WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS COUNCIL
SCOUTING AMERICA

Getting It Paid For:
The Purchase Order Process

How volunteers request, approve, and pay for what an event needs

At a glance	
This is for	Event chairs, finance leads, committee members, and anyone about to spend council money
The route	Your committee → VP of Program → council office → Scout Executive
Policy number	WMC-FIN-2026-01
Effective	September 1, 2026
Goes with	Be Prepared: Planning and Promoting Council Events
Questions?	Your council staff advisor, or the Office of the Scout Executive

The Short Version

> **Nothing gets ordered, signed, or committed until a purchase order has been approved. Every request takes the same route: your committee → the VP of Program → the council office.**

That is the whole process. The rest of this page explains how to fill out the request, how much lead time to give us, and the handful of things that will save you trouble.

Why We Do It This Way

This is not about second-guessing your judgment. It is about three things that protect you and the Scouts you serve.

- **The money is actually there.** The council office confirms the funds are in the budget line you think they are in, before you are on the hook to a vendor.
- **The council carries the obligation, not you.** A purchase made in the council's name, through the council's process, is the council's responsibility. A purchase made on your credit card is yours.
- **A Scout is Thrifty.** Buying through a purchase order means we do not pay sales tax, we do not order the same thing twice across two events, and every dollar stays in program.

Who Does What

Role	Their part
Finance Lead	Fills out the request and, once approved, places the order and turns in the receipts.
Event Chair	Signs the request, confirming the committee approved it.
VP of Program	Reviews the spending against the approved program plan and budget. Is this the right purchase, for the right program, at the right time?
Council Office	Verifies the funds, sets up the vendor, applies our tax exemption, flags anything needing a contract.
Scout Executive	Approves and issues the PO number.
Staff Advisor	Your help at every step. Ask early rather than late.

How a Request Moves

Step	Who	What happens
1	Finance Lead	Fills out the purchase order request: vendor, what you are buying, the amount, which budget line it comes from, and the date you need it by.
2	Event Chair	Signs it.
3	VP of Program	Reviews and signs, or sends it back with questions.
4	Council Office	Verifies funds, vendor, tax exemption, and contract needs.
5	Scout Executive	Approves. A PO number comes back to you.
6	Finance Lead	Place the order, referencing the PO number.
7	Finance Lead	Invoices and receipts to the council office within seven days, with the PO number on them.

Requests that skip the VP of Program come back unapproved. That step is not a formality; it is the person who can see your purchase alongside everything else the program calendar is committed to this year, and who can tell you when two events are about to order the same thing twice.

How Much Lead Time to Give Us

What you are buying	Submit the request
Routine supplies under $500	14 days ahead
Anything over $500	21 days ahead
Anything drawing on your 25% cushion	21 days ahead, with a written reason

What you are buying	Submit the request
Anything with a contract, deposit, or venue agreement	30 days ahead

Build these dates into your event timeline when you write it, not when you need the patches. A late request does not get faster handling; it gets a committee scrambling.

Five Things Worth Knowing Before You Spend

- **Volunteers do not sign contracts.** Only the Scout Executive can sign an agreement that binds the council — venues, caterers, entertainment, equipment rental, insurance riders. If a vendor puts a form in front of you, send it to the council office instead. A volunteer signature on a council contract can make that volunteer personally liable.
- **The council is tax-exempt.** Buying through a purchase order means we do not pay sales tax. Buying it yourself at the store means we do, and that is program money gone for nothing.
- **Over $2,500, bring two written quotes.** Attach them to the request. It protects you as much as it protects the council.
- **A receipt is not a purchase order.** If you pay out of pocket without an approved PO, we cannot promise reimbursement. Please don't put yourself in that position; ask first, every time.
- **Using the cushion takes one sentence.** Write what changed on the request. That sentence is what makes next year's budget more accurate.

Something You Need on the Spot

It happens: ice, propane, a second run for hot dogs. The Event Chair may authorize up to $100 on the spot with the staff advisor's okay, and the purchase order request goes in the next business day with the receipt attached. Anything larger, call your staff advisor before you buy.

After You Buy

- Send invoices and receipts to the council office within seven days, with the PO number on them
- Note anything that came out of the 25% cushion, and why
- Keep the PO number with your event records; it is what ties the spend to your final reconciliation

Questions Volunteers Ask

"Can I just buy it and turn in the receipt?"

Please do not. Without an approved purchase order, we cannot guarantee reimbursement, and you will have paid sales tax the council did not have to pay. Call your staff advisor before you spend, even when it feels small.

"The venue sent me a contract. Do I sign it?"

No. Send it to the council office. Only the Scout Executive can sign on behalf of the council, and a volunteer signature on that form can follow you home.

"Why does the VP of Program see it before the office does?"

Because the office can tell you whether the money is there, but the VP of Program can tell you whether it is the right spend. That order catches problems while they are still cheap to fix.

"What if the VP of Program is away?"

Call your staff advisor. We will get it reviewed, but do not treat an unavailable signature as permission to go ahead and order.

"It is only forty dollars. Really?"

Really, if you want reimbursement. Small purchases move fast; a $40 request rarely takes more than a day or two once it is in.

"Can the route be waived?"

No. Deadlines can flex in a genuine pinch; ask the Scout Executive. The route itself does not change. We can move faster; we do not skip steps.

Where to Get Help

Start with your staff advisor. They would much rather help you fill out the request than untangle an invoice nobody approved. If you do not know who your advisor is, call the council office, and we will assign one.

Thank you for what you do for the Scouts of Western Massachusetts.

Craig Sims

Scout Executive / Chief Executive Officer

Western Massachusetts Council, Scouting America

Serving Berkshire, Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties

Purchase Order Request

One form per vendor. Do not place the order until an approved PO number comes back to you.

Event	
Date of event	
Requested by	
Date needed by	
Vendor	
What we are buying	
Why we need it	
Amount	
Budget line it comes from	
Drawing on the 25% cushion?	Yes / No If yes, what changed:
Two quotes attached? (over $2,500)	Yes / No / N/A
Contract or agreement attached?	Yes / No (Volunteers do not sign — send it to the council office)

APPROVAL ROUTE

Step	Name	Signature	Date
1. Finance Lead			
2. Event Chair			
3. VP of Program			
4. Council Office			
5. Scout Executive			

PO number / date issued	

Receipts due	To the council office within seven days, with this PO number on them