

The following provides answers to the most frequently asked questions about the usage and applicability of the Army's mandatory Blanket Purchase Agreements for office supplies. See Army Contracting Agency Memo dated 26 Sept 02, subject: Mandatory Use of Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPAs) for Office Products for the Army. Additional information covering use and technical aspects of the Email as well as points of contacts for vendors who wish to become participants in the program will be published soon.

1. Why did the Army establish these BPAs?

The Army believes this innovative acquisition initiative will better ensure that its purchases comply with the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Act and enhance its support of small businesses. Historically, the Army has purchased approximately \$100 million in office supplies each year. Many of these purchases are low-dollar transactions, less than \$2,500. Unfortunately, audits and reviews have shown that far too many of these same purchases were improperly made without consideration for the statutory mandate to obtain comparable products available from blind and severely disabled vendors under the JWOD Program, without preference given to small and disadvantaged businesses, and at full retail price.

2. Are the local Self Service Supply Centers and local JWOD stores still to be used?

CONUS installations that have on-site Self Service Supply Centers or JWOD stores will first attempt to fulfill their purchase need there. OCONUS locations are to use the BPA whenever the supplier can meet delivery requirements.

3. If the Army BPAs are designed to support JWOD, why are large businesses listed as mandatory suppliers?

The BPAs contain provisions that require the BPA vendors (all are Authorized Distributor of JWOD) to automatically substitute JWOD products for the items ordered when they are "like" or "essentially the same". These vendors are prohibited from offering competing non-JWOD products.

4. What items are considered office supplies?

If a cardholder can find the required item on the mandatory BPAs, it shall be bought off of the BPAs. To facilitate this, the Email allows buyers to search all mandatory BPAs simultaneously.

5. Can a buyer go directly to a local JWOD producer or a branch office or distributor of one of the BPA contractors?

Only if the requested item is not offered by any of the BPA contractors and is not a competitive product to those on the JWOD procurement list (Papermate vs. Skillcraft pens). The guidance directing the mandatory use of the Army Office Supplies BPAs through the Email supersedes local policy.

6. How can a local vendor participate in this program?

Although the BPAs are already awarded, the Army will allow, on an annual basis, additional businesses to participate if they meet the following BPA requirements:

- Have a General Services Administration (GSA) contract under Federal Supply Schedule 75IIA Office Products/ Supplies.
- Be an authorized JWOD Distributor for office products.
(See <http://www.jwod.gov/jwod/participate/distributors.html>)
- Accept the Government Purchase Card. Possess a fully operational Internet ordering system. Agree place catalogs and/or product lists on the DOD EMALL (at no charge to the Army).
- Provide management information reports, electronically or in paper form, as required by the Army.
- Make available catalog or product lists with pricing and/or discounts (via the Internet or hard copy).

7. Does FAR/DFAR guidance still apply?

FAR and DFAR guidance does apply. Requirements should be rotated through the various BPA vendors. Remember that using the mandatory Office Supplies BPAs does not relieve a cardholder from obtaining any waivers or approvals that are otherwise required to make the purchase.

8. Can a buyer use other BPAs or FSSs with the same or other vendor to comply?

Only if the requested item is not offered by any of the BPA contractors and is not a competitive product to those on the JWOD procurement list (Papermate vs. Skillcraft pens). The guidance directing the mandatory use of the Army Office Supplies BPAs through the Email supersedes local policy.

9. How do I get into the Email and do I have to process my purchase through the Email?

The URL is www.Email.dla.mil. Each cardholder will need to register as a buyer on the Email. This is a very simple process and takes about three minutes to complete. All purchases shall be processed through the Email.

10. Who is responsible to insure cardholders are using the mandatory BPAs?

As in any purchase, the cardholder has the primary responsibility to comply with all regulations, policy, and directives applicable to that purchase. The Billing Official must review and approve each transaction and the A/OPC shall make compliance with the mandatory BPAs part of the annual review. The PC/PMO, on a regular basis, will request reports from the Bank to insure there are no wide spread abuses.