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History & Authority

The creation of the National Joint Powers Alliance® (NJPA) was authorized by Minnesota law as an Educational Cooperative Service Unit (Independent School District #924) to serve education and government entities with solutions, as outlined in [Minn. Stat. 123A.21](#), which are more efficiently delivered cooperatively than by an entity individually. As a service cooperative, NJPA is a [governmental unit of the State of Minnesota](#), all NJPA employees are government employees.

NJPA is governed by an [eight-member board](#) made up of county commissioners, city councilmembers, mayors, or school board members.

Membership with and participation in NJPA programs is available to all education and government entities, as well as nonpublic schools and nonprofit organizations.

The services offered to NJPA Members are outlined in a [plan](#) assembled by the board of directors in conjunction with NJPA Members that is reviewed and published annually.

Prior to being recognized as the National Joint Powers Alliance, NJPA offered like programs and services, and was referred to as the North Central Service Cooperative.

Additional References

Service cooperatives establishment, membership and participation, governing board, and programs and services are defined in [Minn. Stat. 123A.21 Subd. 3-7](#).

[Minn. Stat. 471.59](#) defines Minnesota's Joint Exercise of Powers.

NJPA Bylaws

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FAQs

Who is NJPA?

NJPA is a public corporation or agency serving as a municipal contracting agency for government and education agencies. NJPA serves member agencies under the legislative authority established and granted by Minnesota Statute 123A.21 (see specific statutory references on pages 4-5). All NJPA employees are public employees whom are required to pay into Public Employment Retirement Association (PERA) through payroll deduction. NJPA employees have the same employment status as employees of NJPA government and education member agencies.

What is NJPA's primary purpose?

Among other areas of serving members, NJPA creates national cooperative contract purchasing solutions on behalf of its member agencies which include all government, education and non-profit agencies nationwide and in Canada. These cooperative contract opportunities offer both time and money savings for their users by consolidating the efforts of numerous individually prepared solicitations to one national, cooperatively shared process. This process leverages the aggregation of volume from members nationwide.

Who is eligible for NJPA membership?

How is NJPA governed?

NJPA is governed by the NJPA Board of Directors. The eight-member board is comprised of publicly elected governing officials; including school board, city council members and county commissioners from Region Five in Minnesota.

How much does it cost to participate in NJPA?

There is no-cost, no-obligation or liability to join or participate in the NJPA contract purchasing program. There are no minimum contract purchasing requirements or commitments for members use of NJPA contracts.

How is NJPA funded?

Vendors realize substantial efficiencies through their ability to respond to one NJPA solicitation and Request for Proposal (RFP) that will potentially earn thousands of sales opportunities. From these efficiencies, vendors pay an administrative fee to NJPA calculated as a percentage of sales processed through the competitively solicited procurement contracts awarded and held by the vendor. This administrative fee is not an added cost to the member. This administrative fee covers the costs of contract marketing and facilitation and it offsets operating expenses incurred by NJPA. This fee may also be used for other purposes as allowed by Minnesota statute. NJPA does not receive state or federal aid or membership fees. With respect to cooperative contract purchasing, NJPA is a self-funded governmental unit. NJPA also shares these fees with certain other NJPA members, partner cooperatives or associations as they demonstrate the desire and ability to help facilitate and market available NJPA contracts. Administrative fees paid to NJPA are not an additional cost to NJPA members.

How can we join and participate in NJPA and its contracts and services?

A membership can be initiated by:

- Online membership application: www.njpacoop.org/join/application
- Paper-based membership application: www.njpacoop.org/membershipagreement
- "Joint Exercise of Powers" or "Interlocal" agreement, see example at: www.njpacoop.org/jointexerciseofpowers

Participating members are non-voting members of NJPA that are able to enter into Joint Powers Agreements. Non-profit organizations, non-public schools and other similar entities may join NJPA through an associate membership. Full voting memberships are limited to units of government or education located within the five county region of Minnesota which NJPA was originally created to serve.

Does NJPA have a professional public purchasing board of advisors?

Yes. At this point, all current members are a part of our Board of Advisors. NJPA also has multiple member advisory committees that specialize in various membership verticals. These verticals include our general membership represented by procurement professionals from our government and education agencies and others, such as fleet departments, food service departments, park and recreation departments and public utility departments.

Can agencies other than government and education use the program?

Yes, under M.S. 123A.21, non-profit agencies may also participate.

What specific statute gives my agency the authority to participate?

Generally, joint powers and/or cooperative purchasing laws create the authority for members to work together with NJPA and accept NJPA procurement laws. These laws are a part of state law in every state, however, they are written slightly differently. Essentially, what these laws state is: "What two units of government can individually do for themselves, one can do for the other." NJPA membership forms are designed to help establish an appropriate agreement to comply with the Joint Powers Laws of our qualifying agencies.

What are the advantages of being a member of NJPA?

- The competitive solicitation and contract process is completed and satisfied on behalf of your agency.
- National aggregation of product and equipment demand and volume resulting in aggressive and competitive pricing.
- Choice of equipment, products and services is offered under awarded contracts featuring the highest quality solutions from industry-leading and nationally acclaimed vendors.
- Members enjoy a broad range of exceptional product and equipment selections complimented by substantial time savings and multiple other related benefits for participating agencies.
- NJPA contract solutions offer choice with the ability to continue to perform your own competitive solicitation process if you choose to do so.

NJPA strives to exceed our members' needs and expectations. Our contracting process mirrors our members' process. In creating a contract pathway through a unified and commonly embraced contracting process, NJPA contracts are accepted by the highest level of government and education agencies across the country. NJPA increases our members' comfort by conducting complete financial audits of our organization annually through an independent auditor with the results submitted to the State of Minnesota as required by state law.

As NJPA members, are we still able to buy from other contracts?

Yes, all NJPA membership and contracts are non-exclusive with no obligation to purchase and are contracts of choice by our member agencies.

Can my public agency use NJPA contracts without issuing our own solicitation?

Yes, in most states and local jurisdictions, though it is the responsibility of individual members to make the determination. All NJPA contracts have been competitively solicited nationally, reviewed, evaluated by committee and recommended to the NJPA Board of Directors for award in accordance with Minnesota public purchasing and contracting rules, guidelines and regulations applicable to NJPA. Each solicitation is issued on behalf of NJPA and current and potential NJPA members nationwide. Each RFP advises all responders that NJPA most desires and invites a vendor whom can sell and service participating member agencies in all fifty states and, optionally, provinces and territories of Canada. All RFP respondents understand that these contracts will be under consideration for use by government, education and non-profit member agencies throughout the United States.

How can I obtain copies of the legal documentation associated with each contract?

Related contract and competitive solicited process documentation is available on the NJPA website under each individual vendors' page or by request. Once on a vendor page, there is a tab titled "Contract Documentation" where these documents can be reviewed. Please follow the instructions under each vendor's "Pricing" tab to access pricing for specific contracts. Due to pricing complexity, most pricing is not located on the website and is available upon request in compliance with MN Data Practices. Procurement files are also available upon request.

What is the solicitation and request for proposal (RFP) process?

NJPA conducts a comprehensive 12-step process (described in full [here](#)) that includes:

1. Identify members' needs,
2. Research solutions available in the marketplace,
3. Request permission from the NJPA Board of Directors,
4. Draft a solicitation, public advertisement and notice,
5. Conduct a pre-proposal conference followed by receipt of responses,
6. Evaluate proposers' responses,
7. Review evaluation results,
8. Provide recommendations to the NJPA Board,
9. Award vendor(s),
10. Post approved contract documents,
11. Develop and implement a joint marketing plan with awarded vendor(s), and
12. Review and maintain our contract throughout its term.

How does the purchase process flow?

NJPA contracts establish a business to government style transaction flow. Members are encouraged to begin communications with their local dealer/representative of our contract holder, as they are the experts in helping members determine their specific needs and thereby defining the best solution for equipment, products and services needed. Members communicate with the vendors through contract proposals that include pricing. Members may contact NJPA to verify the awarded contract pricing and confirm contract terms and conditions. To execute a purchase, a member should issue a purchase order according to their normal organizational parameters. In addition, the member should include identifying language on the face of that purchase order such as: "This purchase order is issued pursuant to NJPA Contract #XXXXXX-AAA" which will notify the local dealer/representative of the desire and intent to use the NJPA contract that includes its pricing, terms and conditions.

Can my agency add additional terms & conditions to meet my local requirements?

Members have the ability to propose new or additional terms and conditions. By reviewing your procurement documentation and local requirements you may find that there are specific requirements by your agency that are not included in the NJPA terms and conditions. The terms and conditions of the NJPA contract cannot be changed, but custom or additional terms and conditions are acceptable between the customer and vendor at the purchase order level.

What about customer satisfaction and assurance?

NJPA cooperative procurement contracts do not guarantee sales. Each vendor must earn each individual sale they propose. Excellent products/equipment and customer service yields excellent customer satisfaction and assurance. As a result, NJPA cooperative procurement contracts are based on the quality and performance of the equipment/products and support of the on-going customer services. Our members issue their most important and final vote with their purchase orders. We find that our vendors exceed our members' expectations due to the quality of vendors we have under contract and how each vendor sees the value of the contract for their company.

Describe who NJPA contract awards to.

NJPA prefers to award contracts at the manufacturer level when possible. Contract awards to manufacturers are made on behalf of that manufacturer's dealer network through the established relationship between manufacturer and authorized dealers. Likewise, contract awards made to a re-seller are made on behalf of the re-seller's manufacturers, again through the established relationship between the re-seller and their manufacturers. In many cases, some products or equipment are only available through re-sellers. Whichever is the case, NJPA members have a single source of responsibility in the awarded contractor and that awarded contractor takes responsibility for all third party sub-contractors used in the acquiring and delivering of products and services to be delivered. As a result of the contracting reputation NJPA has earned, NJPA is able to award contracts to quality vendors that members can trust.

How do my regular suppliers become authorized suppliers for NJPA?

Ask the supplier to watch for solicitations being posted. NJPA solicitations are posted in the *USA Today* (usatodayclassifieds.com), at least once in Oregon and Utah in the *Daily Journal of Commerce* (djcoregon.com) and the *Salt Lake News* (naclegal@mediaoneutah.com), respectively; on the NJPA website (NJPAcoop.org); distributed to other third party procurement websites such as BidSync (bidsync.com), Onvia (onvia.com), MERX (merx.com), and Biddingo (biddingo.com); and distributed to the procurement offices at the state level in each state for re-publication in their jurisdictions at their discretion. Suppliers who respond to NJPA RFPs in a sufficient manner are awarded a contract according to the terms and conditions contained therein.

How do I get more information about NJPA?

Contact us at 888-894-1930 or contact any of our vendors listed in our Contract Directory.

How can we become a NJPA vendor?

All current NJPA vendors became awarded vendors by responding to a NJPA nationally advertised solicitation in their respective categories. To learn more visit our website at NJPAcoop.org/how-to-become-a-vendor.

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