



Buyer and Purchasing Agent

About

Buyers and purchasing agents buy products and services for organizations to use or resell. They evaluate suppliers, negotiate contracts, and review the quality of products. Purchasing managers oversee the work of buyers and purchasing agents and typically handle more complex procurement tasks.

Job Outlook and Salary



- Projected regional employment in 2024 is **13,560**
- The statewide projected average annual growth rate over the next five years is **0.57 %**
- The average annual wage is **\$82,788** (Seattle MSA)
- Hourly wages range from **\$27.94/HR** (25th percentile) to **\$47.03/HR** (75th percentile)

Job Tasks



- Evaluate suppliers on the basis of the price, quality, and speed of delivery of their products and services
- Interview vendors and visit suppliers' plants and distribution centers to examine and learn about products, services, and prices
- Attend meetings, trade shows, and conferences to learn about new industry trends and make contacts with suppliers
- Analyze price proposals, financial reports, and other information to determine reasonable prices
- Negotiate contracts on behalf of their organization
- Work out agreements with suppliers, such as when products will be delivered
- Meet with staff and vendors to discuss defective or unacceptable goods or services and determine corrective action
- Evaluate and monitor contracts to be sure that vendors and suppliers comply with the terms and conditions of the contract and to determine the need for changes
- Maintain and review records of items bought, costs, deliveries, product performance, and inventories

Education and Training



- **Purchasing managers, buyers, and purchasing agents typically need a Bachelor's degree.** Programs vary but may include fields of study such as military technologies. Purchasing managers also need 5 or more years of work experience in procurement.
- **Educational requirements for buyers and purchasing agents usually vary with the size of the organization.** Although a high school diploma may be enough at some organizations, many businesses require applicants to have a Bachelor's degree. For many positions, a

degree in business, finance, or supply management is sufficient. For positions as a buyer or purchasing agent of farm products, a degree in agriculture, agriculture production, or animal science may be beneficial.

- **Buyers and purchasing agents typically get on-the-job training for a few months.** During this time, they learn how to perform their basic duties, including monitoring inventory levels and negotiating with suppliers.

Licensures



- There are several certifications available for buyers and purchasing agents. Although some employers may require certification, many do not.
- Most of these certifications involve oral or written exams and have education and work experience requirements.

Work Schedule



- Most purchasing managers and buyers and purchasing agents work full time. Overtime is common in these occupations.

Skills



- **Analytical skills.** When evaluating suppliers, purchasing managers and buyers and purchasing agents must analyze their options and choose a supplier with the best combination of price, quality, delivery, or service.
- **Decision making skills.** Purchasing managers and buyers and purchasing agents must have the ability to make informed and timely decisions, choosing products that they think will sell.
- **Math skills.** Purchasing managers and buyers and purchasing agents must possess math skills. They must be able to compare prices from different suppliers to ensure that their organization is getting the best deal.
- **Negotiating skills.** Purchasing managers and buyers and purchasing agents often must negotiate the terms of a contract with a supplier. Interpersonal skills and self-confidence, in addition to knowledge of the product, can help lead to successful negotiations.

Technology



- **Accounting Software:** Deltek Costpoint
- **Customer Relationship Software:** Salesforce
- **Enterprise resource planning software:** Enterprise resource planning ERP system; Microsoft Dynamics GP; SAP
- **Office Suite Software:** Microsoft Office, PowerPoint, Project, Excel, and Word

Opportunities for Advancement



- An experienced purchasing agent or buyer may become an assistant purchasing manager before advancing to purchasing manager, supply manager, or director of materials management.
- Purchasing managers and buyers and purchasing agents with extensive work experience can also advance to become the Chief Procurement Officer (CPO) for an organization.

Education and Training Resources

The following regional education and training programs are examples of programs in the region that can help you obtain education and credentials to become a Buyer and Purchasing Agent. Some programs may require additional preparation and completion of prerequisites.



County	Programs
King County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seattle Pacific University (https://spu.edu/)• University of Washington Professional and Continuing Education (https://www.pce.uw.edu/)

Resources to Scholarships and Assistance Programs

- Washington State Opportunity Scholarship: <https://www.waopportunityscholarship.org/about/>
- Washington College Grant: <https://wsac.wa.gov/wcg>

References

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