

Harvard Forest Purchasing Guidelines

Overview

Authorized individuals purchasing on behalf of Harvard are expected to base purchases on sound business practice, best value, accountability, and compliance with donor, sponsor and regulatory requirements. Individuals planning for or making purchases must follow established Harvard University policies and procedures. Individuals who spend funds or who prepare or authorize expenditures on behalf of the University have a stewardship responsibility to ensure those transactions are reasonable, appropriate, and have a proper University business purpose.

Guidelines that are tailored specifically to the Harvard Forest are found below, however please refer to Harvard University's [Procurement Policy](#) for more detailed information.

Questions related to this document should be directed to the HF Finance team at hffinance@fas.harvard.edu.

Contacts

HF Finance team: hffinance@fas.harvard.edu

- Sponsored Research Administrator: [Jeannette Bowlen](#)
 - Financial Manager: [Lisa Richardson](#)
 - Financial Associate: vacant
 - Accounting Assistant: [Chrystal Boisvert](#)
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Guidelines

Authorization

Only authorized individuals may purchase on behalf of Harvard. It is **mandatory** that the individual completes the *Role of the Purchaser, Preparer, and Approver (ROPPE)* training on the [Harvard Training Portal](#) before becoming an authorized purchaser. A certificate of completion must be submitted to hffinance@fas.harvard.edu.

Approvals

Approval must be obtained **PRIOR** to making a purchase under the following conditions:

- Purchases made with *sponsored* funds: purchases greater than \$1,000 or within 90 days of grant termination must be pre-approved by the Sponsored Research Administrator and the Principal Investigator (PI). All purchases greater than \$10,000 made with federal funds or cost-share funds require a vendor selection verification and must be documented using the

[Vendor Justification/Price Verification Form \(VJF\)](#). Purchases greater than \$35,000 made with federal funds or cost-share funds require a [Debarment Certification](#) from the supplier.

- Purchases made with *department* funds: purchases greater than \$1,000 must be pre-approved by the Financial Manager.

Purchase Orders

A purchase order should be created for all planned purchases prior to receiving the items or completion of services. Additionally, a purchase order is required if the purchase is greater than \$1,000 (regardless of funding source). Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis. Please reach out to HF Finance for assistance with obtaining a purchase order.

Contracts

Generally, a contract is required if a binding agreement is intended between Harvard and any outside party where either Harvard or the other party will be responsible for specific deliverables or services. Please reach out to HF Finance for assistance with contracts.

Vendor Selection

Preferred Vendors

- Vendors that have been selected through the University's formal sourcing process should be used whenever possible. HF also has open charge accounts with several local vendors. To find out if a vendor is a Harvard Preferred Vendor, for information on how to make a purchase through our charge account at a local vendor, or for requests to open a new charge account please email hffinance@fas.harvard.edu.

Online Vendors

- An authorized purchaser may choose to shop online. Once a vendor has been chosen, check with HF Finance to find out if an account already exists. If no account exists, the purchaser may create an account (if required). Accounts must be in the name of Harvard Forest with the HF address; however, you can list yourself as the contact. Please make sure tax exemption is applied at account set-up. It is also suggested that you share your account information with the Accounting Assistant.

Amazon

- Please reach out to the Accounting Assistant for assistance with Amazon purchases. Business purchases should not be made using a personal Amazon account.

Tax Exemption

Harvard Forest is exempt from paying sales tax in MA. Please print out [MA Certificate ST-2 and MA Certificate ST-5](#) and bring along with you to all vendors.

Methods of Payment

Purchasing Card (PCard)

- Use for **NON-TRAVEL** purchases such as memberships, subscriptions, supplies, etc. and/or for unplanned purchases.
 - *Non-Travel Exceptions:* Seminar Lunch purchased in the immediate area of HF; fuel for an HF vehicle at a non-Exxon/Mobil gas station or if the vehicle gas card is unavailable
- Single-purchase spending limit of \$2,500 or less (SPLITTING PAYMENTS TO STAY UNDER THIS LIMIT IS PROHIBITED)

Corporate Travel Card

- Use for **TRAVEL** costs such as airfare, taxi, meals, etc.
- Sponsored Travel: reach out to the Sponsored Research Administrator and the PI prior to arranging travel if total expenses exceed \$1,000
- Please refer to Harvard University's [Travel Policy](#) for more detailed information

Buy-to-Pay (B2P)

- Online shop that connects to Harvard University's Preferred Vendor sites
- Billing happens electronically between vendor and Harvard University
- To request access to shop through B2P, please email hffinance@fas.harvard.edu.

Direct billing via Accounts Payable

- Vendors that HF has a charge account with will send an invoice to HF to be paid via check or electronic funds transfer
- Use when other methods above are not an option (e.g. purchase greater than \$1,000 PCard limit) or for frequent purchasing from a vendor

Personal funds (out of pocket)

This should be a last resort option as the methods above are the preferred methods of payment. Please refer to the [Reimbursements](#) page for more information.

Documentation

Receipts, packing lists, invoices, etc. must be forwarded to HF Finance as soon as possible. All documents should be signed, dated, noted with a business purpose, specify method of payment, and indicate a funding source. If a receipt for lodging or any expense greater than \$75 is missing, please complete the [Missing Receipt Affidavit \(MRA\)](#).

Definitions

Authorized: having official permission or approval.

Buy-to-Pay (B2P): Harvard's fully integrated accounts payable, eProcurement, supplier management, contract management, and sourcing system solution created by Jaggaer. B2P replaced HCOM and Novatus in 2020.

Contract: An agreement having a lawful object entered into voluntarily by two or more parties, each of whom intends to create one or more legal obligations between them.

Corporate Card: A *joint-liability* credit card issued by the University to employees for payment of business-related travel and entertainment expenses.

Debarment Form: a form that allows Harvard to obtain written certification from vendors that they have not been debarred (prohibited) from doing business with the federal government.

Harvard Crimson Online Marketplace (HCOM): E-procurement system which was a precursor to B2P. HCOM will remain as view only for historical purposes only. No legacy data was migrated from HCOM to B2P.

Preferred Vendor/Supplier: Supplier that has been awarded a contract and/or pricing agreement with negotiated terms and conditions and pricing favorable to Harvard, for use by University schools or units, after successfully completing a formal sourcing process. The Strategic Procurement Office is the sole office which can flag a Preferred Vendor in the Buy-to-Pay system. The list of University Preferred Vendors can be found on the Strategic Procurement website. A Preferred Vendor does not necessarily meet Uniform Guidance and FAR regulations so a second or third quote is necessary when using federal funds for purchases >\$50,000.00.

Purchaser/Shopper: an individual who spends University funds, both directly (through use of B2P or PCard) or indirectly (through use of Corporate Card or personal funds to be reimbursed). In B2P eProcurement, this is sometimes the Requestors responsibility depending on how the school issued roles.

Purchasing Card (PCard): A *University-liability* credit card issued by the University to employees, for payment of high-volume, low-dollar, non-travel-related and non-entertainment-related business purchases. See the PCard Policy for more information.

Purchase Order: A Purchase Order (PO) is a unique document used to communicate a purchase of goods and/or services to a vendor.

Supplier: A vendor providing goods or services to Harvard. For purposes of this policy, the term "supplier" is used interchangeably with the term "contractor" or "vendor." The general term "supplier" is different from the definition of a Harvard "Preferred Vendor or Supplier," which is a supplier selected through a competitive bid and negotiation process and whose products and services offer optimized value.

Vendor: See Supplier.

Vendor Justification Form (VJF): a form used to justify sole-source selection and cost or price analysis, required for all purchases greater than \$50,000 made with federal funds, cost-share funds or expenses transferred onto federal funds. **Please note:** *as a small department, Harvard Forest has imposed a lower threshold for vendor justification (required for purchases greater than \$10,000)*

Revision History

09/12/24: included note about exceptions in purchase order section; added Amazon section in vendor selection section; PCard single-purchase spending limit changed from \$1,000 to \$2,500; revised Appendix A to add note 1a; clarified language and formatting throughout document

11/01/22: updated approvals section to include language about debarment certification; updated threshold from \$2,500 to \$1,000 for department funds; updated purchase order section to include creation for planned purchases; added contact info in contracts section; clarified language in Purchasing Card section; added Buy-to-Pay (B2P) as a method of payment and removed Harvard Crimson Online Marketplace (HCOM); clarified language in Direct Billing section; added some terms to the definitions section; updated definitions to match HU Procurement Policy; reordered revision history section to reverse chronological order; revisions to Appendix A: updated purchase order threshold and other dollar thresholds to align with HU policy; updated note 1 to align with new purchase order guideline; updated note 3 to clarify quote requirements and added language about exceptions

02/03/20: revisions to Appendix A: included location of purchase order log in note 1, clarified construction project contracts are required for services only in note 2, removed fund range for federal funds and included "University" for Harvard Preferred Vendor in note 3; moved contacts to the top section of the document; clarified language in Purchase Order section; clarified language in Purchasing Card section; included "PI" in Corporate Travel Card section for consistency; formatting

01/01/20: revised purchase order requirement from \$1,000 regardless of funding source to \$1,000 for sponsored funds and \$2,500 for department funds; added Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A: Purchasing Document Requirements Rubric

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	Purchase Order ⁽¹⁾	Contract ⁽²⁾	Quotes ⁽³⁾	Debarment Certification ⁽⁴⁾
< \$1,000: follow preceding Purchasing Guidelines				
\$1,000 - \$4,999.99	X			
\$5,000 - \$9,999.99	X	X		
\$10,000 - \$49,999.99	X	X	X	
>=\$35,000	X	X	X	X

(1) Contact HF Finance for a purchase order.

(1a) The Land and Facilities Manager can place time-sensitive orders under \$2,500 without a written quote but provides finance with an estimate via email until exact amount is known.

(2) Contracts are only required for services, not for the purchase of goods. Construction projects require a contract regardless of the dollar amount.

(3) 2 quotes required but 3 preferred (regardless of funding source); Vendor Justification Form required for purchases made with federal funds or cost-share funds; if using a Harvard University Preferred Vendor, a quote is still required for backup documentation and purchase order creation (regardless of funding source); exceptions may be approved by the Director of Administration and Facilities (DAF) for capital- or department-funded projects under \$50,000.

(4) Debarment certification form **OR** debarment language in contract **OR** printout from sam.gov

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