

CAREER GUIDE FOR PURCHASING AGENT

SOC Code: 13-1023*

Pay Band(s): 4,5 and 6 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description: Purchase machinery, equipment, tools, parts, supplies, or services necessary for the operation of an establishment. Purchase raw or semi-finished materials for manufacturing.

*Purchasing Agents within the Commonwealth primarily purchase items other than wholesale, retail or farm items. However, the Commonwealth has Purchasing Agents that purchase retail and farm items. These Purchasing Agents would be included in other SOC codes but would be assigned to the same Procurement Service Career Group and roles.

Purchasing Agent positions in the Commonwealth are assigned to the following Roles in the [Procurement Services Career Group](#):

[Procurement Officer I](#)

[Procurement Officer II](#)

[Procurement Officer III](#)

While Purchasing Agents within the Commonwealth are all located within the Procurement Services Career Group, individuals may want to pursue other opportunities within the Commonwealth depending upon individual training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.

Other Career Group(s) that may be of interest are:

[Information Technology Specialists](#)

[Financial Services](#)

[General Administration](#)

[Land Acquisition and Property Management](#)

[Retail Operations](#)

[Administrative and Office Support](#)

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

Skills

Note: *The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Purchasing Agents commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

1. Bringing others together and trying to reconcile differences.
2. Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.

3. Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
4. Persuading others to change their minds or behavior.
5. Determining how money will be spent to get the work done, and accounting for these expenditures.
6. Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
7. Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
8. Talking to others to convey information effectively.
9. Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem solving and decision-making.
10. Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.

Knowledge

Note: *The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Purchasing Agents commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The Knowledge of:

1. Business and management principles involved in strategic planning, resource allocation, human resources modeling, leadership technique, production methods, and coordination of people and resources.
2. Economic and accounting principles and practices, the financial markets, banking and the analysis and reporting of financial data.
3. Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus, statistics, and their applications.
4. Structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
5. Automated procurement systems, e-commerce and e-procurement.
6. Project management in complex environment.
7. Research, analysis and quantitative methodology and how to write technical reports.

Abilities

Note: *The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Purchasing Agents commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The Ability to:

1. Communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
2. Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
3. Read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
4. Communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand.
5. Choose the right mathematical methods or formulas to solve a problem.
6. Add, subtract, multiply, or divide quickly and correctly.
7. Come up with a number of ideas about a topic (the number of ideas is important, not their quality, correctness, or creativity).
8. See details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).

9. Speak clearly so others can understand you.
10. Tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.

Tasks

Note: *The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by Purchasing Agents. Employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.*

Tasks

1. Analyze price proposals, financial reports, and other data and information to determine reasonable prices.
2. Confer with staff, users, and vendors to discuss defective or unacceptable goods or services and determine corrective action.
3. Evaluate and monitor contract performance to ensure compliance with contractual obligations and to determine need for changes.
4. Interview vendors and visit suppliers' plants and distribution centers to examine and learn about products, services and prices.
5. Maintain and review computerized or manual records of items purchased, costs, delivery, product performance, and inventories.
6. Monitor shipments to ensure that goods come in on time, and in the event of problems trace shipments and follow up undelivered goods.
7. Negotiate, or renegotiate, and administer contracts with suppliers, vendors, and other representatives.
8. Prepare purchase orders, solicit bid proposals and review requisitions for goods and services.
9. Purchase the highest quality merchandise at the lowest possible price and in correct amounts.
10. Research and evaluate suppliers based on price, quality, selection, service, support, availability, reliability, production and distribution capabilities, and the supplier's reputation and history.
11. Train and provide technical consulting services.

INTERESTED?

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristics. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

The occupation of Purchasing Agent has **Enterprising** and **Conventional** characteristics as described below:

Enterprising — Enterprising occupations frequently involve starting up and carrying out projects. These occupations can involve leading people and making many decisions. Sometimes they require risk taking and often deal with business.

Conventional — Conventional occupations frequently involve following set procedures and routines. These occupations can include working with data and details more than with ideas. Usually there is a clear line of authority to follow.

LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Generally this is not required for Purchasing Agent positions in state government.

However, professional certification is becoming increasingly important, especially for those just entering the occupation.

In Federal, State, and local government, the indications of professional competence are Certified Professional Public Buyer (CPPB) and Certified Public Purchasing Officer, (CPPO), conferred by the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing. Most of these certifications are awarded only after work-related experience and education requirements are met, and written or oral exams are successfully completed. For information, contact National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, Inc.: <http://www.nigp.org>

In private industry, recognized marks of experience and professional competence are the Accredited Purchasing Practitioner (APP) and Certified Purchasing Manager (CPM) designations, conferred by the Institute for Supply Management, and the Certified Purchasing Professional (CPP) and Certified Professional Purchasing Manager (CPPM) designations, conferred by the American Purchasing Society.

Certification enhances professional growth and career progression.

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Department of Labor provides the following information:

Purchasers and buyers determine which commodities or services are best, choose the suppliers of the product or service, negotiate the lowest price, and award contracts that ensure that the correct amount of the product or service is received at the appropriate time.

Qualified persons may begin as trainees, purchasing clerks, expeditors, junior buyers, or assistant buyers. Retail and wholesale firms prefer to hire applicants who have a college degree and who are familiar with the merchandise they sell and with wholesaling and retailing practices. Some retail firms promote qualified employees to assistant buyer positions; others recruit and train college graduates as assistant buyers. Most employers use a combination of methods. Educational requirements tend to vary with the size of the organization. Large stores and distributors prefer applicants who have completed a bachelor's degree program with a business emphasis.

Regardless of academic preparation, new employees must learn the specifics of their employers' business. Training periods vary in length, with most lasting 1 to 5 years.

An experienced purchasing agent or buyer may become an assistant purchasing manager in charge of a group of purchasing professionals before advancing to purchasing manager, supply manager, or director of materials management. At the top levels, duties may overlap with other management functions, such as production, planning, logistics, and marketing.

Regardless of industry, continuing education is essential for advancement. Many purchasers participate in seminars offered by professional societies and take college courses in supply management.

The State Council of Higher Education (SCHV) lists five Virginia educational institutions offering educational programs in business management and administrative services. They are George Mason University, Marymount University, Old Dominion University, Sweet Briar College, and the University of Richmond.

For information on an Apprenticeship Program contact the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry at the e-mail address: jpn@doli.state.va.us

For additional career information contact the Department of General Services at: <http://www.dgs.state.va.us/>

COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES

Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and the organization. Competencies can be observed and measured. When consistently demonstrated, competencies make employees particularly effective in their work. Competencies help lay out a road map to career success. You can use the Commonwealth Competencies to help improve your individual performance by adopting behaviors that make high performing employees successful in their jobs. In this way, you can use the Commonwealth Competencies for your further professional development.

The Commonwealth Competencies are:

1. Technical and Functional Expertise
2. Understanding the Business
3. Achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and ability) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to: http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm. For the competencies, we first list the competencies and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving “up” to the next highest role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That’s because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example: **Purchasing Agent**

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES
4	Procurement Officer I
5	Procurement Officer II
6	Procurement Officer III

PAY BAND	MANAGER ROLES
4	Procurement Manager I
5	Procurement Manager II
6	Procurement Manager III
7	Procurement Manager IV

Sample Career Path

Procurement Officer I

The Procurement Officer I role provides career tracks for procurement officers who conduct a variety of procurement activities to include the purchase of goods and services; contracting; materiel handling services; and order expedition from vendors to users. Duties range from routine to those that are varied and of moderate difficulty and include analyzing documents and resolving vendor and agency complaints.

Procurement Officer II

The Procurement Officer II role provides career tracks for procurement officers who perform procurement services of advanced level, such as formulating term-contracts and administering those contracts. Responsibilities include reviewing and evaluating activities to include compliance administration, investigation of vendor and customer complaints, and administration of bidding and contracting; or provide technical guidance.

Procurement Officer III

The Procurement Officer III role provides career tracks for procurement officers performing technical responsibilities at the expert level in the procurement field by providing highly specialized services involving the procurement of complex statewide services with far-reaching impact.

Procurement Manager I

The Procurement Manager I role provides career tracks for managers who manage the day-to-day activities and the employees engaged in the purchase and procurement of goods and services; warehouse and storage activities; property control; and the disposition of surplus property.

Procurement Manager II

The Procurement Manager II role provides career tracks for managers of complex procurement and materiel handling functions. Range of duties includes supervising and managing employees who are responsible for statewide storage and inventory systems, centralized procurement and

materiel handling activities, contract development and administration, and procurement training, assistance and guidance to vendors, agencies and public entities.

Procurement Manager III

The Procurement Manager III role provides career tracks for managers that lead and direct the operations of a large, diverse and complex procurement program. Examples of such may include the state's central warehouse, the state and federal surplus property program, universities or hospitals/research facilities, or the largest state agencies.

Procurement Manager IV

The Procurement Manager IV role provides a career track for executive-level managers responsible for policies, procedures, and standards, which prescribe and certify a level of professional competence in goods and services procurement. Employees have statutory and regulatory (state and/or federal) responsibilities to provide for the development and maintenance of financially sound, high-quality procurement programs and services.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

O*NET (Occupational Information Network)

http://online.onetcenter.org/gen_search_page

Virginia Employment Commission

<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Career One Stop

<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Virginia Career Resource Network

<http://www.vacrn.net/>