



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the National Purchasing Cooperative?

**A:** The BuyBoard National Purchasing Cooperative is an administrative agency created in accordance with Maryland and Rhode Island state statutes. Its purpose is to obtain the benefits and efficiencies that can accrue to members of a cooperative, to comply with state bidding requirements, and to identify qualified vendors of commodities, goods, and services. The Cooperative also relieves the burdens of governmental purchasing by effectively using current technology and realizing economies of scale.

### What Georgia laws govern the use of cooperative contracts or 'piggybacking'?

**A:** Georgia law allows for the use of cooperative contracts as an alternative to a competitive bidding process, provided the requirements in § 36-69A-4 (<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20052006/511108.pdf>) are satisfied.

### Does the BuyBoard meet the definition of a Public (Lead) Agency in Georgia?

**A: Yes.** Under § 36-69A-3 "Public agency" means:

(E) Any political subdivision of another state.

The National Purchasing Cooperative (BuyBoard) is a political subdivision created in accordance with Maryland state statutes, MD. Code Ann., State Fin. & Proc. §13-110 (West 2009). Its purpose is to obtain the benefits and efficiencies that can accrue to members of a cooperative, to comply with state bidding requirements, and to identify qualified vendors of commodities, goods and services.

### How is the Cooperative administered and governed?

**A:** The National School Boards Association (NSBA) and the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) administer and handle the day-to-day activities of the Cooperative. The Cooperative is sponsored by a number of state school boards associations and other state trade/education associations from across the country. The Cooperative is governed by a nine-member board of directors composed of members and the organizing state associations.

### How is the Buyboard cooperative different from other national purchasing cooperatives?

**A:** BuyBoard is administered by a non-profit organization which returns proceeds from Georgia purchases back into public education in Georgia via the Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA). This cooperative allows flexibility to purchase what is needed. It also owns the entire contracting process from start to finish and is legally compliant in the state of Georgia.

### What does it cost to become a BuyBoard member?

**A:** There is no cost to join or use any of the contracts and is open to all types of local government agencies as well as non-profits. Revenue to operate the BuyBoard comes from a small service fee payable by participating contracted vendors and is generated only when a member makes a purchase.

## What types of products can I purchase through Buyboard?

**A:** BuyBoard has an extensive product list ranging from instructional materials, software, turf, bleachers even vehicles large and small.

## Who can participate and what does it cost?

**A:** Membership is free and open to all types of local governmental agencies. Revenue to operate the system and the Cooperative comes primarily from a service fee payable by participating vendors. The only exceptions to this are for vehicles. The Cooperative charges a flat amount per purchase order, regardless of the number of vehicles on the purchase order, as a service fee for the purchase of vehicles. This service fee is payable by the member entity but is collected by the vehicle dealer as part of the overall vehicle price. The flat amount per purchase order is as follows:

- Vehicles and trucks - \$400
- Ambulances and school buses - \$800
- Fire apparatus - \$1,500

## How does my entity join the Cooperative?

**A:** For governmental entities, membership is as easy as completing the required fields to execute the National Purchasing Cooperative Interlocal Participation Agreement on the "How to Join" page and submitting. Your entity can join the Cooperative at any time.

Nonprofit entities are not eligible for Cooperative membership but may use the BuyBoard by completing the [Nonprofit Subscriber Agreement](#).

## How do I order products through the BuyBoard?

**A:** All awarded items, services or catalogs will be posted on the BuyBoard website, so that cooperative members can search for and select items. The steps for making a purchase are listed below:

1. Select an Awarded BuyBoard Vendor
2. Request a Quote per the BuyBoard Contract
3. Issue and send the PO to the Vendor and List Contract Number
4. Email copy of the PO to [info@buyboard.com](mailto:info@buyboard.com)

## How does the Cooperative work?

**A:** The Cooperative analyzes and makes award recommendations for products and services that have been submitted through a competitive proposal invitation process. All awarded items or catalogs will be posted on a secure website, called the BuyBoard, so that Cooperative members can search for and select items. The BuyBoard is only available to members. Each user has a security role, defined by the entity, that allows them to shop and/or transmit a purchase order to the vendor. Individuals can be assigned multiple roles or a single role, such as a shopper only. Only those individuals with the authority to transmit a purchase order to a vendor will have the ability to do so. The other option is to simply e-mail your purchase order to the BuyBoard for input.

## Are Georgia public school systems permitted to participate in purchasing cooperatives?

**A:** Boards of Education in Georgia have a lot of discretion as to the process used for most purchases. Joining and participating in a cooperative such as BuyBoard is one of those legal options. School boards should review their board policies and check with legal counsel about appropriate language or specific issues.

## Is a school board required to take action in order for the District to participate in BuyBoard?

**A:** Yes. The board must take action through a board resolution or a motion authorizing the district to participate and to enter into the required Interlocal Governmental Agreement. GSBA has a sample board resolution that may be used.

## How many individuals from our entity can have access to the Cooperative's BuyBoard?

**A:** As many as you choose to authorize. There is no limit on the number each entity can authorize. All employees can be issued passwords to search and shop for products without any compromise to the purchasing process.

## **What is the RFQ tool available within the BuyBoard?**

**A:** It is an automated request for quote (RFQ) function that allows members who buy in volume, or that want to streamline the quotation process, to create a request for a selected list of items and select the vendors from whom they want to solicit a price quote. When the RFQ closes and vendors have responded, the system automatically tabulates the results. For any large-volume purchases, the RFQ process allows for additional price concession from the awarded cooperative vendors without members going through the formal competitive bid process themselves.

## **Do we commit our entity from only ordering through BuyBoard by joining the cooperative?**

**A:** No. You use the cooperative as much or as little as needed. A variety of products are available at discounts from manufacturers' prices. Members can elect to do all their purchasing or only purchase selected items. After becoming a member, you choose how much or little to use and participate.

## **Does BuyBoard satisfy the competitive bid requirements for school districts in accordance with Georgia law?**

**A:** Yes for most purchases. There is not just one "competitive bid requirement" under Georgia law. Most things don't require a competitive bid however many school boards have board policies that require it. In Georgia, there are additional requirements for a capital improvement that is over \$100,000. There are also additional requirements for school buses, based on Georgia State Board Rules. In addition, any competitive purchase over \$100,000 has to be advertised in the Georgia Procurement Registry, so this will need to be done even if the District is using BuyBoard.

## **Can you outline the competitive procurement process used by the Cooperative?**

1. Advertisements are placed in 11 newspapers across Texas for once a week for two weeks.
2. The proposal invitation and specification document is posted to the website at [www.vendor.buyboard.com](http://www.vendor.buyboard.com). Registered vendors with BuyBoard are notified via e-mail regarding the proposal opportunity.
3. Electronic vendor responses are received. Vendor responses received after the due date and time are not opened.
4. Proposals are reviewed, tabulated, and analyzed based on the criteria outlined in the proposal terms and conditions, and a scoring matrix is used to rank the criteria.
5. Recommendations are prepared and presented to the Cooperative Board for consideration of award.

## **How does the Cooperative determine price competitiveness?**

**A:** The Cooperative evaluates vendor proposals on the basis of best value to Cooperative members. As a general matter, the Cooperative makes competitive and indefinite quantity awards to vendors that give the same or better discounts/pricing than they give their best governmental clients. Each vendor proposal is evaluated on its own merit and is determined to be fair and reasonable. Discount practices may be examined and evaluated based on historical data, sales information, discounts granted to other governmental clients, and other market research techniques. The Cooperative may award to multiple vendors supplying comparable products or services, known as a multiple award schedule, or award to a single vendor. The Cooperative's decision to make multiple or single awards is based on the type of award that provides the best value to all Cooperative members.

## **Does the Cooperative Board make the final decision regarding awards?**

**A:** Yes, the final decision as to the best overall offer, both in terms of price and suitability of the proposed products or services to meet the needs of and provide the best value to Cooperative members, rests solely with the Cooperative's Board of Directors. The Cooperative Board does not delegate authority to award contracts.

### **What about my current local, regional and MWBE vendors?**

**A:** The BuyBoard encourages their participation in the competitive procurement process. If the local vendors are awarded a contract, it may open greater business opportunities with a wider variety of local governments. We would encourage your vendors to register with the BuyBoard to receive notice of proposal invitation opportunities.

### **What happens if we have a problem with a supplier?**

**A:** If the Cooperative member cannot resolve the problem directly with the vendor, members are encouraged to let Cooperative staff know.

### **What about my current vendors?**

**A:** We encourage their participation. In fact, by participating, your vendors may have greater business opportunities with a wider variety of local governments. We also would encourage your vendors to register with the Cooperative to receive notice of proposal invitation opportunities.

### **How do I become a vendor on BuyBoard?**

**A:** The first step is to register to receive email notifications of proposal invitations. Once you receive your notification and respond to a proposal, it is presented to the Board of Trustees for awarding. If your company is awarded, you will receive notification of becoming an official contracted BuyBoard vendor.

### **How do we know we will save money by buying through the Cooperative?**

**A:** The overall objective of the Cooperative is to provide a mechanism for all local governments to pool their collective purchasing power. Cooperatives save money in two primary fashions: the price of the product purchased and/or in the administrative cost savings from eliminating a formal RFP process. Of course, there are no guaranteed savings, but cooperative buying power is a time-tested method of savings.

### **Does the BuyBoard support public education?**

**A:** Yes. A portion of the revenue collected by the BuyBoard stays in the State of Georgia to enhance and support the State of Georgia's public education. Another portion is given to support public education at the national level.

### **How do I join and who should I reach out to if I have further questions?**

**A:** Membership is super easy. You can go to the BuyBoard website, click on the National Tab and then "How to Join".

For questions - You can reach out to your BuyBoard contact, Jennifer Lansden ([Jennifer.lansden@buyboard.com](mailto:Jennifer.lansden@buyboard.com)) at (512) 483-7105 for assistance or questions.