

THE BUYERS NETWORK

NOVEMBER 2020

VOL. 30, ISSUE 11

THE BUYERS NETWORK is Published Monthly by the Purchasing Division of the West Virginia Department of Administration to Promote Better Value in Public Purchasing.

Purchasing Announces Procurement Officer of the Year, Excellence in Specification Writing Award Recipients

The West Virginia Purchasing Division is pleased to announce the 2020 recipients for its *Procurement Officer of the Year* and *Excellence in Specification Writing* award programs.

Robert Price, who serves as a backup designated procurement officer for the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), has been named the *2020 Procurement Officer of the Year*, and Sarah Long, C.P.A., Chief Financial Officer for the Department of Administration, earned the *Excellence in Specification Writing* award for her work on behalf of the Department.

Employed by DHHR since 2010, Price is an Administrative Services Manager II. He obtained the West Virginia Procurement: Basic



Robert Price, procurement officer for the DHHR (left), and Sarah Long, CFO for the Dept. of Administration (right; pictured with Purchasing Director Mike Sheets and Cabinet Secretary Allan McVey), have been recognized as the recipients of the 2020 Procurement Officer of the Year and Excellence in Specification Writing awards.

Please see **AWARDS**, page 4

INSIDE...

- **Director's Comments:** Identifying Needs and Clearly Communicating Them is Key to Successful Competitive Purchasing
- **Tell Me More:** The Role of Third-Party Approvals
- **Purchasing Division** Continues to Demonstrate Excellence with National Award Recognition

State Code Encourages Buyers to Procure Recycled Products

Did you know that West Virginia Code requires procurement officers to consider purchasing recycled products? According to § 22-15A-21, "It is the policy of the State of West Virginia that, to the maximum extent possible, all agencies and instrumentalities of the state purchase recycled products. The goal of the state is to achieve a recycled product mix on future purchases."

In addition to West Virginia Code, the *Purchasing Division Procedures Handbook* also reiterates the following guidelines:

1. Agencies should remove any language in the specifications that discriminate against recycled products.
2. All recycled paper products shall be given a price preference of 10%. However, priority must be given to paper products with the highest post-consumer content.
3. The use of disposable and single-use products should be eliminated and

Please see **RECYCLED PRODUCTS**, page 5

Identifying Needs and Clearly Communicating Them is Key to Successful Competitive Purchasing

In the purchasing world, there is a misnomer that low bid means low quality. We (purchasing professionals, at least) are all guilty of making jokes about something being low bid when it breaks or does not work how we intended, but what does low bid truly mean? A good or service that is properly solicited should in fact drive down cost, but not at the expense of quality.

Last month, I talked about the use of mandated internal sources and statewide contracts. While the first is intended to serve a vulnerable population in West Virginia, the latter exercises economies of scale (i.e. more end users drives down pricing). When both of those platforms fail to meet a need, we must then look beyond those processes. That is where competitive purchasing comes in. It is not meant to slow down the process, but it does require some forethought and planning, especially with taxpayer dollars involved.

Imagine if you had to purchase a new home. You would not go out and buy the first home your realtor showed you. You would instead discuss first with your family members what matters to you most, including the number of bedrooms and bathrooms required. You might need a minimum amount of square footage or require a house in a specific location near schools, shopping, and work. You might even need a garage to park your vehicle in or to store your tools.

Those things might be necessities for your family, but for yourself, you might want a back deck to enjoy during nice weather or an area where you can grow a garden. You might want a fenced in yard or parking for up to four vehicles. Those things you could probably do without if you absolutely had to.

Competitive purchasing begins the same way. You must identify your agency's needs first. While your non-mandatory preferences may be taken into consideration, they cannot be used to disqualify a vendor in the evaluation process. Not all purchases will be large. In fact, some might only be hundreds of dollars in cost at most, but as soon as a purchase for those same or similar commodities or services reaches the \$2,500 threshold in a 12-month period, competitive purchasing is required.

Many of you have made delegated purchases under the \$25,000 threshold. Our inspectors visit agencies on a rotating basis to review those agencies' files and ensure they contain the proper supporting documentation. See our documentation checklist for requests for quotations (RFQ) online at www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/Handbook/checklist.html. For RFQs ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000, agency procurement officers must obtain three verbal bids when possible.



If three bids cannot be obtained, they must document their reasonable efforts to obtain those bids. Screenshots are acceptable within this threshold.

For goods or services exceeding \$10,000 but still within the agency-delegated range (up to \$25,000), the agency procurement officer must draft specifications, publish the solicitation within *wvOASIS*, evaluate the bids, and award the contract or purchase order based on the lowest bid meeting the specifications. Because the success of any solicitation largely depends on the specifications, it is in the agency's best interest to adequately plan for, research, and delineate their needs before determining what procurement tool best meets their needs.

When an RFQ is not an option, the Purchasing Division has many other tools at its disposal. Among them include direct awards, best value methods of procurement, emergency purchasing, and cooperative purchasing. Next month, I'll speak more about cooperative purchasing and when and how it might be used.

As always, please don't hesitate to reach out to our staff should you have any questions about the type of procurement that will best suit your needs.

Purchasing Division Announces Internal Reorganization, New Sections and Positions

The Purchasing Division adopted a new organizational structure last month to better address its needs. Effective October 13, 2020, the former Communication and Technical Services section was divided into two new sections: the Communication and Training (CT) section and the Business and Technical Services (BTS) section.

The Communication and Training section will be responsible for communication tasks, such as developing the monthly news-

letter; maintaining formal publications and documents, including the *Purchasing Division Procedures Handbook* and Annual Report; distributing guidance to all designated procurement officers through regular eblasts; maintaining the official Procurement Officer Listing; and more.

Please see STAFF CHANGES, page 3

Tell Me More: The Role of Third-Party Approvals

While the Purchasing Division oversees state purchasing, there are times that approval is needed from a third party. This often occurs when the procured good or service could affect the state's security or negotiated services. Knowing when third-party approval is needed is the responsibility of an agency and should be considered when dealing with time-sensitive procurements.

One of the most common circumstances that requires third-party approval is technology-related procurements. For example, any item that may compromise the state's computer framework must be approved by the West Virginia Office of Technology (WVOT). This rule applies whether the purchase is made from a statewide contract, under the agency's delegated authority, or processed by the Purchasing Division. In the case of the IP statewide contract, step-by-step instructions for obtaining this approval are included in the ordering instructions. A list of information needed by WVOT to approve a procurement was also published in the October 2020 issue of *The Buyers Network*.

Procurements that involve banking services or the purchase of new vehicles also require third-party approval (State Treasurer's Office and Fleet Management Division, respectively). This includes purchases made from the MV and MVTRUCK statewide contracts.

"While third-party approvals are a requirement of Rule rather than the Purchasing Division, we look for that documentation, such as verification from the Secretary of State's Office, as part of the purchasing process," said Assistant Purchasing Director Frank Whittaker. "We want to make sure agencies are following the guidelines. In some cases, the third-party approval is actually three or four different processes."

It is the responsibility of the procurement officer to secure the appropriate third-party approvals which might be needed before a solicitation can be processed. If your agency is not sure if third-party approval is needed, please contact your assigned Purchasing Division buyer.

STAFF CHANGES

Continued from Page 2

Staff will also oversee the Purchasing Division's training program, including in-person workshops and virtual webinars; coordinate the annual agency purchasing conference; manage the state procurement certification program; develop online training modules; oversee compliance with training requirements for designated procurement officers; and more.

The Business and Technical Services section will maintain the Division's technology equipment and manage the web and intranet sites as well as all e-procurement initiatives. Other related administrative functions handled by this section will include managing the vendor registration program, imaging and record retention, bid receipt, and purchase order encumbrance.

"While these two sections have been one for many years, we saw an opportunity to grow and increase our services by dividing the teams," shared Purchasing Director Mike Sheets. "This will not change our day-to-day operations but will allow us to grow in new ways and pursue more projects."

With the development of these new sections, two Purchasing Division employees have transitioned into assistant director roles. Samantha Knapp will be the assistant director over the CT section while Guy Nisbet will be the assistant director over BTS.

Knapp joined the Purchasing Division in 2010 as a staff development specialist and has worked in several positions over the years. Since November 2018, Knapp served as the acting assistant director over the previous Communication and Technical Services section.

"I am looking forward to the challenges this new role will entail," Knapp said. "I believe without a doubt that transparency and education are of the utmost importance, and I will do everything I can to ensure our Communication and Training section not only continues to provide the most practical solutions for our agency partners, but improves and advances our current offerings."

Nisbet came to the Purchasing Division as a buyer in 2011. He was promoted to senior buyer before becoming a buyer supervisor in October 2014.

"I look forward to the opportunity to advance the initiatives of the Purchasing Division through the BTS section," shared Nisbet. "The programs and services administered through this section are so vital and touch so many aspects of the purchasing process."

A copy of the new Purchasing Division organizational chart can be found at www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/orgchart.pdf.

Congratulations to Knapp and Nisbet on their new roles!



Samantha Knapp
Assistant Director,
Communication and Training



Guy Nisbet
Assistant Director,
Business and Technical Services

Purchasing Division Continues to Demonstrate Excellence with National Award Recognition

The West Virginia Purchasing Division has been awarded the prestigious 25th Annual Achievement of Excellence in Procurement® (AEP) for 2020 from the National Procurement Institute, Inc. (NPI). This is the eighth consecutive year the Purchasing Division has received the AEP award from NPI.

“The Purchasing Division’s attention to the details of purchasing continue to save money for the state’s taxpayers while ensuring that state agencies have the tools, supplies and equipment they need to provide excellent service to the public,” said Secretary of Administration Allan McVey. “This achievement is not easy to obtain, with only 188 successful applicants nationwide this year. The Division’s staff members are leading examples of a competent and engaged workforce that promotes efficient and effective practices.”

The AEP award, which is the national program used to benchmark organizational excellence in procurement, is earned by public and nonprofit organizations that obtain a high application score based on standardized criteria designed to measure best procurement practices. The AEP is awarded annually to recognize innovation, professionalism, e-procurement, productivity, and leadership in the procurement function and encourages the development of excellence

as well as continued organizational improvement. The West Virginia Purchasing Division is the only governmental agency in West Virginia and one of only five state agencies in the United States and Canada to receive the award this year.

“We continue to prove that our procurement process upholds the highest of standards in public administration,” said Purchasing Director Mike Sheets.

Founded in 1968, NPI establishes cooperative relationships among its members and develops efficient purchasing methods and practices in the areas of governmental, educational, and institutional procurement. The mission of NPI is to facilitate the educational and professional development of its members. In 1995, NPI established a program designed to recognize organizational excellence in public procurement.



AWARDS

Continued from Page 1

Certification in 2015, the Universal Public Procurement Certification Council’s Certified Public Procurement Officer and Certified Professional Public Buyer certifications in 2014, and plans to sit for the National Institute of Governmental Purchasers’ Certified Procurement Professional exam in the near future.

“Robert works on some of the most complex and difficult procurements. He is always clear when communicating about any subject relating to procurement or any other matter,” said the co-worker who nominated him.

“He came up with the idea to have vendor verifications printed to a PDF and attached to documents in wvOASIS,” the co-worker continued. “Robert is very cooperative and always ready to listen, understand and assist in any situation. Robert is always excited and enthusiastic to procure a variety of commodities and services for his agency. He brings security and assurance to his co-workers, bosses, and vendors.”

“I am very surprised and honored to share this award with the excellent procurement officers who have come before me,” Price said.

In its 25th year, the *Agency Procurement Officer of the Year* award program was created by the Purchasing Division to recognize and honor individuals who have demonstrated high levels of performance and professionalism. Nomination criteria include tenure, performance, communication, internal training, professional development, cost-saving ideas, cooperation

Buyers Network

with Purchasing Division and other state agency personnel, creating a positive image for the organization, establishing and following good purchasing practices, and participating in professional purchasing organizations.

The *Excellence in Specification Writing* award recognizes an individual or agency based on specifications drafted that adequately define the scope of a project, increase competition and elicit the best pricing, can be easily implemented by the agency and vendor, and are clear and concise, unambiguous, and non-contradictory.

Sarah Long, C.P.A., chief financial officer for the Department of Administration, has been selected as the recipient of the *Excellence in Specification Writing* award for 2020. For agencies seeking auditing services, her work on behalf of the Department of Administration’s Cabinet Secretary’s Office will set the minimum standards that each audit firm must meet to qualify as acceptable to be included in the overall State of West Virginia Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. Her efforts will have a lasting impact on state government.

“I am honored to receive this award and to work with our Purchasing Division,” Long said. “Working together to be more specific about our purchasing needs enables us, as agencies, to get good quality firms bidding for the lowest price, while not compromising on a quality product. We are fortunate to have a Purchasing Division that works to accomplish that mission.”

Electronic Signature Services Must Be Competitively Bid

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered the way we live and conduct business. Many agencies have put their staff members on rotating work-from-home/office schedules and others have established entirely remote workforces. This means that getting regular signatures on paper can be highly inconvenient. In response, many agencies are looking into utilizing electronic signatures.

It recently came to the Purchasing Division's attention that some vendors have been aggressively marketing their services, even implying that their product has been approved for statewide use. The Purchasing Division has contacted these vendors and insisted that they not misrepresent their relationship with the state of West Virginia.

If such a vendor has reached out to you about similar services, the Purchasing Division would like to remind you that this is a product/service that must be competitively bid.

"Agencies should also be aware that the process for procuring these services requires approval from both the Office of Technology and Secretary of State," said Assistant Purchasing Director Frank Whittaker.

Since this is a technology service, there will be terms and conditions that must be reviewed and/or modified prior to contract award to ensure compliance with West Virginia Code and the Code of State Rules.

"I would like to remind agencies that any choices previously made under emergency conditions cannot be used for justification as the basis for future direct award contracts," Whittaker said.

Purchasing Division Reaches Approximately 75 Vendors During October Webinar

Last month, the Purchasing Division hosted its bi-annual vendor webinar, titled *Doing Business with West Virginia*. Approximately 75 vendors participated.

The webinar, which was planned to supplement an in-person Open House event this year, provides information and training to current and potential vendors wishing to conduct business with the state of West Virginia. The webinar was recorded and will be used as an on-demand training for any vendor who wishes to learn more about the state purchasing process. To view the recording of the most recent webinar, visit <https://youtu.be/zu3hVuhrNQM>.

The Purchasing Division implemented these webinars several years ago as part of an initiative to reach out to the vendor community to educate them on how to participate in the competitive bid process. During the webinar, vendors receive guidance on how to capitalize on the opportunities to bid and perform work for state government, how to register their company with the Purchasing Division, and how to submit bids for solicitations.

Unfortunately, this year's in-person event was canceled due to current social distancing guidelines. However, the Purchasing Division looks forward to bringing it back in future years following a successful kick-off event last year.

Additional efforts to educate the vendor community are being planned for 2021. Information regarding other vendor training opportunities can be found on the Vendor Resource Center of the Purchasing Division's website, located at www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/vrc. Questions regarding this training may be sent to Purchasing.Training@wv.gov.

RECYCLED PRODUCTS

Continued from Page 1

avoided as much as possible.

4. Agencies and instrumentalities of the state should compost in all land maintenance and landscaping activities. The use of composted or deep stacked poultry litter products, certified by the Commissioner of Agriculture as being free from organisms that are not found in poultry litter produced in this state, have priority unless determined to be economically unfeasible by the agency.

Each year, a report is submitted to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Delegates, and President of the Senate that includes the accomplishments of the Environmental Action Plan outlined in this section of code.

This information can be accessed at any time by reviewing the *Purchasing Division Procedures Handbook Section 3.10.3.2: Recycled Products*. If you are concerned about your procurements following the rules outlined in this section, please contact your agency's assigned Purchasing Division buyer.

THE BUYERS NETWORK

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Latest Certification Recipients Recognized

The Purchasing Division is pleased to announce James Meadows and Toby Welch as the latest recipients in its West Virginia Procurement: Basic Certification program.

Meadows, General Counsel for the Purchasing Division, has worked for the state for more than 10 years.

"We are very proud of the certification program and even more pleased that the Division of Personnel recognized the time, effort, and expertise that it takes to become certified," Meadows said. "I am happy that I was able to participate in the program and attain certification."

Welch, a procurement specialist for the Division of Administrative Services within the Department of Homeland Security, has worked for the state for more than two years.

"It has been a professional goal of mine to achieve certification," he said. "I have been fortunate enough to be immersed in a variety of different procurements. I've also been lucky enough to have supervisors who believe in education and encouraged and motivated me to learn more and achieve more. I am very thankful for the opportunities I have been given and the knowledge everyone has shared with me to help me gain this certification."

State agency procurement officers who are interested in participating in the basic and/or advanced certification programs may review the requirements at www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/training/Certification.

Purchasing Welcomes New Receptionist

The Purchasing Division is pleased to announce that a new employee has recently joined its staff. Brenda Brown joins the Division as an Office Assistant II. In this role, Brown will assist with requisition review, acceptance of bids, faxing unsuccessful bid letters to vendors, correspondence, and more.

Brown, a resident of Kanawha County, previously worked at Walker Machinery as a senior clerk. In her free time, she enjoys hiking in West Virginia and surrounding states, gardening, reading, and traveling.

"I look forward to the opportunity to learn new skills in state government and work in a position that serves the great state of West Virginia," shared Brown. "I hope to be an asset to our team and grow into more responsibility over time within the Purchasing Division."

Welcome Brown to the Purchasing Division!



Current Statewide Contract Update

(As of October 19, 2020)

This page includes a listing of current changes made to statewide contracts issued by the Purchasing Division. Information and dates listed in this Current Statewide Contract Update are subject to change. All statewide contracts are available online at www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/swc. For more information, please contact the buyer assigned to statewide contracts.

New Contracts Actions

Contract	Vendor	Commodity	Effective Date
GSUITE20	SHI International	Software	09/28/20 -09/27/25
SIPE	Verizon Business	Telecomm Services	11/01/20 -10/30/21
VOIP13EEE	Verizon Business	Telecomm Services	10/21/20 -10/20/21

Miscellaneous Actions

Contract	Vendor	Commodity	Description of Change
WWARF19	WV Assoc. of Rehab Facilities	Janitorial Services	To provide updated pricing

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Below is a list of Purchasing Division buyers assigned to specific state agencies.

BUYER	E-MAIL	PHONE
<u>Supervisors</u>		
Tara Lyle	Tara.L.Lyle@wv.gov	558-2544
Linda Harper	Linda.B.Harper@wv.gov	558-0468
<u>Senior Buyers</u>		
Mark Atkins	Mark.A.Atkins@wv.gov	558-2307
Jessica Chambers	Jessica.S.Chambers@wv.gov	558-0246
Josh Hager	Joseph.E.Hageriii@wv.gov	558-8801
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<u>Buyers</u>		
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John Estep	John.W.Estep@wv.gov	558-2566

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