

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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- 1. Q: By encumbering funds or requesting a Purchase Order, am I committing to the purchase of Goods or Service?**

**A:** Requesting a Purchase Order or encumbering funds in Unimarket does not create a binding commitment with a Consultant or Vendor. A binding commitment with a Consultant or Vendor is created only after the Purchase Order, and if required a fully executed contract, are sent to the Consultant or Vendor.
- 2. Q: When do I follow the contract process?**

**A:** Whenever you want a person (other than an employee) or organization to perform Services for TC and (a) the value of such Services exceed \$3,000, OR (b) the Services, regardless of the dollar value, involve working with children under the age of 18, transportation (such as contract for bus services) using confidential data, or creating a work that may be subject to intellectual property rights (such as photographs, written materials, or images). The contract process must be followed *before* the person or entity can commence providing services.
- 3. Q: When is the Independent Contractor Questionnaire (ICQ) required?**

**A:** Each time a Consultant, individuals only, is retained to provide Services to the College, the individual Consultant must complete an ICQ. An ICQ is required even if an agreement is not required. The information provided in this form will allow the Office of General Counsel to determine if this individual can be classified as an independent contractor or must be treated as an employee. The ICQ must be completed for each new project because the legal analysis depends on the work to be done, as well as other factors. Corporations and similar entities do not need to complete the ICQ; only individual consultants must do so.
- 4. Q: Who fills out the ICQ?**

**A:** The Consultant.
- 5. Q: To whom is the ICQ submitted?**

**A:** Once a consultant is selected to provide Services, the Consultant should complete an ICQ, at the link available in Unimarket.
- 6. Q: When is the Conflict of Interest(COI) form required?**

**A:** Each time a Business Entity (corporation, partnership, non-profit, etc.) , is retained to provide Services to the College; the Business Entity must complete a conflict of interest form. A conflict of interest form is required even if an agreement is not required. The information provided in this form will allow the College to determine if this entity has a conflict of interest that precludes the entity from providing services to the College.

- 7. Q: Who fills out the COI form?**  
**A:** A Business Entity (corporation, partnership, non-profit, etc.) only
- 8. Q: To whom is the COI form submitted?**  
**A:** Once a Business Entity is selected to provide Services, the Business Entity should complete a COI form, at the link available in Unimarket. Unimarket automatically sends the conflict of interest form to the Office of General Counsel.
- 9. Q: Does an individual need to complete a COI form?**  
**A:** No. COI questions are included in the ICQ
- 10. Q: Do companies/individuals need to complete the Conflict of Interest(COI)/Independent Contractor Questionnaire(ICQ) form, respectively, every time a requisition is created?**  
**A:** Yes, every time a requisition is created for a Business Entity that is providing Services they must complete the COI form <http://goo.gl/8d166C> and if they are an Individual they need to complete the ICQ form - <https://goo.gl/asQE3m> . The Buyer is responsible for sending the link to the Supplier.
- 11. Q: How far in advance of a contractor's work do I have to initiate a request in Unimarket?**  
**A:** At least two weeks. You should submit the request as soon as you start conversations with your possible contractor. Negotiating an agreement may take longer than two weeks when the contract is complicated or if the parties have difficulty agreeing on important terms.
- 12. Q: To whom do I submit the honorarium form?**  
**A:** The entire procurement process, including payments of honoraria, must be done via Unimarket.  
Please note that all requests for honoraria payment over \$1,500 will be treated as a request for consultant services and will be routed accordingly in Unimarket.
- 13. Q: How do I request a payment for a Consultant?**  
**A:** Each payment requires an approved invoice with an assigned Purchase Order number.  
Purchase Orders are issued in Unimarket when all the procurement requirements are met. Remember that some Purchase Orders will require the Consultant to have an executed agreement in place with the College (see Q&A 2).

**14. Q: How do I know how much money a prospective service provider has been paid by the College?**

**A:** The best way is to check BANNER, or ask Accounts Payable.

**15. Q: Once a Purchase Order or contract is in place how do I pay an independent contractor?**

**A:** Either in person or by email submit an itemized invoice to Accounts Payable. Accounts Payable will issue checks in accordance with the Payment Process.

**16. Q: How long will it take for an independent contractor to get paid?**

**A:** Once a Purchase Order is issued, you can commence submitting invoices to Accounts Payable.

After a proper itemized invoice is received by Accounts Payable, it will generally pay the invoice in approximately 14 days.

**17. Q: Do I fill out a PAF or check request form to get an independent contractor paid?**

**A:** PAF is only used for paying College employees – *not* independent contractors. To pay an independent contractor, see answers to Q&A 8 and 10 above.

**18. Q: Who can sign a contract?**

**A:** Only individuals authorized by the Office of the Controller are authorized to sign contracts. Contact the Controller's Office regarding the list of signature authority. The Department Chairs, and the Directors of Centers and Institutes are authorized to sign contracts up to \$25,000. The President, Vice President and Provost are authorized to sign contracts for services between \$25,001 and \$100,000. The Vice President for Finance and Administration and the President, Provost or Vice President must sign all contracts over \$100,000, and such contracts must be reviewed by the Vice President for Finance and Administration. General Counsel route contacts to the appropriate individual with the required signature authority. A list of employees with Signature Authority is available from the Controller's Office.

**19. Q: Does the Consultant have to submit an invoice?**

**A:** Yes. Before any payment can be made to a Consultant, regardless of the amount, an itemized invoice with the Purchase Order number must be submitted to Accounts Payable.

**20. Q: Why do consultants need insurance?**

**A:** Insurance is important to be certain that the consultant is able to cover any liability that may result from the project. Based on type of service, the College's Risk Manager will determine the type and level of insurance.

- 21. Q: What insurance coverage does the independent contractor need?**  
**A:** The required insurance coverage depends on the services being provided and level of risk or liability exposure to the College. A determination will be made on a case-by-case basis by the College's Risk Manager, available at [kaplan@tc.edu](mailto:kaplan@tc.edu), <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/controller/riskmanagement> or (212) 678-3482.
- 22. Q: Can a TC employee or TC student be a consultant?**  
**A:** No. TC employees and TC students are subject to Human Resources policies: See [Additional Employment or Supplements for Full-Time Positions](#) and [Employment in Part-Time Positions](#) (available at [www.tc.edu/policylibrary](http://www.tc.edu/policylibrary)).
- 23. Q: Whom do I contact for assistance with the procurement process?**  
**A:** For assistance with the procurement process, contact Purchasing at (212) 678-3138 or [purchasing@tc.columbia.edu](mailto:purchasing@tc.columbia.edu).
- 24. Q: Whom do I contact for assistance with the contracting process?**  
**A:** For assistance with the contracting process, contact the Office of the General Counsel at <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/counsel/>, [contractadministrator@tc.columbia.edu](mailto:contractadministrator@tc.columbia.edu), or (212) 678-3680.
- 25. Q: Why is the College changing the procurement process and policy?**  
**A:** Over the course of the last 12 months, the College has conducted a thorough review of the procurement process, which included a procedural audit and meetings with stakeholders in academic and administrative departments to gather user feedback and suggestions. The objective was to simplify College requirements and streamline the approval flow while ensuring the College complied with State and Federal procurement guidelines. The announced changes are a direct result of these conversations and meet the requirements promulgated by new Federal guidelines aimed at reducing fraud, waste, and abuse for purchases on federal grant funds.
- 26. Q: Does the new two bid rule apply across the board for all purchases?**  
**A:** TC policy, following Federal guidelines, requires at least two bids for all goods and services greater than \$3,000. Departments may choose to solicit additional bids - particularly when the market is highly competitive. As is the case currently, the alternative to soliciting bids is for purchases to be made from Preferred Vendors (see Q#3) or from vendors where the department has substantiated a valid Sole Source Justification (see Q#5).

- 27 Q:** What are the criteria to use Sole Source Justification?  
**A:** As is the current policy, to use Sole Source Justification for purchases greater than \$3,000, the vendor is not designated as a Preferred Vendor, and one of the below criteria must be met:
- i)** The department demonstrates that the goods/service cannot be purchased except through one vendor, e.g. due to patents or licensing agreements.
  - ii)** An emergency exists which will not permit a delay for competitive solicitation, e.g. a water leak, or in certain situations, a broken window, a breakdown in classroom or lab equipment, etc...Please note that self-imposed deadlines do not constitute an emergency and are not acceptable justification for a Sole Source provider.
  - iii)** When using Grant funds, if the grantor expressly authorizes noncompetitive bidding and the lack of bidding doesn't significantly increase costs.
  - iv)** Document the attempt at bid solicitation and show that competitive responses were unqualified and/or inadequate.
- 28 Q:** If I have worked with the supplier/service provider before, do I still have to obtain two bids?  
**A:** Yes, you will have to bid out good/services for each new project. The exception to this rule is when the vendor is Preferred (see Q#3), or when the department has substantiated a valid Sole Source Justification (see Q#5).
- 29 Q:** Who will have access to issue and solicit bids in Unimarket?  
**A:** Departments may designate any Buyer(s) to be the point person for bidding. To ensure quality control, the Purchasing Department will grant access to department designated user(s) only after attending training with Purchasing personnel.
- 30 Q:** Is training mandatory?  
**A:** Because of the legal and financial exposure of non-compliance, the College is requiring all Buyers go through training.
- 31 Q:** Can a vendor start work prior to a Purchase Order being issued?  
**A:** No! The Purchase Order is a legal document that authorizes the procurement of goods or services from the Supplier. Suppliers cannot provide goods or services prior to receiving a Purchase Order as that exposes both the College and the user to financial and legal risk.
- 32 Q:** Can I add an addendum to an expired contract?  
**A:** No, an addendum can only be added to a contract that has not expired. If the contract has expired the department will need to work with General Counsel to negotiate a new contract.

**33 Q:** What is a Preferred Vendor?

**A:** Preferred Vendors typically are those that have been awarded a contract by the Purchasing Department for College-wide use accessible to all department Buyers. The selection is based on a thorough review and negotiation to obtain the best overall value to the College based on the price, delivery capabilities, quality, past performance, financial stability, ease of ordering, etc...Preferred vendors are identified in the Unimarket Marketplace with a yellow Supplier Tag that states "PREFERRED".

**34 Q:** How do I get my supplier/service provider to be a Preferred Vendor?

**A:** Typically, a department specific Provider may not be deemed a Preferred Vendor as the benefit does not accrue to the College as a whole. However, some situations may warrant that the department specific vendor be given Preferred Vendor status. Please contact the Purchasing Department to explore the possibility of adding a vendor to t