
Procurement Clerks

(O*NET 43-3061.00)

Significant Points

- About 23 percent of procurement clerks work for Federal, State, and local governments.
- Overall employment is expected to experience little or no change as a result of increasing automation, offshoring, and restructuring of business.
- High school graduates with good communication and computer skills should have the best job opportunities.

Nature of the Work

Procurement clerks compile requests for materials, prepare purchase orders, keep track of purchases and supplies, and handle inquiries about orders. Usually called purchasing clerks or *purchasing technicians*, they perform a variety of tasks related to ordering goods and supplies for an organization. They make sure that what was purchased arrives on schedule and meets the purchaser's specifications.

Automation is having a profound effect on this occupation. Orders for goods now can be placed electronically when supplies are low. However, automation is still years away for many firms, and the role of the procurement clerk is unchanged in many organizations.

Procurement clerks perform a wide range of tasks. Some clerks perform strictly clerical functions, but others, particularly at small or medium-sized companies, do more complex tasks. In general, procurement clerks process requests for purchases. They first determine whether there is any of the requested product left in inventory and may go through catalogs or to the Internet to find suppliers. They may prepare invitation-to-bid forms and mail them to suppliers or distribute them for public posting. Procurement clerks may interview potential suppliers by telephone or face-to-face to check on prices and specifications and then put together spreadsheets with price comparisons and other facts about each supplier. Upon the organization's approval, clerks prepare and mail purchase orders and enter them into computers.

Procurement clerks keep track of orders and determine the causes of any delays. If the supplier has questions, clerks try to answer them and resolve any problems. When the shipment arrives, procurement clerks may reconcile the purchase order with the shipment, making sure that they match; notify the vendors when invoices are not received; and verify that the bills match the purchase orders.

Some purchasing departments, particularly in small companies, are responsible for overseeing the organization's inventory control system. At these organizations, procurement clerks monitor in-house inventory movement and complete inventory transfer forms for bookkeeping purposes. They may keep inventory spreadsheets and place orders when materials on hand are insufficient.

Work environment. Procurement clerks usually work a standard 40-hour week. Most procurement clerks work in areas that are clean, well lit, and relatively quiet. These workers sit for long periods of time in front of computer terminals, which many

cause eyestrain and headaches. Workers in this occupation may sometimes work overtime or on varied shifts.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

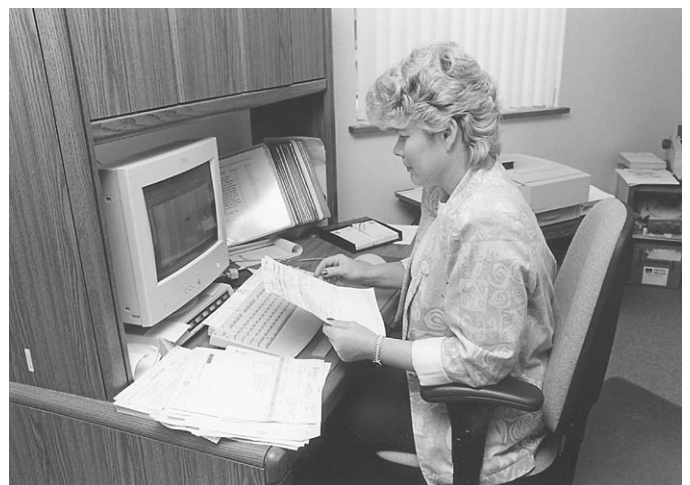
Most employers prefer applicants with a high school diploma or its equivalent. To advance to purchasing agent jobs, a bachelor's degree is usually required and certification is helpful.

Education and training. Most employers prefer applicants who have a high school diploma or its equivalent or a mix of education and related experience. Most procurement clerks are trained on the job under close supervision of more experienced employees. Training usually lasts less than a few months.

Other qualifications. Employers prefer workers who are computer-literate and have a working knowledge of word processing and spreadsheet software. Proficiency with computer software is important because most tasks, such as preparing purchase orders, are performed electronically.

Certification and advancement. Some procurement clerks who obtain a bachelor's degree and show a greater understanding of contracts and purchasing may be promoted to the position of purchasing agent or buyer. Useful fields of study include business, supply management, engineering, and economics.

Getting a certification may help procurement clerks demonstrate that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to take on more advanced purchasing tasks. There are several recognized credentials for purchasing agents and purchasing managers. The Certified Purchasing Manager (CPM) designation is conferred by the Institute for Supply Management. In 2008, this certification will be replaced by the Certified Professional in Supply Management (CPSM) credential, covering the wider scope of duties now performed by purchasing professionals. The Certified Purchasing Professional (CPP) and Certified Professional Purchasing Manager (CPPM) designations are conferred by the American Purchasing Society. The Certified Supply Chain Professional (CSCP) and Certified in Production and Inventory Management (CPIM) credentials are conferred by APICS, also known as the Association for Operations Management. 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 experience and education requirements are met and written or oral exams are successfully completed.



Procurement clerks prepare purchase orders and make sure that the shipment and the bills agree with the order.

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Procurement clerks.....	43-3061	78,000	76,000	-1,600	-2

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

Employment

In 2006, procurement clerks held about 78,000 jobs in every industry, including manufacturing, retail and wholesale trade, health care, and government. About 23 percent of procurement clerks work for Federal, State, and local governments; most of these work for the Federal Government.

Job Outlook

Employment in the occupation is expected to experience little or no change. High school graduates with good communication and computer skills should have the best job opportunities.

Employment change. Employment of procurement clerks is expected to decline by 2 percent during the 2006-16 decade, which is considered little or no change, as a result of increasing automation, offshoring, and business restructuring. The need for procurement clerks will be reduced as the use of computers to place orders directly with suppliers—called electronic data interchange—and as ordering over the Internet—known as “e-procurement”—become more commonplace. In addition, procurement authority for some purchases is now being given to employees in the departments originating the purchase. These departments may be issued procurement cards, which are similar to credit cards that enable a department to charge purchases up to a specified amount.

Job prospects. Despite the expected little or no change in employment, job openings will arise out of the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force. High school graduates with good communication and computer skills should have the best job opportunities.

Earnings

Median hourly earnings of procurement clerks in May 2006 were \$15.91. The middle 50 percent earned between \$12.65 and \$19.41. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$10.16 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$22.68. Procurement clerks working for the Federal Government had an average annual income of \$41,716 in 2007.

Related Occupations

Procurement clerks compile information and records to draw up purchase orders for materials and services. Other workers who

perform similar duties are purchasing agents and buyers, stock clerks and order fillers, and order clerks. Procurement clerks provide office support services for businesses and other organizations. Other workers who perform similar duties are file clerks; secretaries and administrative assistants; receptionists and information clerks; bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks; and payroll and timekeeping clerks.

Sources of Additional Information

Information on obtaining positions as procurement clerks or procurement technicians with the Federal Government is available from the Office of Personnel Management through USAJOBS, the Federal Government’s official employment information system. This resource for locating and applying for job opportunities can be accessed through the Internet at <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov> or through an interactive voice response telephone system at (703) 724-1850 or TDD (978) 461-8404. These numbers are not toll free, and charges may result.

State or local government personnel offices and their Web sites can provide information about procurement clerk jobs at those levels of government.

Information on employment opportunities for procurement clerks in the public or private sector is available from local offices of the State employment service.

Further information about education, training, employment, and certification for purchasing careers is available from:

- APICS, The Association for Operations Management, 5301 Shawnee Rd., Alexandria, VA 22312-2317. Internet: <http://www.apics.org>
- American Purchasing Society, North Island Center, Suite 203, 8 East Galena Blvd., Aurora, IL 60506.
- Institute for Supply Management, P.O. Box 22160, Tempe, AZ 85285-2160. Internet: <http://www.ism.ws>
- National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, Inc., 151 Spring St., Suite 300, Herndon, VA 20170-5223. Internet: <http://www.nigp.org>