

PURCHASING PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES

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A. Principles

Personnel associated with the purchasing function shall comply with the following principles:

1. In all transactions to consider first the interests of the County;
2. To believe and carry out the established policies of the County;
3. To be receptive to competent counsel from colleagues;
4. To be guided by counsel without impairing the dignity and responsibility of the office;
5. To strive consistently for knowledge of the materials and process of manufacture;
6. To establish practical methods for the conduct of the office;
7. To subscribe to and work for honesty and truth in buying and selling and to denounce all forms and manifestations of commercial bribery;
8. To accord a prompt and courteous reception to all who call on a legitimate business mission;
9. To counsel and assist fellow purchasing agents in the performance of their duties;
10. To cooperate with all organizations and individuals engaged in activities designed to enhance the development and standards of purchasing; and
11. To encourage participation in the Equal Business Opportunity (EBO) program in order to attain increased EBO participation in purchasing activities.

B. Policies

1. Centralized Purchasing

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The objective of centralized purchasing in "Howard County" is to obtain the maximum benefit from every tax dollar spent. The Office of Purchasing is responsible for the centralized purchasing of all supplies and services for the County government.

2. Ethics and Professional Conduct

- a. All employees of Howard County are prohibited from accepting any gifts, samples, entertainment, special personal price considerations, fees, commissions or other gratuities from any vendors or bidders except items of negligible value as indicated in 2.(b).

- b. Employees may accept items of negligible value used as obvious forms of advertisement such as pencils, calendars, notepads and key rings which shall not be considered gratuities.
- c. Vendors or bidders who offer gifts, entertainment, etc. may be declared irresponsible bidders and may be debarred from bidding.
- d. An employee who accepts a gift, entertainment, etc. shall be subject to disciplinary action.
- e. Each bidder shall sign a clause, made part of the bid, that he/she has not violated these provisions.

(see Howard County Gratuity Policy and Procedures Number 100.18 dated 1/24/77)

3. Relations With Vendors

- a. No officer or employee of the County (excluding employees in the Office of Purchasing) shall negotiate directly or indirectly for supplies or services, except where an emergency exists after normal working hours or with the approval of the Chief of Purchasing.
- b. In consideration of legal aspects and trade relations with vendors, the Office of Purchasing shall not purchase supplies or services for the private use of employees.
- c. In capital project contracts, it shall be the general practice that the contractor supply all required materials unless the use of materials from County inventories or direct procurement by the County will result in savings to the County.
- d. It is the responsibility of the Office of Purchasing and of all vendors to discourage uniform bidding.
- e. Vendor contact with employees in user agencies shall be through or with the knowledge of the appropriate purchasing representative. The intent is to prevent vendors from bypassing the Office of Purchasing in an attempt to influence employees and agencies.

4. Relations With Other Agencies

- a. The Office of Purchasing shall continuously familiarize itself with the particular requirements of the various agencies and be receptive to suggestions or comments.