

## Principles of Effective Public Purchasing Certificate Program Handbook

### Overview of Program

The OPBA Principles certificate is a highly regarded, industry-standard program that provides a solid foundation of entry-level training for public sector procurement. In the Program, learners participate in interactive courses, complete one of three electives, and prove their understanding by passing a final written exam.

The knowledge and skills gained during the Principles Program are necessary for anyone who spends public funds or is involved in tendering or contracting for goods and services or in issuing Requests for Proposals, Tenders, Quotations, or other bid documents.

### Who should take the Program?

The Certificate Program is intended for individuals new to public procurement or in an entry-level position in a public agency purchasing/procurement department. Some agency departments include public works, parks and recreation, finance, maintenance and property management, schools, and health care agencies. The course may also offer insight and understanding to those who are working with public procurements professionals.

### What are the benefits of taking the Certificate program?

By completing the Program and earning your Principles Certificate, you demonstrate to employers that you are invested in your career, committed to ongoing professional development, and constantly improving your understanding of the complex public procurement environment. Many job postings for junior positions indicate that enrolment or completion of the OPBA's Principles of Effective Public Purchasing Certificate Program is either required or an asset. Enrolling in the Program is a great way to make your resumé stand out from the rest.

### Eligibility:

You do not need to be a member of OPBA to enrol in the program or write the Principles

exam, although it is certainly more cost-effective to do so. There are also many benefits to membership including the ability to take advantage of all the free or member-discounted resources OPBA has to offer as well as networking with like-minded colleagues.

## How do I earn the Principles of Effective Public Purchasing certificate?

Follow the steps below to earn your Principles of Effective Public Purchasing certificate:

- Submit your enrolment form for the certificate Program.
- Complete 5 core Principles courses plus 1 elective. We strongly recommend that you begin with the *Introduction to Public Purchasing* course.
- Attend 2 other courses, workshops, or Purchasing Co-operative meetings.
- Pass the final exam.

**Time limit:** Learners have three years from the date of enrolment to complete the final examination. Requests for time extensions may be considered and granted by a review committee. Submit your request with an explanation to [members@opba.ca](mailto:members@opba.ca).

## Will this certificate Program grant me a designation (letters after my name)?

The Principles program awards a certificate of achievement for entry-level purchasers and, importantly, grants 33 instructor-led education hours, which qualify toward professional designations. To learn more about how the Principles program can help you work toward becoming certified with the professional designation of your choice, read our [Public Procurement Designations FAQ](#).

## Enrolment in the Principles Certificate Program

Whether you intend to take one course or complete the entire Program, you must complete an enrolment form (which can be found at the end of this document or by contacting [members@opba.ca](mailto:members@opba.ca)). There is no charge to enrol in the Program.

## How do I access Principles courses?

Courses take place in a virtual classroom via Zoom with a small group of students and a facilitator. Each course is 6 hours total, split in half (3 hours each) on 2 back-to-back days.

## What are the OPBA Principles program courses, and how much do they cost?

The courses in the Principles of Effective Public Purchasing certificate program are:

- Introduction to Public Purchasing
- Purchasing and the Law
- Risk Management
- Competitive Bidding
- Advanced Competitive Bidding
- Co-operative Purchasing
- Introduction to Construction (*coming online in spring 2023*)
- Advanced Construction (*coming online in spring 2023*)

**Fees:** Please refer to the [OPBA website](#) for the most current and accurate pricing.

**Course overviews are listed below:** Courses 1 – 5 are mandatory; 6 – 8 are electives. Learners are required to complete at least 1 elective to be considered for completion of the Principles Program.

The following provides an overview of the eight (8) courses available:

Course Name	Content
<p><b>1. Introduction to Public Purchasing</b></p>	<p>This course is the foundation for the Principles Certificate Program, giving an introduction to policy and procedures, authority and agency, the public purchasing cycle and other aspects of the function of purchasing. Learners will be given an overview of legal considerations purchasing staff need to know when developing and handling bid documents, deciding the best procurement option (Tender &amp; RFP Processes), as well as discuss centralized versus decentralized procurement systems.</p> <p>Learners will review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• essential elements of public purchasing</li> <li>• competitive bidding: tender &amp; RFP processes</li> <li>• automated &amp; electronic purchasing</li> <li>• central stores &amp; distribution system</li> <li>• specifications &amp; standardization</li> <li>• risk management</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Purchasing and the Law</b></p>	<p>In this course, the mysteries of the law and the relationship of the purchasing agent to it are unraveled in a concise and easy to understand format. Learners are given an overview of the issues and responsibilities related to entering into a legal contract as well as determining what comprises a contract. Other topics discussed are the Law of Agency, Contract Law, Laws of Competitive Bidding, comments on various Acts, bonding and alternatives to bonding.</p>

	<p>Learners will review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the elements of a contract</li> <li>• special requirements in contracts</li> <li>• warranties and conditions in contracts</li> <li>• surety bonds</li> <li>• alternatives to bonding</li> <li>• documenting security</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Risk Management</b></p>	<p>This course examines the various issues associated with managing risk when purchasing goods and services in the public sector. Learners are given an overview of common risk issues, including those of ownership and copyright, the right to privacy, competitive bidding irregularities, occupational health and safety, environmental responsibilities and accountability in terms of personal and corporate liability.</p> <p>Learners will discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how risk is commonly anticipated by professional public purchasers in some of the above areas</li> <li>• how risk is commonly managed by professional public purchasers in some of the above areas</li> <li>• other individuals and/or departments in the agency who are involved or can assist the public purchaser</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Competitive Bidding</b></p>	<p>This course gives a detailed examination of the tendering &amp; request for proposal processes. It includes concepts, issues and the resolution of issues relating to preparing and issuing the procurement documents as well as the ultimate receiving, opening, and checking of bids. Learners will be given an overview of the various components comprising tenders and request for proposals documents and the differences of each.</p> <p>Learners will review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• preparing and issuing the bid documents</li> <li>• receiving and checking the bids</li> <li>• evaluating the bids &amp; awarding</li> <li>• essential components of an RFT</li> <li>• construction RFT requirements</li> <li>• RFP evaluation criteria</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Advanced Competitive Bidding</b></p>	<p>This course builds on the foundations of the Competitive Bidding– General course and focuses more on complex competitive bid solicitations, including both RFTs and RFPs.</p> <p>Learners will discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluated bid submissions</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how to develop evaluation criteria</li> <li>• work with evaluators and evaluation groups</li> <li>• explore different costing calculations</li> <li>• the two envelope approach for the receipt of both proposals and tenders.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Co-operative Purchasing</b>	<p>This course gives an overview of the co-operative purchasing process in the public sector, describing the types, benefits, structure, legal considerations and challenges co-operative purchasing groups face.</p> <p>Learners will be shown and discuss examples of constitutions, strategic plans, business plans reports, commodity listings and standard terms and conditions for public tenders issued by co-operative groups. Discussion will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• methods of co-op purchasing</li> <li>• advantages &amp; disadvantages</li> <li>• factors in success &amp; failure of co-op groups</li> <li>• types of groups</li> <li>• commodities</li> <li>• changes &amp; trends in co-op purchasing</li> <li>• setting up &amp; maintaining a successful public co-op group</li> </ul>
<b>7. Introduction to Construction</b>	<p>This introductory course provides a step-by-step description of the process to retain a general contractor for construction using the design/bid/build contract model and stipulated price contract.</p> <p>Learners will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review a Request for Tenders for construction document and the various sections that comprise the document;</li> <li>• gain an understanding of the importance of the terms and conditions of a Request for Tenders in the administration of the construction contract; and</li> <li>• how best to prepare the Form of Tender to secure competitive bids</li> </ul>
<b>8. Advanced Construction</b>	<p>The Advanced Procurement for Construction course is for procurement professionals in the public sector who are called upon for their expertise in developing and administering large, sometimes complex procurements for construction.</p> <p>Learners will explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• various pre-construction activities and requirements that an owner needs to address and satisfy well before any design or construction can commence;</li> <li>• discuss various contract models for construction available to owners such as Construction Manager and Design Build; and</li> <li>• how best to issue a competitive process to secure a prime consultant or architect for a project.</li> </ul>

**Order of Courses Taken:** The *Introduction to Public Purchasing* course is the cornerstone of the Principles Program. Learners are **strongly urged** to enrol in and successfully complete this course prior to any of the other four core Principles courses. Where it is feasible, Learners may be exempt by proving they have successfully completed an *Introduction to Public Purchasing* approved equivalent course (see below).

Once the *Introduction to Public Purchasing* course has been completed, learners may complete courses 2, 3, 4, and 6 in any order.

**Note: Competitive Bidding is a pre-requisite to the Advanced Competitive Bidding and Introduction to Construction.** Introduction to Construction is not a pre-requisite for Advanced Construction, but we highly recommend that learners have some experience with construction before taking the Advanced course.

**Equivalencies:** Learners showing proof that they have successfully completed an Introduction to Public Purchasing approved equivalent course (from SCC, NIGP or other professional purchasing association recognized by OPBA) may be exempt from completing OPBA's Introduction to Public Purchasing course.

Learners showing proof that they have successfully completed the Strategic Supply Chain Management Leadership Program "Module 7 – SCM for the Public Sector" may be exempt from taking the OPBA Principles – Introduction to Public Purchasing and Co-operative Purchasing.

**Other Course Equivalencies:** In order to receive consideration for equivalency for any of the remaining six Principles courses, a course must first satisfy all three of the following basic criteria: it must be Canadian-based; public-sector specific; and its information must be current and consistent with the Principles course content. Determination of any course equivalency will be made solely by a review committee.

## When are Principles courses offered?

Courses are usually available from January - June and September – November and are typically offered more than once per term. They are usually scheduled for 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM, and for 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM to provide better flexibility for the diverse range of student schedules.

## Can I attend Principles courses in any order?

We **strongly recommend** that you attend the Introduction to Public Purchasing first. After

that, you can attend the courses in any order - noting that Competitive Bidding is the pre-requisite for Advanced Competitive Bidding and Introduction to Construction. Remember, you must complete an enrolment form for whatever course you take first.

## What materials are required for the Program, and how much do they cost?

The Principles of Effective Public Purchasing, a hard copy textbook, is the only required study guide for the Program. Each chapter of the textbook corresponds with the courses in the Program - you only need to purchase one textbook for the whole Program.

Be sure you're registered for at least one Principles course, then purchase the textbook at its 'Discount with Seminar' price from the [OPBA Store](#). If you're interested in previewing the program content without registering for a course, you can also purchase the textbook on its own beforehand.

## What types of events qualify as Two Other Courses, Workshops, or Meetings?

The basic requirements for other courses, workshops or meetings are that the content should be purchasing-focused and a minimum of one hour long. The most common types of events that qualify are:

- OPBA – Advanced Construction course
- OPBA Talks meetings/webinars
- OPBA - Supply Chain Canada Live Chats
- OPBA Spring and Fall Workshops
- OPBA Annual Conference
- other procurement-related professional development offered by [NIGP](#), [Supply Chain Management Association of Ontario \(SCMAO\)](#), etc.
- attendance of a local Purchasing Co-operative Group meeting (if your agency belongs to a co-op)

## How do I register for Principles courses?

To register for any OPBA course or event, visit the [opba website](#) at [www.opba.ca](http://www.opba.ca).

1. Click on the Upcoming Events heading
2. Scroll down to the event for which you wish to register
3. Complete the form by following the prompts

## How quickly can I complete the Program?

It depends on your budget and schedule. Many students find that they are able to complete everything in under a year, and others will use the program's full 3 year time frame.

## What is the process to write the final exam?

Registration is a two-step process. You may register to write the exam on the OPBA website. On that page you will also find the exam application. Complete the [exam application](#) and email it to [members@opba.ca](mailto:members@opba.ca).

Effective January 2023, the exam will be available three times per year: March, June, and November. Register and pay on the OPBA website.

Read the section called **'Writing your exam'** below for important details about the exam.

## Registering for the Exam:

Are you ready to write the Principles Certificate exam? Before registering, please make sure you have fulfilled all the required criteria, including:

- completion of 5 core Principles courses plus either the Cooperative Purchasing or Introduction to Construction electives
- proof that you have attended two meetings, courses or workshops (e.g. eligible OPBA Talks, OPBA-Supply Chain Canada Live Chats, OPBA Spring and Fall Workshops, OPBA Conference, or other procurement-related professional development offered by NIGP, Supply Chain Canada, etc. or local Purchasing Co-operative Group)

**To register:** The registration form for the Principles Certificate exam is located under the [Upcoming Events](#) tab of the website. Be sure to register for the month in which you want to write the exam. First, download the Principles Exam Application file, then make your payment by clicking the "Register for this Meeting" button.

## Schedule of Exam:

<b>Date to register by:</b>	<b>Exam Writing Period</b>	<b>Receive response by:</b>
February 25 May 25 October 25	1st - 7th of March, June, and November	Usually, by the end of the month



**Fees:** *\*\* Be sure to check the OPBA website to check the most current pricing for member and non-member fees.*

### Before you write the exam:

Once your application has been approved, we will create an account on OPBA's exam platform and send a notification to you.

You can then login and explore the website once you update the password as per the instructions. We encourage you to take the Brightspace Quiz Tutorial to familiarize yourself with the tool before writing the exam.

A reminder that you must be thoughtful when planning to take the exam. The exam will be available between the 1st and the 7th of the month for which you have registered only.

### Writing your exam:

When you are ready to write the exam, please note the following items:

- **This is not an open-book exam.** i.e. Course notes and the Principles of Effective Public Purchasing textbook should not be used as resources while writing the exam.
- **A proctoring service will verify your identity.** Ensure that you have valid photo identification and a working camera on your computer/laptop. Note: No headsets or electronic devices are permitted while taking the exam. Writers must always remain in camera view for the duration of the exam.
- **Once you click "Start Quiz!" on the "Principles Program Final Exam," the two-hour testing period begins and cannot be reversed - so please ensure you are ready to write the exam when you activate this function.**
- The exam includes true/false, multiple choice, short answer questions, and an essay question.

### After you write the Exam:

Once the evaluator marks your exam, you will receive an email with your pass/fail status. We aim to have all exams marked by the end of the month for which the exam was taken. Upon passing the exam, you can download your Principles of Effective Public Purchasing certificate.

You must earn 75% on your first attempt to pass the exam. If you do not pass the exam, you must register on the OPBA website and pay the 2nd attempt fee. A passing grade on your second attempt is 80%.

### Who can be a member of the OPBA?

OPBA membership is open to any individual employed in a public sector agency who spends

the majority of their time spending or managing the spending of their agency's funds. Students, retirees, and those who have an interest public procurement, may become Affiliates.

### Do I need to be an OPBA member to earn the certificate?

We recognize that whether someone is an OPBA member or not, the public procurement professional is stronger if more people gain understanding and insights into the profession. That's why we have amended the criteria so that the courses and the exam are open to both members and non-members.

Of course, there are many benefits to an OPBA membership, including access to members-only resources, networking and sharing of information among like-minded colleagues. And overall, there are cost-savings to be had when taking the Principles courses at members-only pricing. But whether you are a member of OPBA or not, we welcome you as a learner to our Principles of Effective Public Purchasing Certificate program.

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## PRINCIPLES CERTIFICATE PROGRAM ENROLMENT FORM

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I am submitting my enrolment form for inclusion into the OPBA Principles Certificate Program. I understand that to complete the program successfully, I must:

- complete **5 mandatory courses**: Introduction to Purchasing, Purchasing and the Law, Risk Management, Competitive Bidding and Advanced Bidding.
- complete **1 of the following elective courses**: Cooperative Purchasing, Introduction to Construction, or Advanced Construction.
- participate and attend two other OPBA sponsored seminars or courses, regional workshops or co-op meetings, qualifying OPBA Talks meetings, or OPBA spring/fall workshops.

I understand that if I want to write the exam and receive my Principles Certificate, I must:

- complete and pass the final examination.

I understand and confirm that I must satisfy the above requirements within 3 years of my enrolment date.

I have read and agree to these requirements.

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**Name:**

**Designations:**

**Title:**

**Employer:**

**Address:**

**Work phone:**

**Email:**

**Signature:**

**Date:.**

**Email completed *Principles of Effective Public Purchasing Enrolment Form* to:**

Membership and Learning Specialist

E: [members@opba.ca](mailto:members@opba.ca) W: 905-682-2644 x. 255