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Purchasing Policies and Procedures

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General Guidelines (apply to all purchases)

Authorized faculty and staff are empowered to purchase required products and services from external suppliers on behalf of the University. With delegated authority comes responsibility for ensuring that their procurement related duties are executed in an efficient, effective, professional, and ethical manner. Authorized employees are accountable for ensuring that their purchase activity is accurate, necessary, and in accordance with University policies.

Conflict of Interest

Clark University faculty and staff who act on behalf of the University have an obligation to avoid activities or situations which may result in a conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest. Employees must not use their University positions to influence outside organizations or individuals for the direct financial, personal or professional benefit of themselves, members of their families or others with whom there is a personal relationship.

In order to avoid a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest, at no time should an employee solicit or accept gifts from a supplier or contractor or from a potential supplier or contractor. Ordinary business courtesies, such as payment for a modest lunch, are acceptable. Gifts which are promotional items without significant value (less than $50.00) and which are distributed routinely by the supplier to clients, are also acceptable. Gratuities or gifts of money to an employee cannot be accepted at any time.

Never accept any money, commission, object of value, offer of employment or compensation of any kind which is provided or offered directly or indirectly by a supplier, contractor or subcontractor for the purpose of obtaining favorable treatment in connection with a purchase.

Vendor Selection and Qualifications

When selecting a vendor, consider quality, cost, delivery, terms, past vendor performance and the following criteria:

- Vendors must demonstrate their ability to supply goods and services on a regular and timely basis.
- Vendors should be cost competitive.
- Vendors should demonstrate the ability to meet both the specification requirements and applicable industry standards.
- Vendor's financial strength and stability.
- Vendor's reputation for adhering to specifications and delivery schedules.

- Vendor's commitment to the environment and sustainability.
- In support of the Buy Worcester initiative, preference should be given to vendors located in Worcester if all other factors are equal.
- Clark University expects vendors to be affirmative action/equal opportunity employers.
- Clark University supports socially responsible purchasing by favoring companies that are making significant steps towards conflict-free certification. For more information about Clark's purchasing position on conflict materials, please review Clark's purchasing position statement.

Group Purchasing Organizations

Clark belongs to several group purchasing organizations (GPOs). These organizations have negotiated contracts providing discounted pricing on a wide variety of goods and services. In many cases the discounts are significant and/or the vendor provides free shipping. Before purchasing any products or services, you should check to see if the vendor provides discounts through any of the GPO contracts or if the goods/services could be obtained cheaper through a contracted vendor. Please see the group purchasing page for additional important information.

Preferred/Contracted Vendors

The University has negotiated, either directly or through group purchasing organizations, contracts for the purchase of various products and services including the following:

- Office Supplies/Paper
- Bottled Water
- Copiers/Multifunction Devices
- Transportation
- Car Rental

Unless there are unique circumstances or you are able to find cheaper prices elsewhere, every effort should be made to purchase goods or services from these vendors. If you are able to secure cheaper pricing than is available through Clark or group purchasing organization contracts, please share that information with the Business Manager.

Please see the vendors page for a listing of key vendors and their contact information.

Printing:

The University has negotiated rates with AlphaGraphics (located at the copy center) which, in most cases, will be cheaper than their competitors. Faculty and staff are highly encouraged to utilize AlphaGraphics for their printing needs.

Catering:

Dining Services has a full range of options to meet your catering needs. Faculty and staff are strongly encouraged to utilize Dining Services for their catering needs.

Any concerns regarding the ability of AlphaGraphics or Dining Services to meet your needs should be addressed with the Business Manager.

Purchases/Annual Volume Under $10,000

Products or services totaling less than $10,000 may be purchased through any of the following methods:

- P-Card (subject to individual limits)
- Purchase Order
- Personal Funds Reimbursement
- Check Request

While it is not required that all purchases under $10,000 be competitively bid, it is generally prudent to solicit bids/proposals depending on the nature of the goods or services being purchased. Group purchasing contracts should also be checked for all purchases as significant discounts may apply. If the annual anticipated purchases of a product or service from a single vendor will exceed $10,000, the purchases are subjected to the University's bidding requirement as outlined below.

Purchases/Annual Volume of $10,000 or more

Clark University requires competitive bidding for every individual purchase totaling $10,000 or more or where the annual volume of purchases will equal or exceed $10,000. Competition among vendors who can meet the buyer's requirements will help ensure the University's needs are met at the lowest overall cost - price, quality, availability and other factors considered. Written bids must be obtained from at least three (3) qualified vendors, when available. These acquisitions are audited to a stricter standard and it is the purchaser's responsibility to ensure that all related documentation adheres to Clark University's policies.

Non-Competitive Supplier Selection (Selected/Sole Source)

In rare cases, a buyer may be unable to or may choose not to competitively bid the requirements. These situations involve selected or sole sources. A selected source is when alternative suppliers exist but the buyer chooses a particular supplier because of unique technical requirements or past performance by other suppliers (poor service, lack of availability of parts, etc.). A sole source is when no other supplier that is capable of fully meeting the requirements exists.

Examples of legitimate sole source vendors include:

- The requested product is an integral repair part or accessory compatible with existing equipment.
- Only a particular brand or "make" is compatible with existing equipment or inventory.
- Only one supplier is capable of providing the required goods or service.
- An emergency condition exists which makes soliciting three bids impractical.
- Goods are being purchased from a supplier with an established University contract (for example, copy machine/multi-function devices).

Justification for utilizing a selected or sole source must be provided on a completed Competitive Bid Form and be approved by the Business Manager. Selected or sole sources should be an exception.

Excluded Categories

Due to their unique nature, the following categories of purchase are excluded from the competitive bid requirement. Any other exception requires the written approval of the Business Manager:

- Honoraria and fees for entertainers

- Membership fees and subscriptions
- Utilities

Multi Year Arrangements

Certain arrangements for professional services that typically span multiple years such as legal, audit, investment management, food services, health service, etc. do not need to be re-bid each year. These arrangements are, however, still subject to periodic review and open bidding where appropriate.

Bid Request Process

The purchaser should provide each potential bidder with a written, detailed Request For Proposal (RFP). The RFP should clearly list the specifications for the required product or service and should have a submission deadline date. The following guidelines should be followed during the bid process:

- All vendors must be provided with the same information and deadlines to avoid any advantages for any vendor.
- No information on the bids submitted (especially price) may be disclosed to the other competing vendors except for the name of the company.
- Vendors should not be told the dollar amount that should be submitted.
- Vendors should not be allowed to unilaterally resubmit a bid. Resubmission bid requests must include all vendors.
- At least one vendor should have a contract through a Group Purchasing Organizations the University belongs to (if applicable)
- The list of vendors receiving the RFP should be reviewed by the Business Manager.

The most qualified bidder is defined as the bidder who submits the lowest bid quotation in accordance with the requirements set forth in the bid specifications, with consideration given to such factors as:

- Reliability and integrity - does not have a record of contract default or malfeasance in attempting to secure a contract.
- Financial stability - has a sound financial condition as evidenced by financial statements.
- Service and delivery - capable of delivering the specified products, in the required quality and quantity, on time.
- Insurability - ability to meet University liability insurance requirements.

The lowest bidder is not always the most qualified bidder. Judgment must be exercised in evaluating the criteria to determine the most qualified bidder and, therefore, obtaining the best value for the University.

Competitive Bid Form

When purchasing any product or service subject to the competitive bid policy, including purchases from selected/sole sources, a Competitive Bid Form must be completed and submitted to the Business Manager for approval.