

# Cooperative Procurement:

**How Public Sector fleets can save money, procurement time and stretch budgets.**

Cooperative Procurement once known as "piggybacking" is a public procurement method that has skyrocketed in recent years for many reasons. Cooperative procurement is a method whereby if a single government agency has gone through the procurement (bid) process, established a contract for an item or groups of products, issued an award or awards to several vendors, this award can be used by many government agencies for a fixed period of time.

There are many reasons for the growth in cooperative procurement which include; group buying power, procurement staffs have shrunk, not needing to write specs for every single purchase and as one state procurement director said before his state joined a large procurement co-op, "why re-invent the wheel when another state and their procurement staff has done all of the work".

In focusing on the equipment required to maintain public sector fleets, there are several options and opportunities to participate in cooperative procurement for garage equipment. The first cooperative we'll discuss on a state level is the Western State Contracting Alliance commonly known as the WSCA contract. The WSCA contract titled vehicle lifts and related garage equipment is being used by 20 different states. When a state joins a WSCA contract, every city, county or state agency can use the contract. The WSCA contracts terms and conditions are clearly spelled out in the contract, while the contract itself has a mandate for guaranteed lowest government pricing.

In contacting Breann Hollandsworth, the contracting officer for the WSCA vehicle lift contract, Ms. Hollandsworth told us that the vehicle lift contract was one of the fastest growing WSCA contracts (based on the number of states that have joined) as well as a contract that has far exceeded the anticipated purchases.

All WSCA contracts are competitive bids, multi-year contracts with multiple vendors and a variety of equipment

offered on these multiple award schedule (MAS) contracts. Our research on the vehicle lift contract shows there are 4 brands of lifts offered, multiple vendors, and in addition to a variety of vehicle lifts of all types and sizes, the contract also offers wheel balancers, tire changers, alignment and exhaust evacuation equipment. An example we found was one vendor's website (which is also a requirement of the contract) at [www.govlifts.com](http://www.govlifts.com) where each state shows a specific state contract, terms, conditions and net discounted and delivered government price.

While GSA serves the needs of every federal agency, the HGAC, MARC, & BRCPC co-ops serve the needs of all city, county and school agencies across the USA. As a government to government co-op, these contracts are also multi-sourced to include many vendors, all with the guaranteed lowest government pricing, include freight, and a fully disclosed set of terms & conditions of the specific contracts. Like the WSCA co-op offers vehicle lifts and related shop equipment, the HGAC ([www.hgacbuy.org](http://www.hgacbuy.org)) co-op offers vehicle lifts and a full array of fleet service equipment including lifts.

HGAC has 2,700 government agencies in 26 different states, while MARC and BRCPC are regional cooperatives. For a government agency to join HGAC, membership is free and never expires. Cooperative procurement is such a fast growing practice amongst government agencies that HGAC's membership has doubled in the last 18 months. Besides vehicle lifts and fleet service equipment, HGAC offers all types of public works equipment, trucks, cars, ambulances & municipal maintenance equipment. A phone interview with the City of Chubbok, ID showed that Dale Kinlich was able to buy the garage equipment of his choice, legally avoid the cumbersome



process of writing bid specifications, and purchase the lifts he planned to have in his shop vs. the typical low bid offering (which did not suit his agency requirements). Another agency in IL was also able to buy a crack sealing machine for the city at a cost savings of over \$6,000 over the low bid he received from a local vendor.

HGAC's Ron Williamson is in charge of establishing new HGAC members. To join, an inter-local contract form is submitted, and within 48 the submitting government agency receives their own membership number to view the HGAC site, products and prices. HGAC contracts are convenience use contracts. In addition, they serve as a "barometer" to a purchasing department to verify the purchase order they are issuing is the best price available for the use of taxpayers dollars. Additionally, as HGAC reviews bids, looks at the many "soft costs" of a public procurement, man hours can be saved if using the HGAC co-op.

The last type of cooperative procurement is using another agency's contract. Procurement statute (law) in all 50 states allow a city, county or state agency to use another state agency's established contract, or use a GSA contract as a basis of award. Recently the State of Delaware DOT purchased mobile column lifts by using the federal GSA price as a benchmark and issuing a purchase order to a lift vendor.

