



# Buncombe County, North Carolina

## Procurement Card Policy

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### 1.0 Policy Information

<b>Category &amp; Subcategory:</b>	Purchasing/Procurement Cards	<b>Original Effective Date:</b>	9/16/2008	<b>This Revision Effective:</b>	4/10/2018
<b>Persons Affected:</b>	Eligible Buncombe County Workforce				
<b>Approvals:</b>	Approved By:	County Manager	Approved By:	Finance Director	
	Date Approved:		Date Approved:		

### Revision History

Effective Date	Version	Section	Summary of Changes	Author
9/16/2008	1.0		Original version adopted by the Board	
11/20/2012	1.1		Amended by the Board	
4/10/2018	2.0		Updated references, general administrative updates, and added additional risk controls	Policy Review Group

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## 2.0 Purpose/Introduction

The purpose of a procurement card program is to provide an efficient, cost-effective method of purchasing and paying for goods and services costing less than \$5,000. By using a procurement card (P-Card), the traditional requisition-to-check process and cost is greatly reduced. Employees who have been issued P-Cards may now initiate a transaction in-person, by telephone or by the internet, within the limits of this Policy.

### **Benefits of the Procurement Card Program**

- Transactions are completed quickly and conveniently
- Lower processing costs and less paperwork
- Increased control of expenditures through complete and timely reporting
- Allows cardholder to purchase by phone and internet
- Reduces delivery time
- One monthly payment to one merchant (P-Card provider)
- Improved cash flow management

## 3.0 Applicability

This policy is applicable Countywide to all personnel who are assigned a P-Card or review P-Card transactions. Department Directors may enact additional requirements dependent upon budget or resources available. Emergencies may preclude the applicability of policy in certain instances.

## 4.0 Roles & Responsibilities

### **Program Administrator**

Centralized role responsible for all procurement card program details countywide, including requests for new enrollment, maintenance and cancellation of cards and service as the liaison between the County's P-Card provider and Buncombe County. The Program Administrator works with departments in setting up Users and Cardholders as well as troubleshooting and answering department inquires.

### **Board Appointed Positions**

Person(s) appointed by the Governing Board.

### **Cardholder**

Buncombe County personnel who have been issued a procurement card and are authorized to make purchases in accordance with this Policy.

### **Department Director**

Person who acts as steward of card activity and who shall maintain active involvement with the transactions for his/her department. The Department Director has authority to authorize the issue of a card and may terminate the use of a card as well as invoke disciplinary action when appropriate. The Department Director or their designee acts as reviewer and approver for all department P-Card transactions, excluding their own. As approver, the Department Director or designee has the responsibility of:

- knowing that the purchase was made for legitimate County business
- knowing that the purchase was for a public purpose
- reviewing each receipt and making certain all documentation is appropriate

### **Reviewer**

Personnel who are responsible for reviewing and reallocating cardholder transactions in the reallocation system. Each cardholder may be assigned a reviewer.

### **Designee**

The staff member chosen by the Department Director to act on their behalf during their absence or at appointed times for certain duties or responsibilities.

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## 5.0 Related Policies

**Purchasing Procedures Manual**  
**Travel Policy**  
**Gift Card Policy**  
**Gift Card Procurement Procedure**  
**Electronic Payments Policy and Procedures Manual**

## 6.0 Definitions

### Procurement Card (P-Card)

A credit card issued by the County's procurement card vendor. Also known as a procurement card.

### Transactions

A transaction is created when a purchase is made using a P-Card.

### Reconciliation/Reallocation

The process of assigning the correct General Ledger Account for each transaction in the reallocation system to assure all transactions post to the correct expense account.

### Transaction Limit

- a. **Single Transaction Limit** is the maximum amount of a single transaction: \$4,999.99.
- b. **Monthly Transaction Limit** is the maximum amount of transactions during the billing cycle as determined by the Transaction Limit Tier.

### Split Transactions

Transactions that together exceed the maximum amount of a single transaction and were split into more than one transaction to avoid being over the single transaction limit. Split transactions are a violation of the procurement card policy and **are not allowed**.

### Available Funds

Remaining balance of the Monthly Transaction Limit on an individual's P-Card.

### Merchant Category Codes (MCC)

A series of codes that are used to permit, restrict or block certain merchant types. If a cardholder attempts to use their card at a merchant that has been blocked, the charge will be rejected.

## 7.0 General Provisions

### Requesting a Card

Department heads may propose personnel to be cardholders by completing the Procurement Card Request form. In an effort to prevent fraud, the P-Card provider may request a cardholder's date of birth or other personally identifying information prior to card issuance. Request forms should be forwarded electronically to the Finance Department, attention Program Administrator, for processing.

Each P-Card will have the employee's name and department embossed on it and shall **ONLY** be used by that cardholder. **NO OTHER PERSON IS AUTHORIZED** to use that card. A violation may result in cardholders having their card revoked and disciplinary action taken. Cardholders are responsible for all purchases charged on their card.

Transaction limits are established in tiers, with lower tiers having a lower transaction limit. A transaction limit tier should be specified on the Procurement Card Request Form in accordance with the need of the employee.

**Any desired increase in a transaction limit for an existing procurement card holder must be requested in writing by a Department Director to the Program Administrator.** The table below provides guidelines for

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selecting a transaction limit tier based on general employee roles:

Transaction Limit Tiers

Tier	Employee Role	Monthly Limit
1	Infrequent usage of procurement card; items purchased are not of a critical nature to operations; other procurement methods can be utilized to meet needs if limit is reached.	\$1,000
2	Infrequent usage of procurement card; items typically purchased may be of a higher value. Expected needs of role would be limited at Tier 1.	\$5,000
3	Frequently makes purchases for entire cost center, program, or multiple employees; responsible for supplementing critical activities with procurement card. Expected needs of employee would be limited at Tier 2.	\$10,000
4	Acts as primary purchaser for large cost center(s) and/or Tier 3 would be an unreasonable limitation. Also applies to cards that are used as an electronic payment method for suppliers in instances where procurement card is the most reasonable option.	Greater than \$10,000

Monthly limits beyond Tier 3 must be requested in writing by a Department Director to the Program Administrator and authorized by the Finance Director and the County Manager/Assistant County Manager.

The Finance Department shall maintain records of all procurement card requests, limits, cardholder transfers and lost/stolen/destroyed card information.

**Preaudit**

Cardholders shall follow all procedures set forth by the County for the preaudit of procurement card transactions in accordance with North Carolina Administrative Code (20 NCAC 03.0409 and 20 NCAC 03.0410) and the Buncombe County Electronic Payments Policy and Procedures Manual.

**Training**

Employees that are cardholders or verify P-Card transactions must review the Procurement Card Policy and receive training from the Finance Department before they can carry out these duties. Recurring training is also required on the schedule established by the Procurement Card Program Administrator; failure to complete recurring training will result in loss of P-Card.

**Terms and Conditions**

Each cardholder must acknowledge they have read this policy and agree to adhere to the terms within by submitting a signed copy of the Buncombe County Procurement card Program Acknowledgement Letter and Employee Agreement Form.

New cardholders will receive an email at the time the card is requested with instructions and a link to the Policy. Current cardholders will be required to acknowledge and sign as their cards expire and will receive the same email. Before picking up their new card, the cardholder’s acknowledgement must be on file with the Program Administrator.

**Reporting**

A report detailing P-Card activity for Board of Commission members and Board Appointed Positions will be made available online, at a minimum semi-annual frequency, to the Public and the Board of Commissioners.

**8.0 Card Security**

It is the responsibility of cardholders to safeguard their P-Cards and account numbers to the same degree they safeguard their personal credit information. Cardholders shall not allow anyone else to use their card, including supervisors and co-workers. A violation of this trust may result in cardholders having their card revoked and disciplinary action taken.

**Lost or Stolen Card**

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Loss or theft of a card should be reported immediately to the Program Administrator, the cardholder's immediate supervisor and the procurement card vendor. Cardholders should keep the customer service phone number in a safe place separate from the card for quick reference in the case of a lost card.

**Cardholder Transfers**

If a cardholder moves from one division to another within the same County Department, a new card is not required. If a cardholder moves from one Department to another, a new card is required. The Department Director must contact the Program Administrator when either event occurs.

**Name Change**

Changes to a cardholder's name should be reported to the Program Administrator in writing by the cardholder's Department Director so a new card can be requested.

**Inactive Cards**

Periodically P-Cards shall be reviewed for inactivity. Cards that show no activity within a twelve-month period may either be deactivated or have their transaction limit reduced.

**Employee Terminations and Retirement**

Upon separation from Buncombe County due to dismissal, retirement, or resignation, cardholders shall surrender their P-Card and P-Card invoices to their supervisor. The Program Administrator shall be notified immediately by the supervisor to terminate the employee's P-Card.

**9.0 Purchasing Guidelines**

The P-Card is designed to be an enhancement to the County's purchasing policy and payment process. It does not replace requirements to comply with existing State or County laws, regulations, or policies and procedures regarding purchasing and/or travel.

The P-Card is simply a corporate credit card issued to Buncombe County employees. The P-Card can be used at any merchant that accepts credit cards.

Buncombe County Policy states that *all* purchases \$5,000 or greater require a Purchase Order.

**Transaction Limits**

The monthly maximum credit limit on any single P-Card is set by the Transaction Limit Tier. The single transaction limit cannot be greater than **\$4,999.99**. Transactions that cost more than this amount cannot be broken into smaller purchases (split transactions) to meet the single transaction limit. Violations may result in card cancellation, disciplinary action taken, a possible Audit finding, and/or a reference to the violating department in the external auditor's Management Letter. A single transaction of more than \$4,999.99 may be possible by encumbering funds with a Purchase Order prior to the purchase and getting authorization from the Program Administrator. A lower single or monthly transaction limit may be assigned to your P-Card based on available budgets or as directed by your Department Director.

**Authorized P-Card Use**

P-Cards may be used at any merchant that accepts credit cards. Cardholders must comply with the County's purchasing and travel policies and procedures when using the P-Card. The total value of a transaction shall not exceed a cardholder's single purchase limit. Examples of appropriate uses include purchases of:

- Materials
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Accommodations
- Airfare
- Training/Conference Registrations

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**Unauthorized P-Card Use**

Cardholders must comply with the County’s purchasing policies and procedures when using the P-Card. Examples of unauthorized use include, but are not limited to:

- Personal purchases of any kind
- Purchases over the cardholder’s transaction limits
- Transactions split to avoid or circumvent the single purchase limit
- Cash refunds or advances, money orders, or wire transfers
- Meals, except as specifically authorized by Department Director (See Meals and Meeting Expenses Policy)
  - If a meal is authorized by the Department Director, tips charged on the P-Card cannot be in excess of 20%.
  - Your P-Card is not to be used for meals while travelling. Per the travel policy, travel meals will be covered by a per-diem rate
- Gasoline for vehicles
- Entertainment expenses
- Use of card by anyone other than the cardholder
- Fines or traffic tickets
- Gift cards (except by the Gift Card Liaison; refer to the Gift Card Policy)
- Controlled substances such as alcoholic beverages or tobacco products
- Electronics and Information Technology equipment and subscriptions not in accordance with the Purchasing Manual

Cardholders shall be personally responsible for any expenditures on their card and shall provide, when requested, information about any specific purchase. This does not include disputed charges or fraudulent charges.

If the P-Card is accidentally used by the cardholder for a personal purchase, the cardholder shall immediately notify the Program Administrator in writing and provide payment via check or money order to “Buncombe County, NC” for the exact amount of the purchase. Habitual accidental use of the P-Card may result in the revocation of the card or other appropriate disciplinary action.

**Online Accounts or Memberships**

Many online vendors offer business or enterprise accounts. Employees shall defer to using any such account as directed by the Procurement Manager. Cardholders should avoid adding County P-Cards to online accounts that may also be used for personal purchases in addition to County purchases.

**Required Backup or Documentation**

When purchases are made, the cardholder shall retain the receipt. For cardholders who do not reallocate their own transactions, all receipts must be turned in immediately to their Reviewer for reconciling purposes. If the information below is not on the receipt provided by the merchant, the cardholder must write the information on, or attach it to, the receipt.

- Merchant name and address
- Date of transaction
- Card number charged (partially encrypted)
- Quantity and description of item(s) purchased to include the departmental purpose served by the purchase if the business purpose is not clear (description must be decipherable by anyone reading the receipt)
- Amount charged to card
- Account codes for reallocating charges
- Reference Food Purchasing Policy for additional documentation which may be required for food purchases authorized by Department Director

**Allocation of Charges**

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All transactions are to be allocated within five business days of the transaction date. Cardholders that do not reallocate their own transactions should give receipts/invoices to the reviewer as soon as the charge is made. Repeated failure to allocate transactions in a timely manner may result in cancellation of P-Card.

**Returns and Exchanges**

The cardholder is responsible for contacting the merchant when goods, equipment or supplies purchased with the P-Card are not acceptable (incorrect, damaged, defective, etc.) and for arranging a return for credit or exchange. If items are returned for credit, the cardholder is responsible for obtaining a credit receipt from the merchant and retaining that receipt with the supporting documentation. If items need to be exchanged, the cardholder is responsible for returning the items to merchant and obtaining a replacement as soon as possible.

**Disputed Transactions**

Each cardholder or reviewer is responsible for resolving any disputed item directly with the merchant. If resolution is not possible, the employee or their supervisor should attempt to dispute the transaction via the County’s credit card vendor or contact the Program Administrator for assistance.

**Retention of Receipts/Invoices**

All P-Card receipts/invoices are to be scanned and retained in electronic format via the appropriate document management system. Retention schedules for NC county governments state that the minimum retention for general receipts/invoices is three years. However, certain transactions, such as those associated with a grant or project, may be subject to retention requirements greater than three years. Departments are responsible for implementing a process to retain receipts that are subject to such requirements.

**Merchant Category Codes (MCC)**

Each merchant that accepts credit cards has a standard code assigned to it that defines the category of goods or activity they are involved with. Buncombe County has restricted certain types of MCC’s to comply with established purchasing policies and procedures. If a cardholder feels their transaction is inappropriately denied due to the MCC, please notify the Program Administrator.

**10.0 Audits**

All P-Card activity is subject to routine monitoring and audits to determine compliance with terms and conditions of the P-Card program. The overall audit objective is to ensure proper management controls are maintained over the authorization and use of the P-Card, to provide feedback for process improvements, and to focus on potentially fraudulent, improper or abusive purchases.

**11.0 Identifying and Reporting Fraudulent, Improper, or Abusive Activity**

With the common goal to provide citizens of Buncombe County with an honest, effective and efficient County government, it is the cardholder’s duty to report all suspected instances of fraud and abuse to the Internal Auditor or appropriate management. Should the cardholder be uncomfortable with reporting to the Internal Auditor or management, the cardholder may report it confidentially through the County’s Whistleblower Hotline toll-free at 1-866-908-7236.

**Fraudulent Purchases**

Use of a P-Card to acquire goods or services that are unauthorized and intended for personal use or gain constitutes a fraud against the County.

**Improper Purchases**

P-Card transactions that are intended for County use but are not permitted by law, regulations, or County policy generally are considered improper. P-Card purchases must be delivered directly to a place where official County business is conducted.

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### **Abusive Activity**

Purchases of authorized items at terms (e.g. price, quantity) that are excessive, are for a questionable government need, or both are considered abusive. Costs and quantities should be reasonable and comparable for similar goods and services.

## **12.0 Penalties for Misuse**

A cardholder who makes unauthorized purchases or carelessly uses a P-Card may be liable for the total dollar amount of such purchases, plus any administrative fees charged in connection with the misuse. The Cardholder will also be subject to disciplinary action which may include termination and criminal charges.

## **13.0 Questions/Contact Information**

Questions regarding issues not addressed in the Policy and Procedures Manual should be addressed to the P-Card Program Administrator.

**Program Administrator can be reached by calling the Finance Department at 828-250-4130.**