Why suppliers

Weighing flaws in the process – and how to get better bids

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Toward More Sustainable Cell Phones

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Women Take Care; Men Take Charge
OR DO THEY? HOW A MORE DIVERSE WORKFORCE IS CHANGING THE STEREOTYPES

By Jay Smigielski

Stereotypes about gender, ethnicity or race are nearly impossible to erase from our collective consciousness. Whether due to upbringing, popular media, or personal experience, we all have perceptions of how classes of people are “supposed” to act. Gender stereotyping is perhaps the most ingrained because it cuts across racial, ethnic, and national boundaries. The idea of “the man in charge” is prevalent throughout the world, not just in the United States. Gender stereotypes are also the most difficult to change, perhaps because they may contain some truths.

Now before the lynch mob of the politically correct begins to assemble, let me state unequivocally that women are just as capable as men of successfully performing any job, including at the highest level of an organization.

But let me also present a real life example. Several years ago, a formerly pregnant employee visited our workplace with her newborn infant. The men looked briefly and said a few compliments, but soon returned to whatever they were doing. The women, including the head of the department, gathered to coo and admire the baby. They asked the mother how she and the baby were sleeping, how was the delivery, and several other questions. They showed a genuine interest in the mother and child. And this is a good thing.

As women have moved into leadership positions, there is a paradigm shift taking place regarding women’s roles in the workplace. Women in leadership roles are no longer a novelty. Indeed, an all-male leadership team is increasingly rare, especially in the public sector. And the employees of tomorrow will see female managers as the norm, not just on the job, but as part of everyday life. Recently, a study of Census data revealed that in 40 percent of households, women are the primary breadwinners. To the children who grow up in those homes, a woman in charge is routine.

Yet, generally speaking, females do have more empathy than men. And they are bringing that to the workplace. Most organizations have adopted a greater concern for their employees by instituting wellness programs, “flex” time and even employer-sponsored daycare. Federal
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laws such as the Family Medical Leave Act are the direct result of women moving into upper-level career positions. These are not just mushy “feel good” policies. Employers have discovered that the well-being of their employees leads to a more effective and efficient organization. They are good for the bottom line. If these policies were unproductive or a needless drain on resources, they would have been abandoned.

But the workplace is also changing women as well. A few generations ago, even if one had a female boss, it was assumed that she would be more sympathetic to the reasons why you didn’t complete your assignment. It was not an inaccurate assumption. Women who earn leadership roles have learned not to let personal feelings intercede in business decisions. Equal opportunity means that you must perform. And the little girls of today are being conditioned to assume leadership roles.

This is the paradigm shift. Women have made profound changes in the workplace. At the same time, the workplace has changed women. Being nice does not mean being a pushover. A woman entering the workforce no longer will be content to just be a secretary or waitress. She will also realize a leader takes responsibility for the success of the organization. This mutual transformation is not unprecedented.

But is this a permanent transformation? For there to be such a change, and not just a temporary switch of popular opinion, it has to advance human thought, behavior and morality. The idea of having slaves existed in all cultures of the world for thousands of years. Now slavery is universally banned and condemned. Such profound transformation would have been unthinkable a few hundred years ago.

As women are integrated into all levels of the workforce, as the new generation advances and the older one fades away, we will someday wonder what all the fuss was about. The evolution of women into the workforce is the latest ingredient to improve our offices, factories and society.

Therein lies the strength of diversity. Over the life of this nation, we have incorporated the positive traits of a wide variety of cultures into one that is stronger. E Pluribus Unum is the motto that appears on our coins and roughly translates as “out of many – one.” It elegantly summarizes both goal and practice of our country. It has not been, and probably never will be, a smooth transition. But the overall guiding philosophy still continues to strengthen and elevate us as a nation and individuals. <

JAY SMIGIELSKI, CPPO, is materials manager at the City of Norfolk, Va., This column is based on the winning entry in NIGP’s 2013 Diversity Essay Contest.
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A new organization seeks to bring clarity to the area of green purchasing, to raise the bar on supplier performance, and to recognize leaders in the field. There is already a wealth of information in the area of green purchasing. Even so, purchasers often find it hard to translate information into the purchasing choices they make every day. The new Sustainable Purchasing Leadership Council (SPLC) seeks to overcome the current lack of standardization in how sustainable purchasing is defined, guided, measured and rewarded.

A group of leaders in government, industry, academia, standards organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are joining forces to help overcome the obstacles of large organizations seeking to direct trillions of dollars in spending toward sustainable products.

SPLC’s founding members include Office Depot, FedEx, Dell, Waste Management, Ecolab, the cities of San Francisco and Washington, D.C., the states of California and Minnesota, Arizona State and Michigan State universities, UL Environment, and FairTradeUSA. Founding partners include, among others, American National Standards Institute, Institute for Supply Management, National Association of State Procurement Officers and the Product Stewardship Institute.

The council, which evolved from the Keystone Center’s Green Products Roundtable, held its founding summit Aug. 27-28 at the National Academies of Science in Washington, D.C. The goals of the summit included building consensus around the mission, vision and values; finalizing governance of the council, and configuring a work plan for 2013-2014.

The council will begin releasing tools within the next few months for procurement and sustainability professionals, starting with a consensus set of “Principles for Leadership in Sustainable Purchasing,” finalized at the summit. Within six months, the Council will release an analytics buyers guide and training curricula to help organizations measure the social and environmental impacts associated with their spending. The guide will connect scientific impacts from the arena of life-cycle assessments with purchasing communities. More tools will follow, including action-planning guidance for redirecting spending to lower-impact solutions and solicitation-ready templates for a number of high-priority products and service categories.

SPLC plans to implement a recognition program (rating system) modeled on US Green Building Council (USGBC)’s familiar and successful LEED [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design] program. SPLC will recognize organizations for excellence in measuring and mitigating the impacts of their purchasing choices. The goal is to compose a pilot of a rating system (version 1.0) within two years.

“Many long-timers in the sustainable purchasing movement have dreams of having a multi-stakeholder, multi-sector space for collaborating to refine our efforts – a ‘USGBC for procurement,’” said Kevin Lyons, professor of Supply Chain Management at Rutgers University and former chief procurement officer there. “Now that dream is becoming a reality. The biggest challenge for procurement professionals is a wealth of sustainability information. How can we bring it all together in the choices we make every day? How can we make sense of too much information?”

Lyons enumerated current problems, related to sustainable purchasing, that the new council will seek to address:

> **Lack of program guidance.** Policy inconsistency, gaps in product labeling, inertia of standard practices.

> **Ineffective performance measurement.** No standard methodology, siloed accounting practices, no standard process, software not optimized, lack of return on investment (ROI) for program.

> **Need for leadership recognition.** No recognition framework, no professional distinction, no multi-sector forum.
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BUILT FOR IT.
First Step Toward Procurement Savings

UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT SITUATION PAVES THE WAY TO IMPROVING IT

By Jonathan White

In the spring of 2013, NIGP’s strategic partner, Spikes Cavell, developed a “Guide to Procurement Savings” designed to show public sector procurement teams how they can use spend data to understand, change and measure their procurement function. This six-part guide takes the user step by step from understanding their current spending situation, through several ways to identify and deliver efficiencies and finally to monitoring progress and reporting the value procurement teams deliver to their organizations. Let’s look at the first step.

Step 1: Understanding the Current Spending Situation. To know where money can be saved, you need to know where it is spent. But the reality for the majority of public and education sector procurement teams is that access to the data is much more difficult than it should be. Spend and contract information is often incomplete, inappropriately classified for procurement purposes and/or distributed across multiple systems. Fix that (not always a simple task) and you can begin to understand the baseline from which to deliver procurement savings and improve efficiency.

For example, most people are familiar with the 80/20 rule, but did you know that when it comes to public procurement expenditure, the ratio is closer to 90/20 – that is, around 90 percent of spend will be with the top 20 percent of suppliers? If you are on top of the top 20 percent of suppliers, you are well on your way to having 90 percent of spend under management. How many suppliers does that mean you need to manage at your organization and do you have the resources to do so? In a similar vein, many procurement teams are “asked” to spend more with local companies or small businesses, but if you don’t know how much you spend with those groups today, how do you set a target or know if you have achieved it?

Many procurement managers’ gut instinct is that there is maverick spend going on in their organization. But without some idea of the value of that expenditure or what categories it is in, how do you decide what is worth spending your limited time and resources on? Maybe there is a lot of off-contract expenditure, but the efforts you have been making to bring that spend under control for the last couple of years are really beginning to pay off as shown in the accompanying figure.

Combine the on/off contract spend information with data about your organization’s spend and number of vendors by category and you begin to see where the greatest “leakage” is likely to be occurring. Categories of spend with large numbers of suppliers, but low spend per supplier, can be indications of maverick purchasing or undermanaged categories. On the other hand, categories with large amounts of spend with only a handful of suppliers (utilities, insurance and waste management usually fit this description) may have historically been outside of procurement’s purview, but more involvement in the process by the procurement team could increase spend under management, competition, transparency, savings and efficiencies.

For more examples of ways spend data can be used to gain a better understanding of the current spending situation, see Step 1 of the “Guide to Procurement Savings” here: http://www.spikescavell.com/step1.aspx.

JONATHAN WHITE, is territory director for Spikes Cavell, Inc., which equips decision makers in the public sector with the business intelligence, online tools and analytical insight to transform the way they procure goods and services.
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Struggling to maintain a decentralized procurement system, the Raleigh-Durham (N.C.) Airport Authority (RDU) began to experience delays and inadequacies in its processes and to discover gaps in spend resulting from disorganization and insufficient communication. With purchasing functions disbursed along multiple routes across multiple departments, RDU suffered a range of issues, such as an overall sluggish procurement cycle, an overwhelming number of assigned approvers and purchase order requestors, and a misunderstanding of approval paths by employees.

The authority also had an excessive number of suppliers with similar needs to be met, a staggering amount of small-dollar purchases, and overlooked automatic contract renewal terms. Other problems included a lack of standardized RFP and contract templates, and no centralized repository to house solicitations and contracts.

In 2012, the Airport Authority took action, developed a vision and compiled a set of objectives to lead to a complete procurement transformation. “Our mission was to create a robust procurement department as the primary provider of procurement services to enhance transparency and increase efficiency of our processes, all while maintaining a strong customer focus,” said Joe Styres, Deputy Director of Finance, Business and Administration at Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority.

RDU sought direction and support from the public procurement professionals of NIGP’s Consulting Program to jumpstart their strategy to standardize, to the extent feasible, the acquisition of all non-construction products and services by means of streamlining the procurement contracting process.

RDU engaged the services and expertise of a team of three veteran NIGP consultants and involved approximately 50 personnel to provide abundant feedback via individual interviews, small focus groups, and data to review, in order to narrow the scope of the Authority’s needs and maximize the effectiveness of the project.

Key areas included in the breadth of the project were: business process; organizational structure and staffing; policies, procedures, and practices; source documents; and staff development.

Upon conducting an analysis of the data gathered from interaction with personnel, the NIGP Consulting team was able to determine several fundamental pain points on which to focus and tailor their solutions. The consultants found that the departments of Requesting and Purchasing were drowning in high-volume, low-transaction-value activities, and that the procurement function was deeply fragmented.

Further, the contract administrators in need of products and services did not fully comprehend the procurement process and essentially had too much responsibility over it compared to those organizations following best practices.

Styres added, “The NIGP Consulting team helped us analyze the volume of work we were doing and the level of effort we were spending. It was a classic case of two different ‘ends of the pool.’”

On the high-volume end of the procurement spectrum, there was an unnecessary portion of staff involved, lack of delegation of authority for purchase approvals, and no substantial tools to support procurement activity. For the low-volume, high-complexity procurement items, they identified insufficient staffing and lack of the proper training and credentials needed by procurement and contract administration personnel to effectively manage such relatively high-dollar, high-risk acquisitions.

NIGP Consulting also pinpointed that the organization fell short in spend analysis reporting capabilities and both knowledge and usage of cooperative and blanket purchasing agreements, which led to lost opportunities for supplier consolidation and savings on operating costs.

And finally, 80 percent of all transactions totaled less than $1,000 each, indicating the need for a purchasing card (p-card) program in place at RDU.

The consultants laid out a roadmap of recommendations unique to RDU’s circumstances for the Authority leadership to implement.

Taking essential steps toward complete procurement revitalization has produced significant benefits for the Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority.

For more information on this project or to learn more about the NIGP Consulting Program, contact Joe Styres at joe.styres@rdu.com or Matt Walker at mwalker@nigp.com.
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The Future is Calling
UL ENVIRONMENT AND EPEAT IDENTIFYING GREENER CELL PHONES

By Scot Case

UL Environment and the Green Electronics Council (GEC), managers of the EPEAT greener electronics registry, have teamed up to make it easier for government purchasers and others to identify greener, more sustainable cell phones. ECOLOGO has certified 43 models of cell phones made by eight manufacturers as meeting the UL 110 standard, Sustainability for Mobile Phones. All certified phones are currently listed on the UL Environment certified products database at www.ul.com/environment.

UL Environment, using its ECOLOGO certification standard, is working toward inclusion of cell phones on the EPEAT greener electronics registry. (Logo for illustrative purposes only.)

UL Environment is currently navigating UL 110 through the ANSI process to establish it as an official American National Standard. Once that process is finished, products that meet the UL 110 standard will be listed on the EPEAT registry of greener electronic products, www.epeat.net.

U.S. Federal government agencies and many state, provincial, and local governments are required to buy greener electronics listed on the EPEAT registry. The addition of cell phones further expands the EPEAT registry, which is already a source for identifying greener desktop and laptop computers, monitors, televisions, and imaging equipment.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS
The typical lifespan of a cell phone is only 18 months. New phones are constantly being designed, built, and purchased. In 2012, there were more than 326 million wireless device subscriptions in the United States, including 1.5 million Federal government wireless subscriptions. U.S. consumers purchased more than 108.8 million devices last year.

Most new purchases result in the disposal of an older device, generating a substantial electronic waste stream. In 2010, EPA estimates more than 152 million mobile devices were disposed of, more than 350,000 mobile phones every day.

If not recycled or disposed of properly, cell phones can create significant environmental issues because they can contain concentrations of toxic heavy metals and other metals such as cadmium, lead, nickel, mercury, manganese, lithium, zinc, arsenic, beryllium, and copper. These metals can be problematic because they are persistent, meaning they do not degrade in the environment, and they are bioaccumulative, meaning they accumulate in human tissue.

If these metals leach into the environment through improper disposal, they can contaminate groundwater or soil, eventually entering the food chain in sufficient concentrations to cause human health concerns. Adverse human health effects include damage to the nervous system, reproductive and developmental problems, cancer and genetic impacts.

The human health and environmental risks are not limited to the impacts of improper disposal. There are hidden human health and environmental impacts throughout the entire supply chain – from the mining of the raw materials to the manufacturing of components, assembly of the final product, and packaging and shipping.

UL 110 STANDARD
Recognizing the multiple human health and environmental impacts of cell phones and other mobile devices, the UL 110 standard addresses aspects of a mobile phone’s entire lifecycle.

The UL 110 standard addresses a variety of issues to ensure mobile devices:
> Contain more environmentally preferable materials
> Are manufactured using more environmentally and socially responsible practices
> Are designed to be recyclable at the end-of-life
> Are energy efficient
> Have reduced packaging
Have minimal environmental impacts
Have minimal human health risks
Perform efficiently; and
Demonstrate innovation in more sustainable manufacturing practices.

The UL Environment standard uses a point-based approach to recognize greener products. Products can earn points in the following criteria:

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<tr>
<th>Requirement Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing and Operations</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Environment</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packaging</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy Use</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-of-Life Management and Durability</td>
<td>12</td>
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To achieve certification, a mobile phone must earn at least 60 of the available points. Devices earning 80 or more points can earn UL’s ECOLOGO platinum level certification.

Before a device is ECOLOGO certified to the UL 110 standard, UL conducts a rigorous validation process, including an initial desktop audit of documentation provided by the supplier, visual inspection and disassembly of the device and related packaging, and an on-site audit of the manufacturing facilities to inspect quality systems and controls. After the initial audit, the onsite audit is repeated at least every three years, although unannounced, random spot-checks can occur at any time.

NEXT STEPS
UL Environment is facilitating the UL 110 standard through the formal ANSI standard development process. The ANSI process requires additional public comment periods above and beyond the public comment UL Environment conducted during the development of the UL 110 standard.

Upon completion of the process, GEC will open the EPEAT registry to products that UL’s ECOLOGO or others have certified as meeting the UL 110 standard. It is expected that the EPEAT registry will include mobile phones by the end of the first quarter in 2014.

SCOT CASE has been researching and promoting responsible purchasing since 1993. He is the Market Development Director for UL Environment. Contact him via email at scot.case@ul.com or in Reading, PA, at 610-779-3770. This article represents the views of the author only and do not necessarily reflect the views of UL Environment or its affiliates or subsidiaries. This article is for general information purposes only and is not meant to convey legal or other professional advice.

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Why suppliers

Does the procurement process always result in the best value and quality?

By the NIGP Business Council
he competitive bidding process is essential to ensure that products and services purchased by public procurement professionals on behalf of their agencies offer the best value and quality. But not all Requests for Proposal (RFPs) and/or Invitations for Bid (IFBs) are created equal. In theory, the bidding process is designed to result in responses from many potential suppliers. However, what if an RFP/IFB does not result in several qualified responses? If leading suppliers in the marketplace choose not to respond, what does that mean?

It’s unlikely suppliers didn’t know about the RFP/IFB or that they were “too busy” to respond. There’s a possibility some small local suppliers may not have the resources to know about potential bidding opportunities, but most regional, national and international companies monitor these opportunities closely.

Let’s look at some potential reasons why a supplier might opt to “No Bid.” The insights can help an agency strengthen its RFP/IFB practices and realize true best-value solutions.

AVOIDING THE PITFALLS

Here are some potential pitfalls of the RFP/IFB process that can cause a supplier to decide not to bid:

No question and answer period. Often the bid process does not allow a supplier to ask questions of the agency: What are their needs and goals? What are their current processes?

Short timeframe to respond. Companies need to spend a lot of time, resources and money to respond to an RFP/IFB. Often, suppliers must get input from many different departments and will need a full review by their legal staff. This takes time. Agencies that provide only a short window of opportunity to receive bids are not allowing enough time for a supplier to adequately respond.

The RFP/IFB is not clear. In an effort to save time, RFPs/IFBs often use portions that are cut-and-pasted from previous versions. This practice may cause information and language to be included that does not apply to the product being solicited for.

The complexity of the RFP/IFB makes a response unreasonable. A company must decide if the costs associated with producing a quality response are worth the effort and eventual pay-off.

Unreasonable warranty requirements. Some RFPs/IFBs include requirements for suppliers to extend manufacturer warranties and/or for resellers to fix defective equipment (which is outside the scope of their business).

Specifications are too broad. Very general specifications provide an opportunity for an inferior product to win a bid.

Specifications are too specific. Very specific specifications are often perceived as written to favor a particular supplier (i.e., color).

Other requirements. The RFP/IFB specifications may require a company to be registered with a particular group; these registrations can take time.

More communication can solve many of the problems. Although purchasing agents and procurement policies tend to keep suppliers at arm’s length to ensure a level of distance aimed at removing any potential conflicts of interest, the side effect is missed opportunities for each to learn about one another. Procurement professionals can help suppliers understand the unique needs and processes of government customers, and suppliers can educate government agencies about the latest technologies and solutions.

LOOKING FOR ‘BEST VALUE’

Historically, agencies seek to select the lowest cost, qualified supplier who, on face value, meets the specifications (technical, managerial, functional, legal, etc.) of the RFP/IFB. However, in reality what may look good on paper does not always pan out in the end. For example, an agency may restrict itself from taking advantage of new technology or lower long-term costs, etc., by not allowing for considerations outside the scope of a supplier who has a better, more cost-effective solution.

The best practice would be for an entity to approach any procurement through the lens of “best value.” In that context, it would select the most qualified supplier that provides the lowest total cost of ownership/use, which will improve the entity’s process while reducing additional related cost.

LEVERAGING VALUE OF SUPPLIERS

The more specific a RFP/IFB’s specifications become, the more restrictive they become. Although restrictive requests with very specific requirements seem to simplify the selection process and are easier to uphold during protest, the unintended consequence is that the agency may miss out on a supplier who has a better, more cost-effective solution.

A restrictive RFP/IFB requires someone at the agency to become a subject matter expert on the particular product and/or service being solicited. This is impractical. The supplier will almost always knows more about the market than the agency.

Suppliers respond to multiple agency types in their markets (states, counties, cities, districts, school districts, etc.). Because of this, they have diverse knowledge related to the issues agencies experience and their long-term goals.

Agencies have the potential to learn a great deal from the subject matter experts. Reputable, sincere and legitimate suppliers realize they will not win all of the business all of the time; however, they also realize that participating in a well thought-out and fair solicitation process allows them an opportunity to learn more about the markets they serve and to potentially help the agency in the long-term.

In general, suppliers will focus on the agencies from which they receive good viable business. They will also not waste money, time and resources to respond to RFPs/IFBs that they feel confident will not result in potential business and/or those that are clearly written to favor a particular supplier.
FEW RESPONSES MEAN PROCUREMENT HAS FAILED

If a RFP/IFB does not attract responses from all potential vendors, the department has failed. When large and national suppliers do not participate in a RFP/IFB, the agency does not gain the market intelligence of the scale and sophistication that will allow them to take advantage of industry trends and best practices.

When medium-sized suppliers do not participate, it becomes a sign of suppliers electing to move away from the public market to put their energies toward the private sector. These entities can be the most cost-effective portion of the market.

For the small market and the Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE), nonparticipation reduces the impact on the entity’s ability to assist the development of this flexible and creative portion of the market.

Over the years and/or through multiple cycles of the RFP/IFB, when a department sees fewer suppliers participate, it is not a sign of a great solicitation but a sign of less competition. The worst award is the one given to a supplier that has the lowest price (lowest profit or least quality) and is willing to take the chance that they can meet the terms and conditions.

IMPROVING THE PROCESS

Establish opportunities to meet with suppliers, either individually or collectively. Sourcing consultants familiar with specific market areas can be a helpful resource. However, keep in mind they may have their own agendas influencing the guidance they may provide.

Establish a standard process for Vendor Market Solicitation. If planning a group presentation to all interested parties, keep in mind that vendors do not like discussing the uniqueness of their product in front of their competitors.

Additional steps to improve the process include:

- Request for information
- Down select
- Vendor presentations
- Request for quotation
- Final presentation
- Award

To improve the transparency, the entity needs to develop a repeatable process that becomes a standard, encompassing the following aspects:

- Inclusivity
- Highly documented
- Public access

To address political agendas, entities should provide suppliers training on Local Preference and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises six to 12 months in advance of the RFP/IFB release date. Rules are different by agency; for instance, definitions can be different: One agency will classify work as Direct Participation while another might define the work as Indirect Participation. Entities should also support partnerships and joint ventures.

ADDRESSING TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Top contract issues must be explicitly stated. Standard boilerplate language has the potential to drive away very successful suppliers. Suppliers need to know if there is a willingness to reasonably adjust the terms and conditions.

Below are examples of terms that will impede some suppliers:

- Broad indemnification for intellectual property rights.
- Examples include no limitation to U.S. claims, no duty of prompt notification of claim, and no duty to assist suppliers’ lawyers at suppliers’ cost.
- Broad indemnification for injury and property damage, including no requirement of contractor negligence, in addition to no limitation to third party claims. Also, again, there may be no duty of prompt notification of claim or no duty to assist lawyers.
- Broad liability for damages, including liquidated damages
- Most Favored Nation clause
- Other entities may piggyback without meeting creditworthiness standards
- First priority for service over other customers in emergency
- Cancel for Convenience vs. Fiscal Funding Out Clause
- Prevailing Wage

BENEFITS OF OPEN DIALOGUE

An agency’s primary purpose is to serve its constituents in the most effective and efficient way possible. One of the key components of the success of any agency is a fair, equitable and transparent procurement process that results in the best possible solutions, products, and services. As part of the procurement process, the RFP/IFB offers an opportunity for the agency to learn from potential suppliers the latest industry trends, technology innovations, and best practices developed through the experiences of other agencies. If the RFP/IFB does not allow for an open dialogue, or the ability for a potential supplier to respond in a way that could result in the agency seeing the other possibilities in the marketplace, it becomes a hindrance to advancement and a disservice to the constituents the agency serves.

EDITOR’S NOTE: This article is excerpted from an NIGP Business Council White Paper: “We ‘No Bid,’ and I’ll Tell You Why,” which is available at nigp.org. NIGP’s Business Council is comprised of representatives from companies that participate in its Enterprise Sponsor Program. For information about NIGP’s Business Council and Enterprise Sponsor Program, contact Chad Quinn, Enterprise Programs Specialist, at cquinn@nigp.org.
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Local Governments In Illinois Pool Their Purchasing Power

30 communities north of Chicago save tax dollars with the Municipal Partnering Initiative

By Larry Anderson

Facing a national economic downturn and a fiscal crisis in Illinois, local governments in Cook and Lake counties, primarily north of Chicago, are combining municipal contracts to maximize their spending power. Instead of seeking contactors separately to do work common to all municipalities, administrators in 30 or so city and village governments have joined together in a concept they call the Municipal Partnering Initiative (MPI).

The initiative began in 2010 when Glenview, Ill., invited 18 to 20 surrounding communities to a meeting to discuss
ways to stretch their tax dollars in the tight economy by pooling contracts for services all the communities procure, from asphalt patching to tree removal and trimming. All the invited communities showed up for the discussion, but not all of them opted in that first year. About 15 communities decided to participate.

MPI has since gained momentum, and cities from Evanston to Lake Forest and villages from Glencoe to Lincolnwood and Cary to Wheeling now participate — some 30 local governments in all. Contracts cover various aspects of construction, public works and professional services. Combining work for multiple entities into larger contracts and giving suppliers an opportunity to make a single bid for a larger amount of work is a “win-win.” Local governments get better pricing based on economics of scale, suppliers get guaranteed work, and the contracting process is simpler for everyone.

“We initially started the discussions with several of the managers who knew each other,” Todd Hileman, Glenview village manager, said. “There was a necessary minimum level of trust to get it off the ground. A lot of us knew each other going in, had relationships, went to school together. If you don’t have the trust you can’t make it work.”

Some of the communities border one another, while some are up 20 or 30 miles away from Glenview.

WORKING THROUGH THE KINKS

The Municipal Partnering Initiative was a major undertaking that required significant amounts of staff time to review bid specifications, service level needs and current contract costs, plus write new bid specifications. Also, the various communities had differing opinions and perspectives on bid specifications.

Several initial concerns were expressed, such as differences in fiscal years among the participating governments, varied funding sources and differing bid specifications. There were also some concerns about job security. Pooling engineering resources, for example, might lead to positions being eliminated, some administrators feared. Some of the municipal attorneys were resistant at first, but the prospect of simplifying legal documents helped to eliminate their objections.

At the outset there was no clear estimate of the possible cost savings. At best, the communities would save money in contractual costs; at worst, they would fare no better or do poorer than their current pricing.

The MPI partners overcame obstacles by dividing the work among committees to evaluate and write bid specifications for various groups of services and commodities, such as a Public Works Committee and a Construction Committee. Each community assigned staff to work on the committees, each led by a chairperson. To overcome differing opinions for bid specifications, the committees discussed each community’s legacy programs and contracts, and allowed each community to opt in or out of a contract based on the group’s bid specifications. This method respected each community’s needs and political sensitivities but at the same time challenged each to rethink the mantra “this is the way we have always done it.” For example, a variation among specifications for a sewer cleaning contract worked itself out the first year, and the process was streamlined. In the end, more companies participated, Jerry Burke, Glenview public works director, said.

Committee members also had the opportunity to form relationships with peers and counterparts in other municipalities.

GLENVIEW TAKES THE LEAD

Glenview is committed to the process and has dedicated a lot of resources to make it happen, from coordinating meetings to preparing bid documents. (Before the initiative, Glenview had already been contracted to provide dispatch services to several communities.)

Glenview staff, including , handles most administrative aspects of the initiative. At the beginning of each year, a list is compiled of the various entities’ needs. Projects are then divided based on budget and geography, with various governments volunteering to take the lead on each contract.

For the first year, Glenview did a lot of the “heavy lifting” and led more of the projects. Fortunately, management support encouraged greater participation and in years two and three other governments stepped up and devoted more staff time toward leading projects.

THOUSANDS IN SAVINGS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

In 2011, participating communities jointly contracted for more than $9 million in projects and realized savings of $389,500 to $529,500. In 2012, more than $13 million in projects yielded $291,000 to $365,000 in savings. The initiative has also allowed administrators to unearth savings in their budgets they didn’t know existed, thus enabling them to do additional work planned for future years with the savings.

In 2013, the Construction Committee issued joint bids for resurfacing, sewer lining, and concrete and asphalt patching, with 15 bids led by 11 different communities. Six communities were involved in resurfacing bids in three different bid groups led by Lake Forest, Glenview and Lincolnshire. Concrete flatwork contracts involved 15 communities in five bid groups led by Glenview, Grayslake, Glencoe, Kenilworth and Highland Park. Four communities participated in four sewer lining contracts led by Northfield, Cary, Arlington Heights and Highland Park.

Also in 2013, the Public Works Committee awarded a crack sealing bid involving 15 communities, and a street sweeping contract involving three communities, among others. The committee was able to hold off annual price increases and achieve savings compared to 2010 pricing. For street sweeping, Glenview saved $10,300 from 2010 pricing with the same service levels and vendor. On a leak detection contract, Glenview saved almost 15 percent compared to 2010 pricing for the same vendor.

New public works contracts being explored in 2013 include utility locating services, tree removal and trimming, valve turning, asphalt street patching, HVAC maintenance and water meter testing, reading and repair.

Contracts extended in 2013 include janitorial services,
public works hauling/delivery, hydrant painting, bridge inspections and emergency contractor assistance.

The MPI is not limited to “brick and mortar” services. For professional services, an auditing contract involving six communities in 2012 attracted a large pool of quality respondents and saved more than $30,000 in 2013 for Glenview. An inspectional services RFP involved five communities and attracted a national vendor that can adjust staffing based on development needs.

Future contracts being explored include a printing services supplier to handle newsletters, business cards, letterhead and other printing needs.

MORE DYNAMIC INTERFACE WITH THE MARKET

Attorneys and managers were able, through cooperation, to smooth over the rough spots after the first year. As processes became more efficient, employees had more time for other tasks. Spreading resources helped to save tax dollars. Once the concept was proven, several communities stepped up to take the lead on some contracts and other communities asked to join the initiative. An unexpected benefit has been that multiple entities have shared their best ideas and practices.

Suppliers generally like the process, especially if they are successful in getting a contract, because it is more efficient – they can submit one bid once rather than five or six for individual towns. There were, however, some concerns about the risk of “putting all their eggs in one basket.”

The future of the initiative is limited only by the imagination of participating governments. Joint bids for auditing services and shared information technology services are just two examples of the expansion envisioned when the initiative began.

“The recession opened people’s eyes to look for ways to share resources and extend our dollars,” Hileman said.

The initiative is dynamic and flexible, which makes it all the more effective, Hileman added. For example, the governments can experiment with the size of contracts and how they are packaged to get the most effective pricing and the highest number of bidders. It’s a more dynamic interface with the market; with suppliers constantly being challenged to sharpen their pencils to get the next job if they lost out on the one before. “It positions contractors so they have to compete,” Hileman said. “They know it’s a big risk-reward, so we get better pricing because of it.”

“‘It won’t work’ is never the answer,” Burke said. “We can make this work; it just takes cooperation, communication, strong leadership and support from the top. You just have to put egos aside and work together.”
Completed in 1965, the exterior skin of the Gateway Arch consists of 886 tons of stainless steel; just one of the products procurement professionals purchase every day.

Like the Gateway Arch, NIGP is a landmark. Since 1944, the Institute has been providing ground-breaking professional development programs to government procurement professionals throughout the world. It’s a legacy we are proud of.

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With an operating budget of more than $37 million per year, the Georgia Building Authority wanted to be able to track its contracts proactively from “cradle to grave,” that is, from inception to completion. Specifically, management wanted all parties to be able to see where a contract stood at any particular time relative to the three basic elements of contract administration – time, money and product.

The Georgia Building Authority’s automated Contract Administration Module provides just that – ongoing and real-time administration of all contractually bound procurements. To achieve the goal, the GBA decided to build its own system in lieu of purchasing a “canned” contract management system.

“The beauty of it is, it’s home-grown,” says Rey Palma, procurement services manager, Georgia Building Authority, Atlanta. “We have built the process to reflect how we do business. We built the data fields ourselves working with the IT (information technology) people. The system reflects what we do.”

The Contract Administration Module (CAM) was created using a Web-based database provided through a license contract with Intuit-QuickBase. The system is cloud-based so there is no impact on internal resources. GBA Procurement Services asked departments what they wanted and designed the system in response. The resulting system has improved contract processing times by 30 percent – from up to two weeks down to three or four days.

The system tracks each contract through nine steps
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Equipment and vehicles co-listed on
of procurement: (1) identification of
needs; (2) pre-solicitation; (3) preparing
the solicitation, the (4) solicitation, (5)
evaluation, (6) award and (7) contracting
processes; (8) contract administration; and
(9) product delivery and deployment.
Since initial implementation in 2011,
CAM has improved contract administration
and enhanced staff accountability.
The automated system also addresses
critical questions of what happens once a
contract is “handed off” to an operating
department for contract execution, delivery
and implementation. Effective contract
administration ensures a product or
service is provided to the satisfaction of the
customers, in spite of typical institutional
resistance of silos or territorial issues.

INTUITIVE AND INTERACTIVE SYSTEM

The Georgia Building Authority (GBA)
provides facilities management for nearly 7
million square feet of indoor and outdoor
state-owned buildings and related or attached spaces. The
spaces include office buildings, parking facilities, warehouses,
cemeteries, historical buildings, the Georgia Governor’s
Mansion and the gold-domed State Capitol structure in
Atlanta. GBA Procurement Services is tasked with planning,
soliciting, awarding, processing and administering all
contracts addressing maintenance, repair/renovation and
operations (MRO) as well as new construction. Contracts range
from a few thousand dollars to millions of dollars each year.
The contract administration system combines an intuitive
solicitation data-gathering system with an interactive
monitoring process, all customized to the authority’s
processes. The system is intuitive and interactive and
asks simple questions such as “Do you want to override a
solicitation?” and “What is your bid period?” When the
solicitation is opened up, the system provides a bid number
to the project (combining a fund number, the fiscal year
and a sequential number) that follows it throughout the
procurement and contract management processes. Entered
information includes the kind of contract, whether it needs
to be bid, etc., and the contract is enlisted in the procurement
registry. The system prompts the requester and his supervisor
that the contract is in the system. The system tracks all
contracted procurements, leases and task order contracts.
The total system is integrated with human resources
(HR) files for proper titles and supervisory assignments,
which tend to be fluid as the authority reorganizes.
A logical workflow process is embedded in CAM, with
sub-processes adjustable according to proper procurement
administration and based on the policy-driven dollar
threshold approval limits. The system adapts to the
complexity of each procurement process, based on the
elements to be tracked, the approval routing sequence
and frequency of monitoring, guided by an automated
questionnaire that records and maintains progress reports.
Once the bids are back, they are also loaded into the system,
with all information available for everyone to see. Awarding the
bid is simple, involving users interfacing with the system. Once
the contract is awarded, a monitoring system is also included,
with a questionnaire used to gauge performance related to
vendor response time, accuracy of delivery, satisfaction, etc.
Administrators may provide comments to be addressed by
the buyer. By not “dropping” the contract after the award,
the procurement department can continue to add value.
Both passive and proactive notification processes are used.
Project and executive managers are e-mailed an automatic
“weekly procurement report” identifying active contracts
for their action. Contract expirations also can’t happen
without warning. There is a published schedule of when
contracts are expiring, and warning emails are created 90,
60 and 30 days before. The system knows at a glance where a
contract is in the approval process; i.e., who is holding it up.

IMPROVING INTERACTIVITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

CAM has improved interactions between procurement
and end users, and provides ongoing updates on contract
status. Rather than waiting for an end user to find fault with
a contract after the fact, the system’s questionnaires force
them to consider issues up front, and creates documentation
of their responses. Answers to questions have to be factual
and material, and can’t use discriminatory language.

The questionnaires are an effective tool for procurement to interact with user departments. CAM also ties into the fiscal processes, so anyone can see the status of payment, with immediate updates possible by account and line items.

The system’s ability to provide updates and to hold end users accountable has changed the culture, says Palma. “We have people who understand they can’t wait to the end and expect us to make a problem disappear,” he says. “People don’t understand all the steps in procurement. It’s all automated, and they can see the workflow and process, which has created an awareness of what procurement does that has made everything more peaceful.” CAM has also increased communication about vendor performance. End users now understand they have to build a case against a firm for lack of performance, delivery, personnel, etc. if they want to rebid a contract, he adds.

“Once we have awarded the contract, we have a way to track the contract in the field. The system forces you to communicate with procurement about the state of the contract,” says Palma. The system provides a pragmatic, easy-to-follow, logical and intuitive manner to track procurement actions through to fruition. Users and procurement professionals are “gently prodded” to collaborate to complete the records.

CAM provides an efficient workflow, and procurement has override capabilities at any point. All managers have a work queue, and can click on any requests that need approval. They can view a PDF version of the contract, which doesn’t allow them to make changes although they can ask procurement to consider changes. Automated followups prompt personnel who don’t respond in a timely manner. Record management keeps every element throughout the process grouped together according to the solicitation process. Users can receive notifications, open contract modules and provide approvals via their smart phones. The cannot delegate approval authority.

A dashboard allows users to view their contracts – or to view anyone’s contracts. For example, if one department likes a particular custodial service, they can view the contract without affecting the system.

PROCUREMENT AS A ‘LEAD PARTNER’

Atlanta Building Authority is working to integrate CAM with its requisition system. The goal is more timely renewal of contracts with fewer logjams, in effect scheduling and prioritizing work on an annual, fiscal-year basis. Another innovation involves enabling a “file dump” into the system of E-Verify’s nightly updates related to contractor compliance with employment eligibility requirements.

Palma says the next step is to develop a grading system to help evaluate vendors for future contracts. For example, if a vendor performed at a “C” level, procurement might negotiate more aggressively. The approach would provide another element in the evaluation and RFP process.

To implement a similar system, Palma suggests entities start with flow-charting and eliminating redundancy. Also, consider delegating approval processes – “the executive director doesn’t have to sign $500 contracts.” A transparent system enables the process to be viewed from start to finish.

“Procurement wants to be involved in the administration of the contract, too,” says Palma. “We have knowledge of how contracts should run because we helped to draft them.” The system positions procurement in a “lead partnership position” for the life of a solicitation, maintaining administrative control throughout the process. At GBA, the approach has required organizational and culture changes that have improved service delivery for all.<
IN DEPTH [NIGP awards]

NIGP’s 68th Annual Forum and Products Exposition

Procurement professionals from federal, provincial, state and local governmental agencies in the United States and Canada gathered for the 68th Annual Forum and Products Exposition hosted by NIGP: The Institute of Public Procurement at the Orlando World Center Marriott in Orlando, Fla. Here is a roundup of awards presented at NIGP Forum Aug. 24-28.

NIGP AWARD WINNERS

Louis Moore, CPPO, CPPB, director, purchasing and materials management, St. Petersburg, Fla., won the Albert H. Hall Memorial Award, NIGP’s top honor. This award recognizes a former or present member who has made outstanding contributions to NIGP over an extended period of time. Established in 1977, the Institute named the award in honor of NIGP’s founder, Albert H. Hall, who served as the organization’s first Executive Vice President from 1944 to 1975.

NIGP presented the Distinguished Service Award (DSA) to three outstanding professionals: Kirk Buffington (left), CPPO, C.P.M., MBA, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; Ken Koester (right), CPPO, C.P.M., A.P.P., Unified Purchasing Cooperative of the Ohio River Valley, Cincinnati; Wendy Geltch (left), retired from Polk State College, Lakeland, Fla. Theresa Webb, CPPO, CPPB, C.P.M., FCCM, of Hillsborough County (Fla.) Aviation Authority won the 2013 Professional Buyer of the Year Award recognizing non-supervisory professionals who have made significant contributions to purchasing, professional development, their entity, their chapter, and the Institute.

2013 NIGP Chapter of the Year Awards

Category: Small Chapter – less than 80 members
Winner: Copper Chapter of NIGP

Category: Medium Chapter – 81 to 200 members
Winner: Tampa Bay Chapter of NIGP

Category: Large Chapter – 201 or more members
Winner: Virginia Association of Governmental Purchasing Chapter of NIGP
Spirit of NIGP Leadership Awards recognize three unsung heroes of the profession who have played a significant role in shaping the organization. Winners were John Adler, CPPO, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (no photo), Terry McKee (right), CPPO, CPPB, C.P.M., Knoxville’s Community Development Corp., Tenn.; Dave Nash (left), CPPO, CPPB, independent consultant and NIGP instructor; and Jill Press, JKP Consulting Group.

For the second year in a row, Washington Department of Transportation won the MEASURE UP Award, which recognizes one NIGP agency member best using the free member tool called Measure to capture and report savings and efficiency gains through procurement activities.

Maricopa County, Ariz., won the NIGP Innovation Award for its use of a reverse auction approach to contracting of health and life insurance benefits. The net results of Maricopa County’s creative application of reverse auction practices expanded the life insurance benefits at 63 percent savings to the agency and 26 percent savings to employees – almost $6 million over the life of the contract. Savings on pre-paid dental insurance totaled $999,000 over three years.

PARETO AWARD OF EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

City of St. Petersburg, Fla., Procurement and Supply Management Department received the Pareto Award, the pinnacle award for public procurement excellence. It is tantamount to the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the Deming Prize for Quality. The Pareto Award accreditation is earned only by OA4 accredited agencies that have undergone extensive evaluation by a third party review team and met all performance requirements.

Through its Agency Certification Award program, the Universal Public Procurement Certification Council (UPPCC) identifies organizations that have earned the distinguished and unique honor of achieving and/or maintaining a high percentage of UPPCC Certified staff. This program was developed to recognize organizations that have made a concerted effort to achieve procurement excellence.

The Sterling Agency Award is an advanced level of recognition reserved for those agencies that apply for and achieve UPPCC Agency Certification Award recognition for three consecutive years.

### OA4 ACCREDITATION AWARD RECIPIENTS

Achievement of OA4 accreditation is realized upon successful completion of an agency self-evaluation process that assesses performance in 12 key functional areas. Obtaining OA4 accreditation is a prerequisite to qualifying for the pinnacle agency accreditation in public procurement, the Pareto Award of Excellence.

- Broward County, Fla.
- City of Newport News, Va.
- City of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.
- City of Port St. Lucie, Fla.
- City of Punta Gorda, Fla.
- City of South Miami, Fla.
- Douglas County School District, Colo.
- Georgia Department of Corrections
- Hamilton County, Tenn.
- Hampton Roads Sanitation District, Va.
- Kane County, Ill.
- Knoxville’s Community

### UPPCC AGENCY CERTIFICATION AWARD 2013 RECIPIENTS

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- Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Md.
- Arapahoe County, Colo.
- Arizona Office of Tourism
- Broward County Housing Authority, Fla.
- City of Ames, Iowa
- City of Cedar Rapids, Iowa
- City of Chandler, Ariz.
- City of Goodyear, Ariz.
- City of Lakewood, Colo.
- City of League City, Texas
- City of Lisle, Ill.
- City of Longmont, Colo.
- City of Miami Gardens, Fla.
- City of Olathe, Kan.
- City of Palm Bay, Fla.
- City of Port St. Lucie, Fla.
- City of Raymore, Mo.
- City of Red Wing, Minn.
- City of Rome, Ga.
- City of Sparks, Nev.
- City of Tarpon Springs, Fla.
- City of Virginia Beach, Va.
- City of Wheaton, Ill.
- City of Winter Park, Fla.
- Frederick County Public Schools, Va.
- Gloucester County, Va.
- Hinds Community College, Miss.
- Johnson County, Kan.
- Little Rock Wastewater, Ark.
- Livingston County, Mich.
- Loudoun County, Va.
- Louisiana Department of Transportation
- Maricopa County, Ariz.
- Nashville Electric Services, Tenn.
- Ohio Lottery Commission
- Old Dominion University, Va.
- Oregon Department of Revenue
- Oregon Housing and Community Services
- Polk State College, Fla.
- Poudre School Districts, Colo.
- Santa Rosa County School Board, Fla.
- State of Alaska, Division of General Services
- Technical College System of Georgia
- Town of Marana, Ariz.
- Town of Orange Park, Fla.
- Town of Queen Creek, Ariz.
- Township of Franklin, N.J.
- Unified Purchasing Cooperative of the Ohio River Valley
- Unified Schools District 259, Wichita Public Schools, Kan.
- Village of Lisle, Ill.
- Village of Niles, Ill.
- Warren County Purchasing, Miss.

NOTE: Bold text indicates Sterling Agency Award Recipient.
May 2013 – The Universal Public Procurement Certification Council (UPPCC) announces that 340 individuals successfully completed the spring 2013 UPPCC certification examinations administered May 6–18, 2013. The Certified Public Procurement Officer (CPPO) and Certified Professional Public Buyer (CPPB) credentials are recognized throughout the public procurement profession as demonstration of an individual’s comprehensive knowledge of public procurement. Of the 340 newly certified individuals, 240 earned the CPPB certification and 100 earned the CPPO certification. This newest class of professionals brings the total number certified for CPPO and CPPB to 9,325 and 2,309 respectively.

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Jessica L. Baraket, CPPO; School Board of Hernando County, Fla.
Matthew T. Bauer, CPPB; Maricopa County, Ariz.
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Nancy M. Belson, CPPO, CPPB; City of Farmington, N.M.
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As I was looking at some recent job announcements for public procurement positions, I noticed that many require college degrees. Those not requiring a degree are at least hoping for one. Normally they say it is “preferred,” but that comparable training and experience will be considered. Hmm, sounds like this could be a trend.

Now, I am the first to say that some of the procurement professionals I hold in highest regard do not have college degrees. They are experienced, savvy and certified, some of the best in the business. However, as I advise newcomers to the profession or when I speak to college students about a career in public procurement, I always recommend they get their degree. It will only help them advance in a great career field that is becoming more and more competitive.

Does a degree mean you are better or smarter than the next candidate? No, I don’t think so. In fact, I am proof of that. My degrees do not make me a better buyer or stronger negotiator, but they do open doors. Many of the opportunities I have been blessed with come as a result of my education. The privilege to teach at a major university, meet the mandatory requirements for a high-level job, or qualify for a certification program are all results of having a degree.

Today we see that a Certified Professional Contracts Manager (CPCM) requires an accredited bachelor’s degree, as did the Certified Professional in Supply Management (CPSM) when it was established in 2008. The Universal Public Procurement Certification Council currently requires either a degree or a CPPB (Certified Professional Public Buyer) to qualify for the Certified Public Procurement Officer (CPPO) designation. In the future, a college degree will likely be required to meet minimum eligibility. Like it or not, the degree requirement raises the bar for the profession.

For a long time, many in our ranks have lamented the fact that attorneys and accountants were recognized as “professionals” while purchasing was not. Gee, do you think it had something to do with their JD and CPA? Of course, the Juris Doctorate is an advanced degree and to even sit for the Certified Public Accountant test one must have a bachelor’s degree, but I think you get the point.

For the new generation of procurement professionals, it seems much easier to obtain their degree. Many of them are traditional-aged college students (under 25) and may not have the responsibilities, children and mortgages that more seasoned professionals may have. But what about the working professional in public procurement? How are they supposed to earn a college degree? Let me tell you, there is hope for all of us.

When I tell my students about my bachelor’s and master’s degrees, I do so with a sense of humility. You see, I was not the best student when I was younger. In fact, I got asked to leave Bible college after just one term (Mom, I am so sorry), and after that I bounced around various business colleges until I finally got serious. My bachelor’s degree came in my 30s and my master’s didn’t arrive until my 40s. I share this only to say this. If there is hope for me, there is hope for anybody.

OK, off my soap box about degree requirements. I just believe future procurement professionals will be better served with a college degree. It’s good for the individual, and it’s good for the profession as a whole.
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