

University strategically partners with a cooperative for technology purchases

E&I's GovConnection contract delivers major savings and increased services for Auburn University

The IT team at Auburn University in Alabama purchases a large amount of computers and related technology to serve the 25,000 students and numerous faculty and staff that use the institution's facilities and infrastructure. This is an expensive undertaking, especially considering it wasn't until 2009 that Alabama law permitted the use of cooperatives for purchasing.

"I heard about E&I in 2004 at an NAEP national meeting, and it seemed like a great opportunity to save money," says Missty Kennedy, assistant director of Procurement Services. "As soon as it was legally allowed, we started talking to them about contract options."

E&I is a member-owned, not-for-profit buying cooperative that leverages the power of more than 3,000 institutions to reduce the total costs of goods and services. Members have access to a diverse portfolio of competitively awarded contracts, consulting services and electronic purchasing platforms. Members also realize significant time efficiencies since the Cooperative manages the entire RFP process.

"We reached out to E&I and explained our vision and what we were looking for," says Kennedy. "They laid out all of our options."

The procurement team already had a contract for peripherals, such as jump drives and cables, through GovConnection, as well as a separate contract with a manufacturer for hardware. When both contracts expired in 2013, Kennedy realized the opportunity to achieve significant cost savings through a singular contract with GovConnection available through E&I.

"My IT community loved working with GovConnection and wanted the flexibility on the hardware side to purchase from any manufacturer," says Kennedy. "I went to E&I to see if they could make that happen."

Kennedy adopted E&I's GovConnection contract in November 2013, and says it has been a great experience. "By purchasing through the Cooperative, we were able to work with the amaz-



"By purchasing through the Cooperative, we were able to work with the amazing GovConnection team we always worked with and achieve cost savings."

ing GovConnection team we always worked with and save money at the same time."

The team at E&I assisted greatly in the transition to the Cooperative's contract, says Kennedy. "We experienced a few kinks, such as making sure we received all of the rebates for which we were eligible. E&I was tremendous in that process."

There is a wide variety of products and services covered under the E&I contract, Kennedy says. "For example, our veterinary school students are required to use a certain laptop. Through our contract, we are able to get that machine, and GovConnection preloads images on all of them and sends them directly to the students. Our IT team doesn't have to spend time doing that anymore."

Auburn considers E&I and GovConnection valuable strategic partners, Kennedy says. "When I look at my mission for procurement, it's to partner with key strategic partners, and both of them serve that role for us extremely well!"

For this calendar year, the Cooperative contract has saved Auburn over \$1 million. "We want to continue to expand the contract and grow as much as we can," says Kennedy. "As state funds get cut, all institutions need to work smarter and E&I provides a channel to do that."

Kennedy recommends that all procurement officers use the buying power of E&I when possible. "They have a great team and want to help you achieve your goals. If you haven't used them, research them and give them a try."

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