



CO-OP PURCHASING

A great way to get the best buy for your grant funding is to purchase supplies in cooperation with another county(s) or municipality(s), if possible. By combining supply orders, you get volume discount pricing and you are able to get more for the money you spend. In order to do this effectively, however, there are a few things that must be considered.

1. All parties must agree on exactly WHAT type of items are going to be purchased and either have a large storage area to store them, or arrange for pick up shortly after the order is delivered to one, designated coordinator.
2. All parties involved must agree that supplies will be picked up from one, designated coordinator and in a timely fashion.
3. Make simple supply lists to refer to.
4. Have invoices printed up so orders can be sorted easily.
5. In the event that one coordinator will be purchasing for several, see below for some handy tips.

As the Salem County Clean Communities Coordinator, I purchase supplies in large quantities and then pass the discount savings onto my Municipal Coordinators. Municipal Coordinators pay the same price I pay for the supplies. If the price goes down or up, it is adjusted on the yearly price sheet. Some municipalities only receive \$4,000.00 grant funding, so this helps them to stretch their grant dollars by purchasing supplies cheaper. I have specific types of gloves, vests and bags that I choose based usually on pricing. I also try to get the “best buy”, but I also want quality items for the price, so I will periodically poll my coordinators to see if the supplies I’m purchasing are meeting their needs and expectations.

- ❖ I usually purchase plenty of supplies to have on hand that are stored in two sheds behind our office.
- ❖ I update the price list each year and circulate it to each coordinator, along with blank invoice/purchase sheets that I make up on the computer so they can place the order by fax. Some coordinators will e-mail or call me, but faxing the order over, is the quickest way for me to fill the order.
- ❖ I keep a running tally sheet on each order placed and give each its’ own invoice number for easy identification.

- ❖ When the order is faxed over, I fill the order and put a copy of the invoice with the order. I call, fax or e-mail that the order is complete and ready for pick up.
- ❖ All orders must be picked up at my location. I do not deliver!

- ❖ If I am “out of stock” on an item, I’ll either call them to substitute, or let them know that I’m placing my large order for more and will hold their order until the requested supplies have been received. It is a rare occasion when I don’t have what is requested.
 - ❖ I periodically check the sheds and take a quick “inventory” to see what more supplies need to be ordered on my end.
 - ❖ The most popular gloves are kept by cases in three sizes, two sizes of traffic cones, both types of the coroplast safety signs (Slow Down-Give Us A Brake and Litter Crew Ahead), three sizes of the E-Z Reachers (Litter Picker-Uppers) and cases of plastic trash and recycling bags. I order large quantities of imprinted trash bags with our County slogan on them. These bags are also used by all my adopt-a-road groups and mini-grant clean up groups, so I always have plenty on hand.

I keep track of payments received for orders by updating an invoice/order list that is periodically checked. I also ask that each Municipal Coordinator specify on their check and/or the check “topper” that the amount of the check is for **Clean Communities Supplies**. In the years that I’ve been cooperative purchasing, I’ve never had a problem receiving payments for orders.

Cooperative purchasing is a great way to save money and get the best value for the money you spend. Make every dollar count! Stretch your grant funding by cooperative purchasing.

Melinda J. Williams
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