

- If necessary, work with the Purchasing Department and Corporation Counsel to negotiate and execute a contract agreement with the selected vendor.
- Place the order.

Step Three –Receiving goods or services

- Verify delivery/service dates and follow up if necessary.
- Inspect deliveries thoroughly and report any deficiencies in quality or quantity immediately.

Step Four – Payment Processing

- Verify that product or services have been received and are in good order.
- Match invoices with the original order and packing slips.
- Receive against PO.

6. **Developing Specifications**

Specifications establish the design, type of construction, quality, functional capability and performance level desired. Identify the need and the key factors to fulfill the need completely. Be specific, identify grade, type, or other industry standards that must be met. It is very difficult to disqualify a poor quality product if the specifications are vague or limited.

Specifications may include:

- Type of construction or materials.
“Product shall be stainless steel” is typically not specific enough in most cases.
“Product shall be 20 gauge 304 stainless steel” is a much better specification.
- Minimum level of performance required.
“High capacity fan” is typically not specific enough in most cases.
“Fan shall be 50 CFM (cubic feet per minute) minimum” is a much better specification.
- Physical characteristics, size, weight, color, shape, etc.
“Lightweight design” is typically not specific enough in most cases.
“ Product weight shall not exceed 20 lbs.” is a much better specification.
- Delivery and installation requirements. Is the County responsible for unloading the product from the vendor’s truck? Does the product need to be unloaded by the vendor and set in a specific location? Is the vendor required to install the product?
- Quantity and packaging requirements. 1000 items loose in a box or 10 bundles of 100?
- Warranty requirements.
- Training requirements.
- This or equal quality. Identify a specific product (by manufacturer and part number) that meets all our needs and allow bidders to bid that product or an alternate product of equal quality.
- Scope of services. Include method of service delivery, onsite, online, phone, etc. Identify timeliness of service delivery, response time, lead time, time to complete project. Describe in detail what is required including outcomes desired.

7. **Procurement Thresholds and Approval Levels**

Procurement process thresholds:

- Purchases less than \$10,000 may be purchased on the open market by departments directly if the pricing is generally known to be fair. Quotes should be used when an appropriate price is unknown.

- Purchases of \$10,000 or more may be made only after using a competitive process determined by the Purchasing Department. Competitive processes include, but are not limited to, Request for Bid (RFB), Request for Proposal (RFP), Request for Quote (RFQ), and Cooperative Purchase Contracts.
- If a dollar value is unknown or additional information about a product or service is needed to form a bid or proposal packet, a Request for Information (RFI) will be issued to determine scope and estimated cost.

Approval Levels:

- All leases or contracts for services of any type for \$25,000 or less shall be reported to the legislative oversight committee of the department.
- All leases or contracts for services of any type exceeding \$25,000 must be approved by the legislative oversight committee of the department.
- All leases or contracts for services of any type exceeding \$100,000 or 10% of a department's annual budget with a single vendor in a single calendar year or are for an amount of more than \$25,000 per year and which have a duration exceeding one year, must be approved by the legislative oversight committee of the department and by resolution of the County Board, except where otherwise permitted by law.
- All contracts and leases shall be reviewed for legal sufficiency by the Corporation Counsel and shall be kept on file in the originating department, except for those contracts as deemed by the Corporation Counsel to be kept on file with the County Clerk, generally certain large scale or multi-year contracts, contracts for the sale and purchase of real estate, and intergovernmental contracts. In the case of the County Executive, the Finance Committee shall be the designated legislative oversight committee for reporting purposes under this paragraph.
- All contracts and leases shall have a fully executed digital copy stored within the Munis system uploaded by the Purchasing Department.

8. Procurement Methods

The following methods are approved competitive processes to be used in the procurement process. The Purchasing department should be contacted to determine the best method for a particular procurement. The Procurement Director shall have the final authority on the method of procurement to be used.

8.1 Simplified Bidding (State Procurement Manual PRO-C-8)

"Simplified bidding" is a method of procurement used when the estimated cost of a transaction is \$15,000 or less. The Procurement Director may provide written authorization to conduct simplified bidding up to \$25,000 if it is in the best interests of the County.

Simplified bidding takes place when three or more qualified suppliers are solicited to submit bids on a procurement. However, "three or more" is a minimum. The definition of "three or more" bidders is not to be used to restrict competition or to prevent qualified bidders from bidding on procurements.

Procedure:

- A. The agency first determines the estimated cost of the procurement. To establish whether the simplified bidding process or an official solicitation is necessary, the department will use the estimated dollar amount applicable to the entire contract duration.
- B. When the estimated cost is \$10,000 or less the department may award to the vendor judged best able to supply ("best judgment"). In choosing a vendor, the following should be considered: location of delivery point, quality of articles to be supplied, price of articles, conformity with specifications, purpose for which articles are required, and date of delivery.

- C. When the estimated cost is over \$10,000 through \$15,000, the department compares, whenever possible, a minimum of three bids from qualified bidders from any of the current sources below:
1. Price lists,
 2. Quotes on file,
 3. Phone or verbal quotes, or
 4. Written bids.

E-mail quotes from vendors are considered written documentation of a bid. Phone and verbal quotes should be confirmed in writing by the successful vendor. The department must have a procedure to check the invoice against the purchase order to assure proper pricing. The department is responsible for ensuring that purchases do not exceed \$15,000. If a department feels it is in the best interest to use simplified bidding on purchases between \$15,000 and \$20,000 they should contact the Procurement Director to discuss and justify this request.

- D. Once all bids are obtained the department shall review and select the lowest, qualified, responsible bidder to provide the goods and/or services. A requisition must be submitted in the Munis ERP system by the requesting department and all quotes must be attached to the requisition. Failure to attach quotes will result in a rejection from the Purchasing Department.

Recordkeeping:

- A. Documentation of all simplified bidding transactions is required.
1. When the cost is \$10,000 or less, the department shall keep documentation related to the purchase on file in the department office.
 2. When the estimated cost is over \$10,000 records should be attached to the requisition submitted via Munis by the requesting department. Hard copies should be sent to the Purchasing Department to be kept on file. Phone and verbal quotes should be confirmed in writing from the successful vendor. The department must have a procedure in place to check the accuracy of the invoice.

8.2 Request for Bid (RFB)

A Request for Bid is an advertised solicitation that is conducted by the Purchasing Department for goods and services for \$15,000 or more and that can be defined with clear specifications.

Process:

- The Department shall identify the need, notify the Purchasing Department, and develop detailed specifications. Purchasing can assist with the specification development if necessary.
- The Purchasing Department shall incorporate the specifications into a standard bid template and work with the Department to schedule the bid.
- The Purchasing Department shall conduct the bid process, advertise, collect questions, work with the Department on answers/addenda, and open the bids.
- The Purchasing Department will assist Departments in reviewing bid responses and making recommendations for award. Bids shall be awarded to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder that meets all the needs, terms, conditions and specifications.
- The Purchasing Department shall assist the Department in creating the final contract document or purchase order.

8.3 Request for Proposal (RFP)

A Request for Proposal is an advertised solicitation conducted by the Purchasing Department that is used for goods and/or services that are not able to be clearly defined, outcome requirements that have multiple methods to accomplish, or for projects for which the skill or quality of the Contractor needs to be weighed with

the cost. RFP solicitations are weighted and scored by an evaluation team and awarded to the highest scoring proposer.

Process:

- The Department shall identify the needs and notify Purchasing Department.
- Purchasing Department will work with the Department to develop proposal requirements and response requirements, maximum scores for each requirement and a format for submitting costs.
- Purchasing Department shall incorporate the requirements into a RFP template and work with the Department to schedule the RFP.
- Purchasing Department shall conduct the RFP process, advertise, collect questions, work with the Department on answers/addenda, and collect the submittals.
- Purchasing Department will assist in negotiating contract price and terms with the awarded proposer.
- Purchasing Department will work with Corporation Counsel and the Department in creating the final contract document.
- Purchasing Department will report the results of the RFP process to the Department for the Department's discussion and action, if any.

8.4 Request for Information (RFI)

A Request for Information is a type of request used when information and pricing is not readily available for goods, professional services, specialized services or specific construction projects that require a higher degree of skill than usual. The Request for Information may be used to create a short list of vendors for either direct negotiation or bid requests.

8.5 Cooperative Purchasing

The County may participate in, sponsor, conduct, or administer a cooperative purchasing agreement for the procurement of goods and services. Cooperative purchases shall be made in accordance with public procurement principles of open and equitable competition. The County may also purchase from any other government entity without the intervention of bids, Section 66.0131 (2) Wisconsin Statute.

Common cooperative purchasing contracts include:

- State of Wisconsin Cooperative Contracts
- University of Wisconsin Cooperative Contracts
- General Services Administration (GSA) Schedule 70 & 84

State of Wisconsin and UW contracts may be searched on VendorNet:

<http://vendornet.state.wi.us/>

Login: User Name = Portage County

Password = Portage

GSA contracts may be searched at:

<https://www.gsaadvantage.gov>

8.6 Used Equipment Purchases

The purchase of used equipment from vendors when, in the discretion of that department's respective head, the purchase of said used equipment will result in considerable savings to Portage County, shall be submitted to the Procurement Director or Procurement Director's designee for review and approval for waiving requirements of the competitive process. Respective department head must provide written justification to Procurement Director or Procurement Director's designee for review and approval.

8.7 Sole Source Purchasing (Portage County Ordinance- Section 3.7.13)

“Sole Source Purchasing” is a procurement process initiated with a specific vendor without competition who has a unique product or service. The product or service has to be truly unique in design or service method, not just a preferred brand or service provider. Purchases that are considered “sole source” must be approved by the Procurement Director and the Corporation Counsel.

9. Public and Legal Notices (State Procurement Manual PRO-C-6)

The following defines notice types and when they are required to be used:

1. “Legal Notice” means an advertisement of procurement in the Stevens Point Journal
2. “Public Notice” means a posting of a procurement to the official designated website. Posts to Wisconsin VendorNet will automatically create at public notice. Posting to the Portage County website shall also be part of public notice.

Any Request for Bid or Request for Proposal where the estimated cost is to be more than \$25,000 shall be advertised with both Legal and Public notices. One (1) legal notice insertion into the Stevens Point Journal shall occur. Any RFB or RFP where the estimated cost is to be more than \$50,000 shall have two (2) legal notice insertions into the Stevens Point Journal. All RFB’s and RFP’s, regardless of estimated value, shall be advertised publically on the State of Wisconsin VendorNet site and the Portage County website.

Any noncompetitive (Sole Source) awards for goods and services over \$25,000 shall have a legal and public notice with one (1) insertion into the Stevens Point Journal and posted on the State of Wisconsin’s public notice site.

10. Information Technology (IT) Purchases

All requisitions and purchases for information technology (IT) equipment or software must have prior approval from the Director of IT. If a RFB or RFP is issued, the Director of IT shall provide input about the compatibility and other issues related to the software or equipment prior to an award being made. This is to ensure the compatibility of the requested equipment and software with existing systems and also ensure the new technology does not pose risks to cybersecurity of County systems. The Director of IT may waive the compatibility requirement.

11. Emergency Purchases (Portage County Ordinance 3.7.10)

An “emergency situation” is a situation which:

1. Threatens the public health, safety, or welfare; and all of the following conditions exist: was unforeseen; calls for immediate action; and cannot be responded to using established procurement methods; or
2. Exists as the result of a State of Emergency being declared by the County Executive.

The existence of an emergency situation does not preclude the use of the competitive bidding process in its entirety. Department Heads and purchasing staff will obtain such competition as is practical under the emergency requirements of the situation.

If an emergency occurs, the Department Head or other employee of the using department shall purchase the required commodity. Under all circumstances, the Department Head or designee shall, no later than two business days thereafter, submit to the Procurement Director a requisition and a written explanation of the circumstances of the emergency.

Emergency procurement over \$20,000

In emergency situations where the estimated cost of an emergency procurement exceeds \$20,000:

1. The agency will promptly give verbal or written notice of the emergency to the Procurement Director. In his/her absence, the agency may seek approval from the director's designee (on file in the Emergency Management Department).
2. Within two (2) business days, the Department Head must submit written justification with the circumstances of the emergency and why the purchase was made.

12. Retirement Recognition

In honor of employees who have retired from County service a workplace appropriate cake and non-alcohol beverages to be consumed during regular work hours, along with related supplies, may be purchased with County funds, subject to the approval of the Department Head. Total cost may not exceed \$65 and receipts of purchases must be provided.

Applicable to employees who: 1) actually retire from Portage County service at the normal retirement age as established by the Wisconsin Retirement Fund or retire due to a medical disability, and 2) apply for a retirement annuity from the Wisconsin Retirement Fund before their last day of work will be eligible for this recognition.

13. Appeals Process

Notices of intent to protest and protests must be made in writing. Protestors should make their protests as specific as possible and should identify Wisconsin Statutes or Portage County Ordinance provisions that are alleged to have been violated.

The written notice of intent to protest the intent to award a contract must be filed with the Procurement Director, Portage County Wisconsin, 1462 Strongs Ave, Stevens Point, WI 54481, and received in the purchasing office no later than five (5) working days after the notice of intent to award is issued.

The written protest must be received in the purchasing office no later than ten (10) working days after the notice of intent to award is issued.

The Procurement Director shall inform the County Executive and conduct an investigation regarding each protest and may request information from departments or Corporation Counsel when necessary. The Procurement Director may also create an evaluation team to review the merits of the protest, depending on the complexity of the project.

The decision of the Procurement Director may be appealed to the Corporation Counsel Office within (5) working days of issuance. The appeal must allege a violation of a Wisconsin Statute or a Portage County Ordinance provision.

14. Tied Bids

Tied bids exist when the total costs of two or more responses to a request for bid are identical. Cost totals can be carried out to two decimal points to break a tie. Tied bids do not apply to requests for proposals. If the final scores of two or more proposals are identical, the best and final offer process shall be used to break the tie.

If a tied bid occurs, award may be made to the bidder offering the best additional economic benefits to the County such as discounts for early payment, volume discounts, more advantageous contract term, etc.

If all economic benefits are equal, the Procurement Director or designee and one witness may conduct and document one of the following processes to complete the award:

- If only two vendors are tied, flip a coin: Assign “heads” to the vendor whose company name is alphabetically first and “tails” to the other vendor. Flip the coin allowing the coin to come to rest on the floor. If “heads” is up, the vendor whose company name is alphabetically first wins. If “tails” is up, the other vendor wins.
- If more than two vendors are tied, draw lots: Assign similar sized pieces of paper for each tied vendor and conduct a blind draw to select one awarded vendor.

The process used and results shall be documented on the bid tabulation.

15. Surplus

Departments with surplus items of value shall contact Purchasing Department to determine the best method of redistribution, sale or disposal. Purchasing staff will provide the proper paperwork for the Department to complete, if necessary. Methods of sale include, but are not limited to:

- Online Auction
- UW Surplus Store
- Direct Sales
- Trade-in (if requiring new equipment)

16. Waiver of Competitive Process

The Procurement Director may waive the competitive process requirement, if multiple bids, quotations or proposals are not obtainable, for professional services not conducive to competition, or in cases of immediate need for goods and services due to unforeseen circumstances. The Procurement Director will require written justification from Departments as to the circumstances requiring the waiver.