

# Cooperative Purchasing Reference Guide

Your guide for sourcing success



Together,  
we are  
Sourcewell

## Cooperative Purchasing

Cooperative purchasing is procurement conducted by, or on behalf of, one or more governmental units for use by other governmental units.



### Compliant

- Our process can be trusted to satisfy your bid requirements
- We are a government agency that works like you
- Achievement of Excellence in Procurement recipient



### Competitive

- Buying power of 50,000 members
- Contracts offer ceiling-based pricing and volume discounts



### Convenient

- More than 300 quality vendors holding competitively awarded contracts
- Full suite of options for a complete solution
- Easy, no-cost membership

## Become a member

Membership is free. Just fill out an online or paper application. A membership legal agreement is available if needed. After submitting your application, you will receive a Sourcewell member ID number electronically and a welcome packet by mail.

- Online at: [www.sourcewell-mn.gov/become-member](http://www.sourcewell-mn.gov/become-member)
- Through hard copy participation membership application (download from our website)
- Through “Joint Exercise of Powers” or “Interlocal” agreements

## Make a purchase

Browse our catalog of nationally awarded vendors online. Contact the vendor directly and inform them of your interest in using the Sourcewell contract, OR use our expertise — contact our membership team. We want to be your guide.

For more information, contact our membership team:

877-585-9706

[membership@sourcewell-mn.gov](mailto:membership@sourcewell-mn.gov)

## Our Process

Cooperative purchasing is procurement conducted by, or on behalf of, one or more governmental units for use by other governmental units.

Our user-friendly process—the consistency of our documents, forms, and evaluation criteria—is among our greatest assets.

We continuously refine our efforts to meet the changing needs of our members. The result is a national, competitive procurement process that is valued by our members and satisfies state-specific procurement requirements.

Our members add value to these steps by understanding their local procurement requirements and assessing their ability to legally access and utilize Sourcewell contracts.

### Competitive Procurement Process

- 1. Scope of Solicitation**  
We determine the scope of each competitive solicitation by identifying the needs of our members. This is accomplished through daily interactions and guidance from our members.
- 2. Authorization from Sourcewell's Board of Directors**  
Before initiating a solicitation, we seek permission from the publicly elected Sourcewell Board of Directors.
- 3. Public Notice and Advertising**  
Upon approval from the Board, we issue a public notice and advertisement. Refer to [www.sourcewell-mn.gov/process](http://www.sourcewell-mn.gov/process) for specific advertising locations.
- 4. Proposal Receipt and Opening**  
We time and date stamp each proposal upon receipt at our office in Staples, MN. We conduct a public-proposal opening at a time, date, and place specified in the solicitation.
- 5. Objective Evaluation**  
At the proposal opening, we evaluate the responsiveness of each proposal received. The evaluation committee then presents its recommendations to the chief procurement officer (CPO) for final review and approval.
- 6. Official Award**  
Upon approval by the CPO and ratification by the Sourcewell Board of Directors, we award the recommended vendor(s) a four-year contract with the potential for a one-year extension. The Procurement Department sends a Notice of Award or Non-Award to all respondents via email.
- 7. Posting and Review of Approved Contract Documents**  
Sourcewell maintains a complete procurement file, and contract documentation is posted on our website. We periodically review all awarded contracts for compliance and effectiveness. In addition, Sourcewell may review and approve price and product changes at the vendor's request.



3-time recipient of the Achievement of Excellence in Procurement award.

## The Sourcewell Advantage

Sourcewell is a self-funded government organization. We partner with government, education, and nonprofit entities to boost student and community success.

## You can confidently partner with Sourcewell because we:

### Value independence

- As a government agency authorized by the state of Minnesota, we can enter into contracts and operate as our own cooperative purchasing lead agency. (See enabling legislation on page 6)
  - We adhere to competitive solicitation requirements of the Uniform Municipal Contracting Law.
- We award most contracts corporately, but you purchase from local dealers and providers.
- Contract terms allow you to propose supplemental terms and conditions.

### Lead the way

- Choice of high-quality equipment/products/services—300 North American vendor contracts and more than 500 construction contracts.
- We eliminate low-bid, low-quality issues. You capture lifecycle-cost savings.
- Our contracts are tailored to you with solutions-based solicitations.
  - Basic to fully customized solutions available when you choose from a suite of options.

### Read the fine print

- Proven procurement process, refined over 40 years. (See prior page.)
- Contracts competitively solicited on your behalf and awarded by our CPO and elected board.
- The documentation you need is right at your fingertips—with a complete procurement file posted on our website [Sourcewell-mn.gov](http://Sourcewell-mn.gov).

### Make purchasing easy

- Browse our catalog of awarded vendors online.
- Members can then contact the vendor directly and tell them you'd like to use the Sourcewell contract.
  - If not a member, check out how easy it is to join on page 3.
- Tap into our expertise by contacting our membership team: 877-585-9706 or [membership@sourcewell-mn.gov](mailto:membership@sourcewell-mn.gov).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q. Who is Sourcewell?

- A. Sourcewell, formerly National Joint Powers Alliance, is a local unit of government, a public corporation and agency under the Minnesota Constitution and its enabling law, Minnesota Statutes § 123A.21. Sourcewell employees are government employees.

### Q. What is Sourcewell's primary purpose?

- A. Sourcewell is a service cooperative created to provide programs and services to members in the government, education, and nonprofit sectors. Its statutory purpose is to assist members in meeting specific needs which are more efficiently delivered cooperatively than by an entity individually. Minn. Stat. § 123A.21, subd. 2.

### Q. Is cooperative purchasing one of Sourcewell's authorized activities?

- A. Sourcewell is authorized to establish cooperative purchasing contracts on behalf of itself and its members. Sourcewell follows the competitive contract law requirements under Minnesota Statutes § 471.345, to solicit, evaluate, and award these contracts.

### Q. How is Sourcewell governed?

- A. Sourcewell is governed by an eight-member Board of Directors made up of local elected officials including county commissioners, city council members, mayors, and school board members.

### Q. Who is eligible for membership, and how much does it cost?

- A. Membership is free and available to all government, education, and nonprofit entities.

### Q. How do we join Sourcewell?

- A. You can join by submitting an online membership application at: [Sourcewell-mn.gov/join](https://sourcewell-mn.gov/join) or by submitting a paper application.

### Q. What specific statute gives my agency the authority to participate?

- A. Joint powers and cooperative purchasing laws authorize members to access Sourcewell cooperative purchasing contracts. Sourcewell members are responsible for ensuring compliance with state and local laws in their respective jurisdictions. A comprehensive list of state laws is included on the Sourcewell website on the "Compliance and Legal" page.

Sourcewell continuously monitors changing laws and regulations affecting cooperative purchasing. For questions about state-specific compliance or contract-use requirements, please contact [contract.administration@sourcewell-mn.gov](mailto:contract.administration@sourcewell-mn.gov).

### Q. Can my agency use Sourcewell contracts without issuing our own solicitation?

- A. Sourcewell contracts are competitively solicited on behalf of Sourcewell and its members. Individual members are free to determine whether the awarded contracts meet their needs.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q. Does Sourcewell's procurement process meet federal procurement standards, including the Office of Management and Budget Uniform Guidance (2 CFR Part 200)?

- A. Sourcewell's procurement process is continuously improved to ensure compliance with state and federal requirements affecting our members' ability to use cooperative purchasing contracts. Standard federal terms and conditions are included in Sourcewell solicitations and contracts. For specific compliance questions, please contact [contract.administration@sourcewell-mn.gov](mailto:contract.administration@sourcewell-mn.gov).

### Q. How do I obtain copies of the legal documents associated with each contract?

- A. Contracts and solicitation documents are available under the "Contract Documentation" tab on each vendor's page on the Sourcewell website. Please follow the instructions under each vendor's "Pricing" tab to access pricing for specific contracts. Due to pricing complexity, some pricing is only available upon request. Procurement files are also available upon request.

### Q. As a Sourcewell member, are we able to buy from other contracts?

- A. Sourcewell membership and contracts are nonexclusive with no obligation to purchase.

### Q. How is Sourcewell funded?

- A. Sourcewell is funded by administrative fees paid by vendors. When Sourcewell awards a contract, that vendor realizes substantial efficiencies in the form of thousands of sales opportunities. Vendors pay a percentage of those sales to Sourcewell to cover costs related to the procurement process and to offset general operating costs.

Material prepared and provided by Sourcewell is intended as informational and for reference purposes, but is not legal advice. We recognize your responsibility to ensure the Sourcewell procurement process complies with your local laws.



## Cooperative Purchasing

Sourcewell creates cooperative contract purchasing solutions on behalf of its member agencies. Cooperative contracts offer both time and money savings for users by consolidating the efforts of numerous individually prepared solicitations into one, cooperatively shared process—taking advantage of the volume pricing generated by 50,000 members across North America.

### Join and Purchase

Visit [sourcewell-mn.gov/cooperative-purchasing](http://sourcewell-mn.gov/cooperative-purchasing) or turn to page 3 for more details.

### We want to be your guide.

Contact our membership team:

877-585-9706

[membership@sourcewell-mn.gov](mailto:membership@sourcewell-mn.gov)