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Local Finance Notice

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Qualified Purchasing Agent Certification & Renewal Newly Adopted Rule Amendments

As of October 20, 2014, several amendments to the Qualified Purchasing Agent (QPA) rules will go into effect. These changes pertain to the subject area of Environmentally Preferable ("Green") Procurement, requirements for applicants for the QPA certification after June 30, 2015, and the continuing education and certification renewal requirements, including the addition of a \$35 renewal fee. The full text of the rule changes will be published in the October 20, 2014 New Jersey Register and be made available on our website. Any questions in regard to the amended rules may be directed to the Division's Certification Unit at (609) 292-9757, or by emailing Daniel.Kaminski@dca.nj.gov.

Changes to Requirements for QPA Applicants after June 30, 2015

Under the prior rules, individuals applying for QPA certification after June 30, 2014 were to successfully complete an individual course on Environmentally Preferable Procurement. In order to minimize the time and monetary burden on QPA candidates, the course requirement has been revised and the following changes have been made effective for those applying for the QPA certification after June 30, 2015 (effectively for the December 2015 exam forward):

- Elements of the Environmentally Preferable Procurement course will be incorporated as "green" purchasing into the existing Principles of Public Purchasing courses administered by the Rutgers University Center for Government Services (likely the 3rd course in the series)
- Applicants who have already completed the existing required courses prior to October 20, 2014 or who have completed one or more of the existing required courses prior to June 30, 2015, and whose remaining coursework will not cover green purchasing, must certify to having earned two (2) contact hours in the subject area of green purchasing, prior to being eligible to take the certification exam

- Applicants who are otherwise exempt from having to complete the existing coursework (Certified Municipal/County Finance Officers) must also certify to having earned 2 contact hours in the green purchasing subject area prior to being eligible to take the certification exam.
- Applicants who are otherwise exempt from having to complete the existing coursework or successfully complete the certification exam (those who hold the School Business Administrator (SBA) certificate), must also certify to having earned 2 contact hours in the green purchasing subject area prior to being issued a QPA certificate.

The 2 contact hours in green purchasing noted above shall be approved by the Director of the Division of Local Government Services as relevant to the subject area and pertinent to the duties of a QPA. The Division will utilize as wide discretion as possible to determine eligibility of the 2 hours in the green purchasing subject matter. After June 30, 2015, the Division will revise the QPA certification application to reflect the above changes for both those applying to sit for the exam and those exempt from the exam.

Continuing Education and Certification Renewal Requirements for Existing and Future QPA Certification Holders

Previously, those holding a QPA certification were required to obtain 20 contact hours of continuing education every three years in the following subject areas: procurement procedures, office administration/general duties, information technology, and ethics, with a minimum of three of the 20 hours required to be obtained in ethics. The newly adopted rule amendments add the new subject area of green purchasing, and, of the 20 hours, have established minimum subject area hours as follows:

Procurement procedures	2.0 hours
Green purchasing	2.0 hours (new subject area)
Office admin./general duties	2.0 hours
Ethics	3.0 hours (no change)
Information Technology	optional (no change)

The remaining required 11 contact hours may be obtained in any distribution of subject areas. A revised QPA Record of Continuing Education/Certification Renewal application can be found on the [Professional Certifications](#) page of the Division's website.

If an applicant has obtained at least 20 total contact hours within a renewal period, but has not obtained the minimum number of hours in a given subject area, the Director has discretion to waive subject area minimum hours upon application and good cause shown. However, the waiver discretion of the Director shall not apply to the minimum number of green purchasing contact hours for certificate renewal cycles expiring not later than June 30, 2019.

All those who currently hold a QPA certification and have already submitted their application for renewal to the Division as of October 20, 2014 **do not** have to re-submit their renewal application in order to meet the above new continuing education requirements. However, such persons **must** meet the above new requirements, including the 2 contact hours in green purchasing, for their renewals that will next be due in 2018 or 2019.

Those who currently hold a QPA certification but have not yet submitted their renewal application and are due to renew their certification for the first time in 2015 or 2016 also **do not** have to meet the above new continuing education requirements for their first renewal. However, such persons **must** also meet the above new requirements, including the 2 contact hours in green purchasing, for their renewals that will be due in 2018 or 2019.

\$35 Certification Renewal Fee

All QPA Record of Continuing Education/Certification Renewal applications that are submitted postmarked after October 20, 2014 are subject to a renewal fee of \$35 made payable to the State Treasurer. The fee is to be submitted with the renewal application. The Division will accept a purchase order to be included with the renewal application, but will not process the renewal until the actual check has been received. Division staff will be diligent in signing and returning vouchers on purchase orders in a timely manner.

All those who currently hold a QPA certification and have already submitted their renewal application to the Division prior to the above date **do not** have to submit the renewal fee. Such persons **must** include the fee with their renewals that will next be due in 2018 or 2019.

Approved: Thomas H. Neff, Director

Document	Internet Address
QPA Renewal Application	http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dlgs/programs/certification_docs/qpa_renewal.doc