

# PTAC Link

PROCUREMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER – CONNECTING BUYERS & SUPPLIERS

Progress Through Regional Cooperation In The Alleghenies

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### Upcoming PTAC Training Events

**Mark your calendars!** The Southern Alleghenies PTAC is happy to announce some upcoming sponsored training events to kick off 2016!

**April 12:** COSTARS Training 10 AM to 12 PM, State College, PA. Learn about the PA COSTARS Program and how it can help your business. [You Must Register Here](#)

**April 14:** Doing Business with Penn State University, State College, PA. Learn how your business can work with PSU! More information to come shortly.

**April 18:** CONNECT 2016 Procurement Fair, Johnstown, PA. Learn about resource and opportunities for your small business. More information to come.

If you have any questions about these events, please contact [James Gerraughty](#) or (814) 949-6428(814) 949-6428(814) 949-6428.

## 2015 Year in Review

All of you can probably agree that each year seems to go by faster than the year before. The older we become, the rate at which we age seems to increase. So now, with 2016 upon us, (and without providing a comprehensive listing of new contracting laws, statutes, regulations, personnel changes, or best practices during 2015), perhaps it's best to simply summarize and reflect on what 2015 might signify regarding acquisition success. Let's also not use the "R" word even though talking about acquisition reform keeps us blog writers and consultants busy.

Some initiatives that began with great fanfare are no longer around. The government almost "closed" again, although the list of program exception to shutdowns is now so large that many don't notice. Those programs with greater lobbying power are essential, while many very worthy programs are used as pawns. Probably the greatest damage to government contracting, dwarfing any new legislative improvement, is the indecisive nature and short-term environment under which government programs must operate.

GSA launched initiatives in category management, including its acquisition gateway, eBuy Open and other initiatives intended to improve contracting officer market knowledge and vehicles available to meet specific needs and better leverage government buying power.

The Department of Defense says is at a 35-year best in controlling costs for major acquisition programs and bestowed a variety of 15 individual and five organization awards for the past year. Heidi Shyu stepped down as the Army's acquisition executive and off of the acquisition "bus", where she coined the analogy that all acquisition program "passengers" have a brake and steering wheel, but no gas pedal.

Legislation intended to improve the current process within information technology is underway and new legislation within DoD was passed. It will be sometime before it is clear how well these latest changes have performed.

Discussion with today's acquisition leaders reveals a determination to do the right thing as best as possible despite

## International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) Training -February 16 & 17, 2016

The Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission (SAP&DC) and our regional economic development partners, with the support of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, have received a U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) grant to assist defense contractor's transition into new markets. We are offering the following training in International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) to eligible businesses at **no cost** if company representatives successfully complete the training.

This advanced seminar is designed for export compliance officers and ITAR "empowered officials," international contracting specialists, contract managers and administrators, program and project managers, marketing professionals, legal advisors, and other involved in the international defense marketplace and ITAR compliance.

There is a pre-registration form that needs to be completed. Seating is limited. For more information, please contact [Gloria Brooks](#) or (814) 949-6550 (814) 949-6550 .

### Become a PTAC Client

To take advantage of the services and resources provided by The PTAC at SAP&DC, complete the [New Client Sign-Up form](#).

### Quick Links

[The PTAC at SAP&DC](#)

[PA Department of General Services](#)

[PA Small Business Procurement Initiative](#)

the peripheral (beyond acquisition) system challenges at each step. This past year may best be remembered for cyber security breaches; new and enhanced multiple-crises emanating from the Middle East; successful space probes and retrieval; cyclones, earthquakes, and changing climates; gun violence from Tunis to California; and a never-ending political campaign.

For contracting managers, the faster nature of societal change and new cycles may mask the great strides made to respond more effectively to ever-changing government requirements and outsourcing needs. Ineffective conference, education, and industry communication restrictions appear to be abating. However, lengthy debate over government salary, bonuses, or predetermined solutions to unresearched acquisition problems continues.

From a contracting standpoint, 2015 may not be momentous in terms of single legislation or headlines. However, the complexities and challenges of successfully navigating today's acquisition environment--from reduced spending to cyber security to Federal Reserve policy to the sheer complicated nature of the business enterprise itself--continues to grow. The requirements are harder, and the solutions harder still. Contractors supporting the government (and indeed the government itself) have a more difficult time understanding how to prepare, respond, and execute to these ever-evolving challenges. From workforce to technology, uncertainty is increasing and proven solutions decreasing. A new workforce is growing up in an environment of more employment uncertainty, from challenges to the education they've received to the manner of training and on-the-job experience they need.

However, we should all be impressed by the professionals working within this environment and what they accomplish. They don't have time to publicly write or promote their efforts, but they are there and are noble. The year 2016 promises to be no easier than 2015. Our contracting leaders and managers are up to the challenge, but let's understand for ourselves the causes and concerns, offer our advice and support, and be part of the solution.

*Article posted courtesy of  
[Michael P. Fischetti](#), Executive Director, NCMA*

## Procurement Assistance Centers Help Small-Business Owners Government Buyers

Fort Belvoir, Virginia -- Jane Dowgwillo know hundreds of small businesses and how they could support the Department of Defense's worldwide mission. As the manager of 10 Procurement Technical Assistance Centers scattered throughout Florida, she leads a team of 113 government contracting specialists who help small-business owners understand the requirements working with the government.

"We've got a lot of small manufacturing and spare-part businesses here that we provide specialized advice and training to. Any time we offer sessions on how to do business with DoD, it's very well received," Dowgwillo said.

[PA Supplier Portal](#)

[PA eMarketplace](#)

[System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#)

[FedBizOpps](#)

[Small Business Administration / Contracting](#)

The Procurement Technical Assistance Program was created in 1985 to increase the number of small businesses capable of participating in government contracts at local and state levels, as well as with the DoD and other federal agencies. The program is administered by the Defense Logistics Agency's Office of Small Business Programs.

Today there are centers operating in Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam and all 50 states. They provided a variety of services, from identifying contracting opportunities to providing guidance on the bidding process and detailed instruction on registering in our using federal procurement systems, such as the System for Award Management and [www.fbo.gov](http://www.fbo.gov), which is the website where DoD and other federal agencies post opportunities for contracts. Counselors also ensure small business owners have proper licenses and certifications.

The training and assistance PTACs offer are usually free and well appreciated by small businesses, which may lack the time and staff to explore the ins and outs of government contracting. Adino, Inc., a service-disabled veteran-owned small business, described the PTAC in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, as "a highly specialized and hands-on resource to tackle the overwhelming and intimidating sector of government contracting."

Government contracting officers and buyers can also benefit from the program, said Christopher Hall, who oversees the program for DLA. "By supporting new suppliers, the PTACs promote a stronger industrial base, which results in greater competition and higher quality goods at a lower cost. The Department's acquisition professionals are striving toward these goals as they work to create competitive environments and increase small business participation, which is part of DoD's Better Buying Power 3.0," he said.

Kevin Scoles, a DoD business opportunity specialist, recently taught small business owners serviced by Washington PTACs how to use a web-based application that allows users to search for contract opportunities and securely submit quotes. While meeting with PTAC clients, Scoles was able to share with prospective suppliers information on areas with low competition.

Although government representatives frequently partner with PTACs to provide training and have sought input from PTAC counselors during market research for specific commodities, the partnership could be stronger, said Tiffany Scroggs, manager of eight PTACs in the state of Washington.

"I think there's opportunity for growth. There's an upcoming Meet 'n Greet with Industry Day in our backyard, for example. When I discovered it, I instantly asked if we could help promote the event and have 5 minutes to talk about all the great things that PTACs can do to help businesses connect." she said.

Federal agencies should include PTACs in the early planning stages for marketing events like industry days, Scroggs added. PTAC counselors can also help identify qualified suppliers for hard-to-source parts.

"If buyers are seeing trends or have areas with really low competition, we're more than happy to help promote that to our firms," she said. "A lot of PTACs have newsletters where we

can include articles on needs, or we can get the details out through social-media campaigns."

Market research is another step in the acquisition process where PTACs can contribute, Hall added.

"They have in-depth knowledge of local small businesses and their capabilities and can identify potential suppliers that have demonstrated their capability to deliver," he said. Though PTACs do host "matchmaking" events to connect small businesses with government officials, counselors don't do the legwork or place bids on behalf of their clients, Dowgwillo said. And just because PTAC services are usually free doesn't mean they're inferior.

"Most of my counselors and those around the country have been contracting officers themselves, or they came to us from a state or local agency purchasing area. They have a wealth of experience and hands-on expertise," he said.

Winnie Cichosz runs a small, woman-owned janitorial business in Alaska. "Federal contracting is overwhelming for a small business like mine," Chichosz said. "The PTAC helped me along the way."

*Article posted courtesy of  
Beth Reece*

## About Us

The PTAC at SAP&DC is an economic development entity that bridges the gap between supplier and buyer in the government marketplace. The PTAC stands ready to support businesses in the Alleghenies region in their pursuit to secure contracts with local, state and/or federal government agencies nationwide by:

- Identifying niche government markets and specific contract opportunities
- Assisting with bid and proposal preparation
- Preparing the required vendor registrations
- Navigating your company through the requirements and procedures of government contracting
- Enhancing competition by obtaining applicable socio-economic certifications
- Providing guidance to ensure successful post-award contract performance

**Due to the generous support of our Commonwealth and Federal funding partners, services provided by the PTAC are free of charge.**

Whether you are an experienced contractor or new to the government marketplace, the PTAC will provide one-on-one counseling utilizing the following program resources to increase your share of contact awards.

### PTAC Resources

- Electronic Bid Matching for products and services
- Military/Commercial specifications and standards
- Past procurement information and pricing histories
- State and Federal regulations guidance
- Professional training and outreach events
- Quality assurance and packaging guidance

Contact us today at [The PTAC at SAP&DC](#) to get started!



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