



STREAMLINE YOUR COUNTY PARK PURCHASING

HOW COOPERATIVE CONTRACTS SIMPLIFY PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Imagine your county park: children laughing on playgrounds, families gathering for picnics, while everyone enjoys a clean, safe, and well-maintained space. Behind the scenes, county procurement professionals dedicate considerable time and energy to buying the equipment, technology, and services needed to create and maintain inclusive, sustainable parks that bring communities together.

Though it might seem simple, the public procurement process is much more complex. Buyers must follow strict government requirements to ensure responsible spending of taxpayer money. This meticulous process includes developing a Request for Proposal (RFP), evaluating proposals, negotiating terms, and awarding contracts. On top of that, a 2018 survey by GovWin & Onvia reports that procurement staff are working with leaner teams, longer hours, and stricter budgets. To save time and reduce costs, many public agencies are using cooperative purchasing, which has doubled in use in the past decade. In Georgia, 48% of all government agencies have used a Sourcewell cooperative contract in the last year, making more than \$153 million in purchases.

Enhance your Procurement Process with Cooperative Purchasing

Cooperative purchasing is procurement conducted by, or on behalf of, one or more government units for use by other government units. Purchasing cooperatives take on the time-intensive solicitation process, freeing up valuable time for procurement teams.

“Cooperative purchasing essentially cuts the purchasing process time in half,” explained Dana Kahlhamer, account representative at Sourcewell, a government cooperative. “Your procurement team works with the relevant departments to identify their purchasing needs. They then use a cooperative, which has completed the competitive solicitation process, to select high-quality suppliers with awarded contracts. You can buy what you need when you need it.”

Sourcewell provides easy access to competitively solicited contracts for park facility maintenance and safety equipment, playgrounds, grounds maintenance, and more – all from top suppliers. By harnessing the buying power of thousands of participating agencies, Sourcewell can secure volume pricing and discounts. Often, suppliers’ products and services are delivered by local representatives or dealers, supporting your local economy.

Understand your Legal Statutes and Policies

Cooperative purchasing is widely accepted in Georgia, but it is best to review both state and local statutes to understand your procurement requirements. While your agency may have the authority to use cooperative contracts, you should also consult your agency's policies, procedures, and procurement manuals to understand your internal process. You may need to meet certain requirements or receive approval. If you haven't used cooperative purchasing before, you may need to modify your existing procurement processes.

Choose the Right Cooperative Purchasing Partner

Once you've determined your eligibility, evaluate different available cooperative organizations. Review how closely the competitive process mirrors your own, how easily you can access contract documentation, and pricing. Also, verify if the cooperative has any fees, minimum purchase requirements, or other conditions.

"When evaluating a cooperative, it's important to understand how it's governed, what's available, and how the buying process works," Kahlhamer explains. "Meeting with a contact at each cooperative gives you a chance to ask questions regarding the RFP process and whether the cooperative can help meet your needs."

With Sourcewell, participation is free, with no obligation to purchase. Once registered, participating agencies gain immediate access to hundreds of ready-to-use awarded supplier contracts.

When you're ready to purchase, your cooperative contact can help navigate available contracts and obtain contract documentation. You can contact suppliers for guidance, quotes, and more information. Once you approve the purchase order, be sure to document your agency's cooperative account number and the supplier's awarded contract number to verify the purchase came from a supplier using a competitively solicited cooperative contract.

About Sourcewell

Sourcewell is government empowering government since 1978. Throughout North America, we offer a cooperative purchasing program to streamline the public procurement process. On behalf of fellow public agencies, Sourcewell conducts competitive solicitations, awarding the most responsive and responsible suppliers. Agencies can purchase from hundreds of competitively solicited contracts delivered through local dealers and representatives and awarded through a trusted government process. Sourcewell is a multi-year recipient of the NPI Achievement of Excellence in Procurement Award, with Sourcewell staff serving as force multipliers to help you fulfill your public service mission. Visit sourcewell.mn.gov to learn more.