

STATE FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AUTHORITY  
MEETING OF October 13, 2026

REGULAR SESSION  
ITEM NUMBER 12

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AGENCY: Division of Procurement Services

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SUBJECT: Procurement - Proposal for Staff Credentialing & Agency Certification

See attached Proposal for Staff Credentialing & Agency Certification.

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AUTHORITY ACTION REQUESTED:

Approve the proposal by the Division of Procurement Services to develop and implement both a statewide credentialing program for all procurement staff and a proposed approach for revising and standardizing the categories and differential dollar thresholds by which agencies are delegated procurement authority.

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ATTACHMENTS:

Agenda item worksheet and attachment

**STATE FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AUTHORITY  
AGENDA ITEM WORKSHEET**

**Meeting Scheduled for: 10/13/2026**

**Regular Agenda**

**1. Submitted by:**

- (a) Agency: SFAA, Division of Procurement Services  
(b) Authorized Official Signature:



John St. C. White  
Materials Management Officer  
Division of Procurement Svcs

**2. Subject:** Procurement – Proposal for Staff Credentialing & Agency Certification

**3. Summary and Background Information:**

See attached Proposal for Staff Credentialing & Agency Certification.

**4. What is the Authority asked to do?** Approve the proposal by Procurement Services to develop and implement both a statewide credentialing program for all procurement staff and a proposed approach for revising and standardizing the categories and differential dollar thresholds by which agencies are delegated procurement authority.

**5. What is recommendation of the submitting agency involved?** Approve.

**6. Private Participant Disclosure – Check one:**

- ☒ No private participants will be known at the time the Authority considers this agenda item.  
☐ A Private Participant Disclosure form has been attached for each private participant.  
As referenced on the Disclosure forms, a private participant is a natural person or non-governmental legal entity which may directly benefit from, and is participating in or directly associated with, the requested approval.

**7. Recommendation of other office (as required)?** Approve the Authority action requested.

- (a) Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
(b) Office Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. List of Supporting Documents:**

- A - Proposal for Staff Credentialing & Agency Certification  
B - Key Laws - Staff Accreditation & Agency Certification

**9. Upload Agenda Item Worksheet and supporting documentation in PDF and native format to the SFAA Authority File Drop.** Supporting documentation should include all related agreements or approval requests (e.g., leases, contracts, permanent improvements, indebtedness, agenda items), either current or anticipated; or provide affirmation from the submitting agency that there are no related transactions.

# **Proposal for Staff Credentialing & Agency Certification**

South Carolina's procurement laws apply the term "certification" to two distinct concepts: (a) the delegation of procurement authority to an agency, and (b) the professional credentialing of individual procurement officers.

## **Background**

Over the last twenty years, State agencies have struggled with waves of retirement, frequent turnover, and the increasing complexity of procurement.<sup>i</sup> The result is a growing gap between the skills the State's procurement responsibilities demand and the skills its staff possess. To address this gap, the Division of Procurement Services (DPS) recommends two reforms: (1) recalibrate and standardize how agencies receive certification, and (2) establish a professional credentialing program for procurement staff.

## **Agency Certification**

The Consolidated Procurement Code centralizes the State's procurement authority in its chief procurement officers (CPOs), granting them unlimited authority to conduct procurements for all governmental bodies governed by the Consolidated Procurement Code. The Code also authorizes those governmental bodies to make direct procurements up to \$50,000 without going through a CPO. The Code further authorizes Procurement Services to permit a governmental body to make direct procurements up to \$150,000 and permits the Authority to authorize direct agency procurements of any amount. The procurement laws refer to such delegated authority as "certification".<sup>ii</sup>

Although the law contemplates certification in "procurement areas," it does not define those areas or categories. By long-standing practice, the Authority has certified agencies by acquisition category. The primary and most common categories are Supplies and Services, Information Technology, and Construction (with subcategories for Change Orders regarding Construction or A/E Services). Additional special categories are specific to particular agencies or agency types. Examples include Revenue Generating Contracts (Higher Education), Food Products (Corrections), Pharmaceutical Drugs or Services (DDSN), and School Bus Supplies and Maintenance (Education).

## *Agency Certification Proposal*

Procurement Services proposes recalibrating and standardizing these categories to better tailor certification to each agency's needs, to grant agencies greater authority at lower risk, and to better address the compliance risks arising from shortcomings in the qualifications of procurement staff.

Currently, agency certification is granted by broad categories, such as Supplies and Services. Because these categories are not tied to the skills required, they can result in an agency being either under-certified or over-certified. For example, an agency certified to \$250,000 in Supplies and Services may be under-certified for purchasing commodities on a firm-fixed-price contract awarded on a low-bid basis—a relatively straightforward procurement—while being over-certified for acquiring complex consulting services on a level-of-effort contract awarded on a best-value basis and involving negotiations. The two scenarios demand substantially different skill sets. By refining the categories through which certification is granted, the Authority could better tailor certification to both an agency's capabilities and its needs, while granting greater authority where warranted.

## **Professional Credentials for Procurement Staff**

Since first adopted in 1981, the State's procurement laws have required a procurement training program and *allowed* Procurement Services to require that procurement officers be professionally credentialed. Procurement Services has long maintained a modest training program. For a time, Procurement Services also maintained a professional credentialing program, but it did not involve knowledge assessments, and over time—with diminishing resources and the disruption of COVID—that program lapsed.

### *Professional Credentialing Proposal*

Procurement Services proposes adopting multiple levels of professional procurement credentials, with those levels tied to the skill sets involved. DPS has identified multiple roles ranging from personnel who make non-competitive purchases under \$10,000 to agency procurement directors, and each requires different skill sets. We are also considering tying credentials to source-selection method, distinguishing between contracts awarded solely on a low-bid basis versus those using non-price factors. If approved by the Authority, Procurement Services will fully develop and implement a credentialing program for all State procurement staff. That program will require implementation of a robust training program that involves knowledge assessments and course offerings tied to the categories of professional credentials.

## Agency Certification Tied to Professional Credentials

If professional credentials do not benefit State employees directly, they will have little motivation to seek them. While each agency controls its hiring decisions and qualification requirements, the Authority controls how it delegates procurement authority—and that leverage can create the necessary alignment.

If an agency's ability to acquire and maintain agency certification is tied to the professional credentials of its procurement staff, agencies will be incentivized to hire, promote, and support the training of procurement officers with professional credentials. Accordingly, Procurement Services recommends that the Authority tie agency certification to the employment of professionally credentialed procurement officers.

### Authority Action

If the Authority votes to approve this approach, Procurement Services will proceed to:

- (a) develop and implement a multi-tiered credentialing program for all State procurement staff;
- (b) develop and submit to the Authority for information a proposed framework for (i) recalibrating and standardizing the categories and differential dollar thresholds by which agencies are delegated procurement authority; and (ii) tying agency certification closely to the qualifications of agency procurement staff, and ultimately to their professional credentials; and
- (c) develop and submit to the Authority for information a phased approach to gradually implement the requirement that agencies employ credentialed professionals as a condition of maintaining agency certification, including transition periods.

Drafts of items (a) through (c) will be vetted with Authority offices for input prior to finalization.

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<sup>i</sup> Procurement has grown increasingly complex in three respects: how we procure (a move from low-bid awards toward source-selection methods involving non-price factors and negotiations); what we procure (a shift from routine supplies and services to complex services); and the contracts we enter (evolving complexity in both contract terms and contractual arrangements). In addition to this growing complexity, high turnover has hindered systematic knowledge transfer and succession planning.

<sup>ii</sup> An overview of Certification is available here: <https://procurement.sc.gov/doing-biz/certification>

# **Key Laws - Staff Accreditation & Agency Certification**

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## **Statutes**

Section 11-35-1030 calls for a system of training procurement staff and allows the CPOs to determine that their system of “training must include a requirement for the certification of the procurement officer of each purchasing agency.”

## **Regulations**

Regulation 19-445.2000B(2) makes the MMO [i.e., the management of the Division of Procurement Services] specifically responsible for: (a) developing a system of training and certification for procurement officers of governmental bodies in accordance with Section 11-35-1030; [and] (b) recommending differential dollar limits for direct procurements on the basis of but not limited to the following: (1) procurement expertise, (2) commodity, (3) service, [and] (4) dollar;

In the context of evaluating an agency’s internal procurement operation in response to a request for increased authority, Regulation 19-445.2020(A)(2) provides that the MMO “shall review and report on the particular governmental body’s entire internal procurement operation to include, but not be limited to the following: . . . (b) Procurement staff and training . . .”

R. 19-445.2020B(3) requires that “Certification [granted by the Authority] shall be in writing and specify: . . (b) Any conditions, limits or restrictions on the exercise of the certification; [and] (d) The procurement areas in which the governmental body is certified.” Item D. goes further and provides that “Such certification [by the Authority] shall be subject to maintaining an adequate staff of qualified or certified procurement officers.”