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**What is the FMDA?**

We are a group of school facility representatives who have consolidated to maximize our buying power and formed the Facilities-Maintenance Directors Association Buyers Group.

**How did we get here?**

The group buying concept was first introduced at a meeting of facility directors in the Spring of 2010. At this meeting there were approximately 30 schools/supervisory unions represented, and a committee was formed to further develop the concept of group purchasing based on the Food Directors Association (FDA) model for purchasing food for schools. Our goal was to maximize buying power for school districts throughout Vermont.

In June 2010, the FMDA asked all interested schools/supervisory unions to send us their prior year custodial supply usage costs and we received data from 10 schools that spent a combined \$200,000. An RFP for custodial supplies was developed and mailed out inviting twelve vendors to participate. Six vendors returned their bids that met the RFP specifications. The six bids were analyzed and units of measure were converted to allow a fair price comparison. The analysis was completed utilizing actual volume data from the ten school districts that had sent us their prior year custodial supply costs. It was evident from the start of the review process that the prices that were being charged to school districts from vendors varied wildly from school to school with no apparent reason.

Based on the analysis, the FMDA committee invited the three lowest acceptable bidders who met the RFP criteria to present their proposal and answer questions from the entire Facility Director group. Each company was asked to focus their presentation on a variety of factors including:

- Service Approach in Meeting School District Needs
- Savings
- Value-Added Relationships with Schools in Training & Problem Solving

Present at the meeting were twenty-four representatives from twenty school districts/supervisory unions. Following the presentations from each company, the group discussed each presentation, price structure, bid format, and procedure to move forward. The members voted unanimously to accept Foley Distributing bid for the 2010-2011 school year.

**What have we accomplished?**

Price comparisons of the group's previous year's usage showed a savings of 25%. Individual schools savings ranged from 20% to 50%. Products not specifically quoted on the RFP are made available at no more than 15% mark-up. Additionally, volume rebates ranging from 3.5% to 5.75% will be returned directly to the respective school districts based on their semi-annual purchases.

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The requirement to be an FMDA member is that a school purchase 87% of their supplies from the primary vendor. Our belief was that this level of commitment from the school would provide competitive pricing from vendors.

After the group awarded the bid, we invited all other schools districts to join. We increased the participation from the original 10 schools to 43 schools districts with annual purchases of \$750,000.

**Why are we doing this?**

We feel that all schools should pay the same price for the same products regardless of size or volume. Schools are primarily funded by the same sources and the strength and commitment of a unified group of school districts has much greater purchasing power than an individual school could ever hope to achieve on their own.

**What is our vision for the future?**

We feel that custodial and food supplies are only the beginning. We envision a day when we are expanding our group purchasing efforts from 43 schools to possibly every school in Vermont. We also feel that group purchasing can expand to include items such as light bulbs, filters, copy paper, office supplies, and heating fuel. We have incredible buying power potential as a unified group.