State and Local Government Collaborative Purchasing: Cellular & Wireless Services

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The State of Vermont conducts centralized procurement of nearly all commodities (products and equipment) and a wide variety of services, for all of state government, through the Office of Procurement and Contracting ("OPC"), which is within the Department of Buildings and General Services ("BGS"). The State of Vermont also actively participates in collaborative procurement efforts by multiple states, aimed at maximizing buying power and favorable pricing, to help efficient government operations and stewardship of taxpayer resources.

> When a local government opts to use a state contract that is eligible for local use, the local government deals directly with the contractor. The local government maintains maximum local autonomy while achieving whole new levels of large-scale buying-power economy.

This is the first in a series of articles that highlight particular products and services that BGS OPC and VLCT have identified as being of potential benefit to local governments.

Of the 1,000+ state contracts that OPC currently has in place, approximately half are eligible for use by political subdivisions such as municipalities and schools, and they include a huge and expanding variety of products and services. OPC follows rigorous and consistently open and competitive bid processes that comply with applicable laws and best practices, provide fair and open opportunity to bidders, and secure both savings and quality through competition and economies of scale. When a local government opts to use a state contract that is eligible for local use, the local government deals directly with the contractor. The local government maintains maximum local autonomy while achieving whole new levels of large-scale buying-power economy.

For the set of state contracts that are specifically set up to also be able to be used by local governments, the local government simply "steps into" the

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products/services/prices already available to the state via the state contract. The local government simply requests (and the contractor has already agreed in the state contract) that the contractor provide the local government with the identical products/services/prices (unless otherwise indicated), that are defined in the state contract.

Local government usage of state contracts also maximizes benefit to all users (state and local) by presenting attractive opportunities for bidder companies to actively compete for government customers.

This month's specific focus is Cellular/Wireless products and services. The State of Vermont's contracts in this subject area were put in place in 2021 as part of one of the state's collaborative efforts with multiple states.

All of these contracts now include the Internet of Things (IoT), which allows for data connectivity of devices. Plans have been modernized, allowing the offering of unlimited voice and data along with the desired amount of data. The three new areas are:

Category 1- Cellular Wireless Services:

- This category will cover the basic cellular wireless transport services for voice, data, and messaging, as well as any new basic transport services that may be introduced for applications like those defined for IoT applications. "Cellular wireless transport" is defined to mean carrier provided wireless services that employ a radio access network based on technologies defined by the Third Generation Partnership Program (3GPP).

Category 2- Equipment and Accessories:

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- This category includes any equipment or accessories operating over cellular carrier provided network services or intended for use with cellular connected devices.

Category 3- Turnkey Wireless and IoT Solutions that are Offered as a Product:

- This category includes any of the wireless or IoT solutions or applications being offered as a complete product by the contractor.
- Subcategory 3a – Fleet Management
- Subcategory 3c – Mobile Integration

Please note:

The period between device upgrades has been changed from 12 months to 18-24 months depending on the supplier. (Note: With this, there is potential of higher cost to replace phones with the longer, two-year commitment. Subsidized devices are still available from all suppliers but require a two-year commitment. The breaking of the commitment will have an early termination fee. Before this, we could purchase a subsidized device with no commitment.

The State currently has contracts with AT&T(opens in a new tab), T-Mobile (formerly Sprint)(opens in a new tab), and Verizon(opens in a new tab).

AT&T Employee discount:

- State & municipal employees: AT&T offers 17% off service plans. The account must be in the employee's name to get the discount. You can link your government email at www.att.com/offers/discount-program/(opens in a new

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tab).

- First responders: AT&T also offers special plans. Information can be found at www.firstnet.com(opens in a new tab).

T-Mobile (formerly Sprint) Employee discount:

- State & municipal employees: T-Mobile offers $5.00 per line discount on up to two lines for Magenta Plus plans. The account must be in the employee's name to get the discount. Link your government email at https://businesssolutions.sprint.com/government-employee-discounts.html…; *(Editors note: As of 7/20/2023 the link to sprint.com provided with the original article no longer works. Try instead: https://now.t-mobile.com/government-employee-discounts.html)*

- First responders: T-Mobile also offers special plans. Information can be found at https://www.t-mobile.com/cell-phone-plans/first-responder-discounts(opens in a new tab)

Verizon Employee discount:

- State & municipal employees: Verizon offers 18% off service plans. The account must be in the employee's name to get the discount. Link your government email at https://www.verizon.com/discount-program/(opens in a new tab)

- First responders: Verizon also offers special plans. Information can be found at https://www.verizon.com/featured/first-responders/(opens in a new tab)

See cell phone and wireless services contracts here(opens in a new tab).

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For more information on these or other opportunities for local governments to leverage contracts for various products and services that are in place via the State of Vermont, please stay tuned to VLCT's website and emails for future articles from OPC. Please also feel free to reach out to the State of Vermont BGS Office of Purchasing & Contracting at bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing (opens in a new tab)and bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing-contracting/contact-us.(opens in a new tab)

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