



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is U.S. Communities?**

U.S. Communities is a nonprofit government purchasing cooperative organization that assists public agencies in reducing the cost of purchased goods and services through pooling the purchasing power of public agencies nationwide.

### **How much have public agencies purchased through U.S. Communities?**

Total aggregated purchases in 2009 exceeded \$1.4 billion, with \$214 million in estimated savings to public agencies during the year.

### **How many public agencies are registered as participants under the U.S. Communities program?**

There are more than 42,000 Participating Public Agencies accessing one or more competitively solicited contracts. [Click here](#) to access a complete list of Participating Public Agencies.

### **What type of public agencies can access U.S. Communities contracts?**

Counties, cities, special districts, school districts, universities and colleges, towns, villages, state agencies and other governmental agencies can use the program, as well as nonprofit organizations providing a service on behalf of a governmental entity.

### **What types of products and services are offered through U.S. Communities?**

U.S. Communities offers a large variety of products and services to Participating Public Agencies, including office and school supplies, office and education furniture, office machines and printers, technology solutions, telecommunications supplies and electrical products. For a complete list of offerings, [click here](#).

### **How does U.S. Communities work?**

U.S. Communities offers Participating Public Agencies the ability to make purchases through existing, competitively solicited contracts between a supplier and a lead public agency.

Although U.S. Communities does not issue the solicitation for the contracts or participate in the bid selection process with suppliers, it works with both the lead public agency and the supplier after a contract is awarded to ensure that Participating Public Agencies are receiving all benefits afforded to them under the contract.

### **Is there any oversight of U.S. Communities?**

Yes. U.S. Communities has an Advisory Board consisting of public purchasing professionals that provide leadership and overall direction for the organization. [Click here](#) to view the list of Advisory Board members.

Moreover, U.S. Communities is jointly sponsored by the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), the National Association of Counties (NACo), the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP), the National League of Cities (NLC), and the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM).

### **What enables public agencies to participate in cooperative purchasing?**

Each state has its own laws addressing cooperative purchasing by local government agencies. Joint Powers Authorities or Cooperative Procurement Authorities generally allow one government agency to purchase from contracts competitively solicited by another government agency (“Lead Public Agency”). The contracts require the consent of all parties including the supplier, the Lead Public Agency and government agency purchasing from the Lead Public Agency contract.

### **Do U.S. Communities contracts meet competitive solicitation requirements?**

In most cases, yes. As with any use of a cooperative purchasing contract U.S. Communities advises each Participating Public Agency to consult with its own attorney to determine that all requirements have been met.

### **How can I obtain copies of the legal documentation associated with each competitively solicited contract?**

Contract and Master Agreement, Amendments, Extension, RFP and Solicitation documents are available for download on each supplier page at the [Products and Supplier pages](#).

### **Why do Participating Public Agencies choose U.S. Communities over other cooperative purchasing programs?**

U.S. Communities offers contracts competitively solicited by a lead public agency, the most favorable public agency pricing, and a broad range of high-quality products and services. The program is nationally sponsored by leading associations and purchasing organizations and is managed by public purchasing professionals. Additionally, there is no cost for public agencies to participate in the purchasing program.

### **How is U.S. Communities funded as a nonprofit?**

Suppliers pay a minimum one percent administrative fee to participate in the U.S. Communities program, and this fee pays for operating expenses and offsets costs incurred by national and state sponsors.

### **What does a public agency need to do in order to participate?**

Public agencies must register to participate at [www.uscommunities.org](http://www.uscommunities.org) and the process takes just a few minutes. There are no restrictions on the amount or size of a public agency order.

### **How much does it cost to participate in U.S. Communities?**

There are no costs or fees to the public agency to participate.