Consolidated IT Purchasing Initiative Exception Process for North Carolina State University

Under the requirements of legislation passed by the North Carolina General Assembly, the Office of the President of the University of North Carolina System convened a working group of campus CIOs to establish a system-wide combined purchasing strategy to address a common set of configurations to provide system-wide cost saving from purchasing and support to all campuses. This strategy, known as the Combined Pricing Initiative and later as the Consolidated Purchasing Initiative [CPI], was created to establish uniform pricing for all campuses within the system and to provide computer users within the system with a number of standard configurations from participating vendors. There is a clear expectation that the majority of the computers purchased within the system that are funded by the State of North Carolina will conform to the standard CPI configurations.

Since all computing requirements may not be met by the CPI standard configurations, each campus within the UNC System is tasked with creating a policy to govern when exceptions to the standard configurations are appropriate; a defined process for computer users to follow to request an exemption, and guidelines of what constitutes grounds for an exemption.

Further at NC State, university officials have agreed that machines purchased from all funding sources will be covered by the CPI configurations. Requests for exemptions from the process are to be handled the same way as when state managed funds are being used.

Exceptions

It is recommended that all computer purchases within the criteria of CPI use the standard configurations. There are several types of purchases including exceptions addressed within this process: standard CPI configurations including options, minor variations from the CPI configurations, and systems outside of the CPI configurations. It should be noted that as of July 1, 2010 only desktop and laptop PCs are included within the program. Servers, netbooks, all-in-ones, and all Apple products are NOT currently included and, therefore, are not considered exceptions. There is an expectation that many of these products will be added to the program in the future.

Process

The exception process has several layers of approval for purchases. Some are automatic and some will require the approval of an individual or committee before the purchase can be completed. Under the constraints of the legislation, computer purchases will be made through the MarketPlace and address standard CPI configurations including options, minor variations from the CPI configurations, and systems outside of the CPI configurations. It should be noted that the use of Purchasing cards, vouchers, personal credit cards for reimbursement, etc. are not allowed under CPI.
Standard Configurations

Standard Configurations with or without CPI options will be presented to Purchasing through the MarketPlace without a requirement for further approval.

Minor Variations to Standard Configurations

Configurations that conform to Standard Configuration with options not on the CPI options list would be approved by the appropriate Dean, Vice-Chancellor or Vice-Provost for that unit. The Dean, Vice Chancellor or Vice-Provost can appoint one or more designees to approve these purchases. The MarketPlace workflow has been modified to include an approval by the designee(s) in the purchasing unit in addition to the existing financial approvals.

Non-Standard Configurations

Configurations and options outside the standards have to be approved by the University CPI Oversight Workgroup following a positive recommendation from the unit. The workgroup is composed of a small college representative, a large college representative, an OIT representative, a Purchasing representative and, if the CIO deems it prudent, additional representative(s). The unit’s representative will forward non-standard requests to the CPI Oversight Workgroup and present the reasons justifying the unit’s support of the non-standard configuration’s purchase. The Marketplace workflow has been modified to include both an approval by the purchasing unit and the CPI Oversight Workgroup in addition to the existing financial approvals.

Designees may be added to the approval workflow in MarketPlace as appropriate, such as a referral to the appropriate Dean, Vice Chancellor or Vice Provost, for items that require additional approval within a unit.

Reporting

Under the guidelines from the UNC System and the General Assembly, NC State must document the success of the program and provide reports addressing the percentage of computer purchases under the program that adhere to the standard configurations and those that do not.

Purchasing will provide reports to the CFO, CIO and units on information within the MarketPlace on whether purchases are meeting the standards and goals for the program.