

COSTARS Connection

The Commonwealth's Cooperative Purchasing Program
Passport to Business Opportunity and Procurement Savings

Volume 15 Issue 4
Autumn 2021



Tom Wolf, Governor
Curt Topper, Secretary

The 2021 Virtual PA Procurement Expo Hosted by the Department of General Services was a GREAT Success!

The 2021 PA Procurement VIRTUAL Expo took place on Nov. 9, 10, 16, and 17. This four-day event, focused on Business and Government, hosted suppliers, exhibitors, state government agencies and COSTARS members within our virtual platform. Participants of the EXPO were procurement professionals from across Pennsylvania including buyers, users, and decision makers from state, county, and local governments, as well as schools, colleges, non-profit entities, industry, public safety agencies, and healthcare institutions.

This year's Expo provided fantastic educational opportunities with some dynamic speakers! Keynote speaker, David DeNotaris, Chief Inspirational Officer from Sky's the Limit Communications, kicked off the event with a memorable and humorous talk about the power of positivity. Throughout the four-day event, he was quoted by participants and continuously mentioned as their hands-down favorite part of the event. During his speech, attendees could barely see him on camera for all the clapping hands, hearts and thumbs up emoticons floating upwards on the screen.

Educational opportunities tailored to COSTARS members included: Best Procurement Practices for Local Government, Personal Procurement and Team Development, Incumbent Negotiations, DGS Procurement, Emergency Management, and Lean Government Strategies. The Expo also offered educational sessions focused on supplier topics such as: Doing Business with the Commonwealth, DGS Small & Small Diverse Business Program, Effective Management, Supplier Roadmap and Jaggaer, Marketing to COSTARS Members, and the RFP Process.

The event closed with a special awards ceremony around emergency personal protective equipment procurement, and award winners were presented with their very own ePPE award. The awards were expertly hosted by Procurated's, David Yarkin and Deputy Secretary of the Department of General Services, Ken Hess. There were 10 categories in the ePPE awards, and the ceremony included two special awards – one to the most active attendee at the Expo earning 6,480 points on the Expo's leaderboard, and a certificate of appreciation to Chavous Consulting, the event planners of the Expo. (See "The Winner Is" box to right.)

We thank all who were able to participate in this year's Expo. The next PA Procurement Expo will take place in 2023 with the expectation of it being a live event. More information on plans for that event will be announced soon.

Remember to regularly update your COSTARS member and supplier profiles so you don't miss the invitation for 2023!

The Winner is!

Generosity Award:	Dennis Meseroll, <i>Tractus</i>
Best Defense Award:	Sumec Orient Textile & Tech.
Mission Impossible Award:	Procurement & Roadway Program Technicians, <i>PennDOT</i>
Citizenship Award:	Robyn Graham, John Smith, Nico Rice, Caitlin Chiarichiaro, Stephanie Ventura, <i>PA Contracts and Property Management</i>
Outside the Box Award:	Andrew Pickett, <i>Dept. of Health</i>
Weekend Warrior Award:	Debbie Sampson, <i>QPCS</i>
Dependability Award:	Lori Michaels, <i>Dept. of Labor & Industry</i>
MVP Award:	John Morgan, <i>PennDOT</i>
Leadership Award:	Eric Ramsay, <i>Dept. of Labor & Industry</i>
Team Spirit Award:	Janice Pistor, <i>Dept. of General Services, Bureau of Procurement</i>
Event Participation Award:	Maurice Kujat, <i>Dept. of General Services, Bureau of Procurement</i>
Excellent Event Award:	Chavous Consulting



Raise Your Hand If You Love a Rebate!

COSTARS members who took advantage of the substantial savings available through the WEX fleet fuel program in 2021, under statewide contract #4400020592 WEX Fleet Card Services, have received a total rebate of \$170,788.13 from July - September of 2021 alone!

If your organization maintains a fleet of vehicles, you will want to participate in this contract. The WEX fleet fuel program helps COSTARS members control fueling and vehicle costs by simplifying fueling with purchase controls, spending limits, powerful online management tools, and acceptance at 95 percent of fueling stations. **Additionally, as a new account incentive, WEX and Sunoco will be offering a \$0.25/gallon rebate for new customers.**

The deadline for applications for the 2022 WEX program is Jan. 31, 2022.

The application is posted in the Newsflash section that can be located by visiting www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS > Member Information > Members Area. It's easy to apply because the RFP, vetting and paperwork are already done!

For more information about this program, or if you have any questions, contact WEX customer service at 1-866-527-8870 or visit www.wexinc.com/Pennsylvania/M26455.



GreenGov Council News

New to the Statewide Consulting Services ITQ...

The statewide Consulting Services ITQ 4400007410 is now offering two new services to help agencies and COSTARS members identify high energy-consuming areas and enable them to implement sustainability solutions to minimize waste. Commercial Building Energy Audits are now available at audit levels 1 and 2 and follow the ANSI/ASHRAE/ACCA/Standard 211-2018. Energy Auditors will assess your building systems and site conditions, analyze, and evaluate equipment and energy use, and recommend strategies to optimize building resource use. Also offered as a new service on this contract, are ENERGY STAR Building Certifications that will verify your organization accounts for all energy use accurately, your building characteristics are properly reported, and indoor environmental quality has not been compromised in pursuit of energy conservation.

According to information from the [Better Buildings Challenge](#), through the U.S. Department of Energy, approximately 20-30 percent of the energy used in our commercial buildings is wasted. This program has more than 360 organizations participating in the challenge, including many in Pennsylvania. The partners in this challenge have collectively reported 760 trillion Btus in energy savings and represents more than \$6 billion in cost savings since 2012. COSTARS member, Allegheny County Community College is one of the Better Buildings Challenge partners who set an energy goal of 20 percent reduction in Energy Intensity and has already exceeded that goal – currently at 25 percent! One area they found great energy savings potential was in their campus computer network. Once implementing a network-wide power management system, they experienced a massive 74 percent decrease in total kWh consumption equating to savings between \$60,000-\$75,000 annually. Commercial building energy audits are the first step in identifying areas of focus to achieve energy and cost savings.

As organizations progress in decreasing energy waste and experience money savings, it is wise to receive an ENERGY STAR Building Certification. This certification is not only a badge of honor but has tangible value as well. According to the [ENERGY STAR](#) website, buildings with ENERGY STAR certifications have higher building valuation than non-certified buildings. These certified buildings also have higher occupancy rates, command higher rent, and federal tenants can only lease ENERGY STAR-certified buildings. Loans for ENERGY STAR buildings often secure longer loan terms and lower interest rates. Certification can also affect your workforce as well. Millennials, with laser focus on the future and sustainability, prefer to work for environmentally conscious organizations.

Suppliers wishing to qualify under the **Consulting ITQ Contract 4400007410**, can visit the [Department of General Services ITQ Documents and Info](#) web page to view the statement of work and to be eligible to provide service to agencies and COSTARS members.

Members interested in energy conservation and savings can view this contract's suppliers at [eMarketplace](#) by searching contract number **4400007410**. Additional energy-related, COSTARS-exclusive contracts are available as you strive for energy efficiency – **COSTARS-28 Energy Conservation Management Supplies** and **COSTARS-30 Energy Consulting Services**.

The [American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy](#) ranks states on a **State Energy Efficiency Scorecard**.



In 2020, Pennsylvania ranked 19th, falling one position from the previous year. PA scored 22 points out of a possible 50 in overall comparison to national median scoring in the categories of utilities, transportation, building policies, state-led initiatives and appliance standards.

A Supplier's Guide to Quarterly Sales Reporting

Per DGS contracts, COSTARS-authorized and -participating suppliers are required to electronically report COSTARS sales on a quarterly basis. The COSTARS team analyzes this information and uses it for future program improvement recommendations. This data is also used in reporting to leadership and legislature on the effectiveness of the program, especially in defining transactional savings for the members. If you have participated in a COSTARS presentation, you will already know that a member invests approximately \$3,600 in advertising costs, administrative costs, and attorney's fees every time they go through the formal bidding process. These sales reports help us calculate how much savings COSTARS members experience overall and individually by purchasing through the program rather than through the public bidding process.

COSTARS quarterly sales are reported within the COSTARS Supplier Gateway (accessed by logging into the PA Supplier Portal.)

What is a Transaction?

One challenge in quarterly COSTARS sales reporting is defining what a Transaction is regarding COSTARS member procurement. When submitting "# of Sales Transactions" in your sales journal, it is important to understand that this figure is *not units sold*. **The sales transactions represent the number of purchase orders fulfilled.**

For example, a sale to a member for \$21,383 for 26 units would be **ONE** transaction. If they needed an additional 50 units later in the same quarter, and didn't include them in the first order, that would be considered a separate transaction because each transaction was placed on different purchase orders. When reporting these sales, you would list these as *TWO individual records* on your sales report and indicate **ONE** transaction on both records.

We use the transaction quantity to determine how much a COSTARS member saved by not having to go through formal bidding. Many of our members must adhere to the rules of the PA Procurement Code and the threshold requirements within that code. The number of transactions should equal how many times the customer would have formally bid, if they had not used COSTARS. If a customer made multiple purchases over a short period of time, and if they had to formally bid, they probably would have just included all the purchases in one bid package. So, the correct number of transactions would be "1." When reporting sales, a supplier should combine all its sales for the same customer for the same product category in the same quarter, as one entry and one transaction. When in doubt, a supplier should always enter one transaction.

Not Sure How to Report Your Quarterly COSTARS Sales?

COSTARS offers step-by-step training modules on many processes within the program. Visit www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS > COSTARS Process – Online Trainings. Scroll down to the Supplier Training section and click on the [Report COSTARS Sales](#) training module. Here's a tip: the module opens to a version called Cue Card. If that is not a version you find easy to use, use the drop-down arrow in the upper right-hand corner to select the Simulation or Guided Help version. The Simulation view is just like watching someone move through each step on the website.

Quarterly COSTARS Sales Reporting Reminders

Don't worry – you don't have to remember when to report sales on your own. The COSTARS team sends reminder emails when the current sales reporting window opens. You will receive your first reminder to report the last quarter's sales at the beginning of the month that starts a new quarter (January, April, July, & October) and suppliers who have not yet reported sales for the previous quarter will receive a second reminder mid-month, about two weeks after the first.

Because we send these reminders, it is very important that you view your supplier profile in the COSTARS Supplier Gateway. **For suppliers holding more than one contract, you will need to update your supplier information on each contract you hold.**



When making changes to your supplier profile, you must change it in both the PA Supplier Portal and in the COSTARS system. The profiles are separate and do not automatically update the other when changed. Step-by-step instructions on updating supplier profiles can be found by visiting:

The [PA Supplier Portal Administrator Support](#) page provides instruction on many types of updates within the PA Supplier Portal including updating company information and editing user (supplier contact) information.

Instructions on how to [Update COSTARS Supplier Information](#) and other COSTARS supplier processes are found in the COSTARS Process – Online Training Center at www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS.

Missed a COSTARS Webinar Opportunity?

The COSTARS team was busy in 2021, creating educational opportunities, via webinars, for our members and suppliers. We know your schedules are full and you may not have had the chance to participate in a live event this year, so we have recorded each session to allow our members and suppliers the option to view the webinars at their convenience.

These sessions are created with our program users in mind. What contracts offer savings opportunities members may not know about? What technologies or processes can help members provide more efficient and effective service to their communities? How can vendors become COSTARS-authorized suppliers and how do they engage with the COSTARS members once awarded a contract?

This year's recorded sessions are listed below, and the title of each session is hyperlinked to the recordings. The event type column indicates whether the session is tailored to members or suppliers.

We are actively working on our 2022 webinar offerings which will be announced in the Winter COSTARS Connection newsletter!

<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Event Type</i>
1/26/2021	Boost Your Customer Base with COSTARS	This session is filled with valuable business-building information for suppliers about the COSTARS program. Viewers will learn how suppliers save valuable time and money when doing business with Local Public Procurement Units and how to submit a bid package to hold a contract with DGS.	Supplier Webinar
2/17/2021	COSTARS for Newbies: Efficient and Cost-Effective Procurement	Does your procurement process take time and feel like a burden? This session will discuss how the COSTARS program offers members an efficient and cost-effective procurement strategy that is hassle-free. Viewers will see a detailed demo on how to search COSTARS-exclusive and statewide, COSTARS participating contracts to find the supplies and services you need.	Member Webinar
3/16/2021	Energize Your Budget with COSTARS and PSFEI - Member Success Stories	This session will enlighten viewers on the benefits and process of using PSFEI and DGS-BOP to shop for savings in electric options. Viewers will learn how to experience certainty in their energy budget as PSFEI's Electricity Procurement Services Program safeguards participants from price fluctuations.	Member Webinar
4/14/2021	Procured: Capitalizing on the Experiences of Your Procurement Community	Do you use product and supplier reviews and star ratings when making personal purchasing decisions? Did you know that procurement professionals have a tool providing that same feedback from past purchasers for your professional decision-making process? This session explores Procured, a comprehensive vendor performance management tool, and shows viewers the benefits of adding this to their procurement toolkit.	Member Webinar
5/11/2021	Supplier Guide to a Successful COSTARS Member Experience	I am a supplier who holds a COSTARS-exclusive or a statewide, COSTARS participating contract. How do I engage with COSTARS members? How do members know about the products and services I offer at a competitive price? These questions and more are answered in this Supplier Guide to a Successful Member Experience. Suppliers will learn how to locate the member contact list and create impactful marketing to make them top of mind when a member needs the products and services they offer.	Supplier Webinar



Missed a COSTARS Webinar Opportunity?, cont.

Date	Title	Description	Event Type
6/9/2021	Technology Roadmap: What Technology Upgrades Will Be Keys to Your Success?	The information highway moves at the speed of light. Without a map of where the tech industry is heading and its capabilities, it is difficult to budget for our long-term technology resources. This session explores technology upgrades that may allow members to serve communities more efficiently and effectively.	Member Webinar
7/13/2021	Going Green: COSTARS Contracts That Save Your Green	Green procurement does not have to break your budget. Although green products may have increased upfront costs, long-term costs decrease because these are designed to not only last longer but benefit the environment and community health. This session educates viewers on the benefits of pairing green advantages with competitive pricing on COSTARS-exclusive and statewide, COSTARS participating contracts and how to locate these types of contracts.	Member Webinar
8/11/2021	COSTARS Communications Solutions	Especially during this time of virtual workplace evolution, do your communications methods allow for your team to work at peak performance? Are you able to effectively convey important messaging to your clients? This session explores communications strategies to assure viewers their message is received loud and clear.	Member Webinar

Links to COSTARS webinar recordings can be found at www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS >
COSTARS Process - Online Trainings.
 This webpage is organized in two sections: **Member Trainings and Supplier Trainings.**



August

New Castle News - Shenango Township approved the purchase of a pole-mounted, semi-permanent Speed Alert Solar-Powered Speed Minder System from All Traffic Solutions through COSTARS, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's cooperative purchasing program.

Meadville Tribune - Meadville Area Water Authority (MAWA) approved a new vehicle: a Kubota RTV-X1100C utility vehicle (UTV) purchased from Greenhill Farms Equipment Inc. of Cambridge Springs. The UTV was

UTV will be used at the authority and will free up a full-size vehicle from being used to plow the parking lot and perform functions that would otherwise be performed by a skid-steer loader.

September

Standard-Speaker - The West Mahanoy Twp. supervisors voted on the purchase for a 2022 International Model HV507 dump truck and spreader. It is being purchased through the state COSTARS program from Five Star International, LLC.

Republican Herald - The Mahanoy Area School District, wishing to upgrade its electronic systems to improve communications between the main campus and other sites and vehicles, unanimously accepted a proposal from Green's Communications, Pottsville, to upgrade the district radio system to a digital trunked two-way system, which will be completed under COSTARS, the state's cooperative purchasing program. The board also approved several other purchases through the COSTARS program: the installation of two gas-fired heating units and a propane tank for the transportation building from McClure Co., Harrisburg; two 2022 Chevrolet Express nine-passenger vans from Bob Fisher Chevrolet, Reading; and the installation of a LED sign with bollards from Bartush Signs, Orwigsburg.



COSTARS Program Evolution, Part 1

Over the last two years, we experienced a lot of change and the COSTARS team has seen that change in the form of staffing. All good things! As we announced in our last newsletter, we had two retirements and now several promotions.



This summer, the COSTARS team bid adieu to Dawn Eshenour, the Chief of the Supplier Development and Support Division, who was instrumental in the growth of the COSTARS program from its inception. The team was sad to see her go, but we were pleased to hear about all the plans she had for the new retirement chapter of her story. But what does the program do without its fearless leader?

Enter, Kim Bullivant! Kim joined the COSTARS team in 2013 as a Marketing Manager, evangelizing the benefits of

the program across the commonwealth to organizations eligible for membership and suppliers. Prior to joining the team, she held the role of Internal Communications Manager for PennDOT's Driver and Vehicle Services where she applied the valuable marketing and communications experience she gained in private industry.

Over the last eight years marketing the COSTARS program, Kim had her hands in all aspects of the program. She became experienced in all COSTARS-exclusive contracts, COSTARS participating statewide contracts, the sodium chloride (bulk road salt) program, governor's initiatives, and had vision into a plethora of topics that affect our member organizations and COSTARS-authorized suppliers. She was Dawn's right-hand in implementing program initiatives and processes, the facilitator of the PA Procurement Expo, and a leader in the creation of the new Electronic Bidding system that will be launched soon!

Because Kim has served as the external representative of the program, she has built strong relationships with partners of the program including PSATS, PSAB, CCAP, UniqueSource, Procurated, members and suppliers.

The team looks forward to Kim's leadership and vision as the program continues to evolve!



The COSTARS team also announces a new Program Manager – Stacey Logan-Kent. Stacey has a vast knowledge of where COSTARS has been and plans to ready the program for the future needs of our members and suppliers.

Over the past 10 years, Stacey has played an integral role in the growth of the COSTARS Program, by managing several contracts, contributing to the development and implementation of the COSTARS electronic management system, and most recently acting as project manager, alongside Kim, for the development and implementation of the new COSTARS electronic bidding system.

In her new position, Stacey will continue to support the vision, mission, and growth of the COSTARS Program, promoting the benefits of the program to local public procurement units, as well as the opportunities available to suppliers in Pennsylvania and nationwide.

Stacey began her commonwealth career in 1990 with the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), gaining a wealth of experience in different capacities, including her first taste of the procurement world as a purchasing agent for the PSP Bureau of Staff Services.

In 2004, she was promoted to commodity specialist within the Department of General Services (DGS) and was assigned to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency's (PEMA) Homeland Security Grant Program. In 2011, she assumed the commodity specialist position within the COSTARS team.

We welcome Stacey in this new role!



At the beginning of October, Priscilla Bills, the COSTARS Management Technician many of you spoke to when calling our toll-free number or emailing COSTARS, was promoted to the role of Administrative Officer 1 within the DGS Bureau of Procurement (BOP) after three years with the COSTARS team. As the first point of contact for COSTARS members and suppliers, she was the front line with a wealth of COSTARS knowledge! Additionally, Priscilla has very successfully collaborated on or led several special projects including new legislator orientation, procurement expos, and special purpose media posts.

You may or may not know that Priscilla is a native Brazilian and was just recently married in Brazil. While at her wedding in Brazil, she received the news of her promotion!

We will miss Priscilla on the COSTARS team but wish her well in her new role in BOP. We are in the process of filling her Management Technician role and you will meet her replacement soon!

We are currently in the process of filling several COSTARS positions– across the commodity specialists, marketing and management technician roles. Stay tuned to future newsletters for COSTARS Program Evolution – the Sequel!

COSTARS in the News, cont.

October

Standard-Speaker - Hazle Twp. supervisors recently accepted a quote from Sprinturf through the state's cooperative purchasing program to have artificial turf installed in the infield at the baseball field near Community Park. The field is home to Hazle Twp. Baseball Association, American Legion Baseball and Penn State Hazleton's baseball team.

Meadville Tribune - Supervisors unanimously approved the purchase of a new Ford Police Interceptor sport utility vehicle (SUV) from McCandless Ford of Meadville for West Mead Township Police Department's fleet. Along with the vehicle purchase, supervisors approved the purchase of ancillary equipment such as emergency lights, radios, computers and graphics from ISV US LLC of Butler. Both purchases were made through COSTARS, the state's cooperative purchasing program.

Times Leader - The Wilkes-Barre Area School board approved an agreement with Keystone Sports Construction for the stadium, to include synthetic turf and an eight-lane running track, sports lighting, grandstand and associated ground work. The project involves the state COSTARS cooperative purchasing system designed to reduce costs and speed up purchases.

COSTARS On The Road

Recent Events

- October 8-10: PSAB Fall Leadership Conference
- November 9-10 and 16-17: PA Procurement Expo
- November 18: York Co. Recycling Municipal Coordinators Meeting

Upcoming Events

- December 7 - 8: PTAC Mega Matchmaker Virtual Event
- December 13-15: State Advisory Committee on Preparedness
- March 2: PSAB Webinar

COSTARS Marketing Managers make it their mission to spread the message about the COSTARS Program, recruit new members and suppliers and provide training about the program.

To submit a request for a COSTARS representative to speak or conduct a training session for members or suppliers at an upcoming event, please contact Felicia Campbell at toll free telephone number 1-866-768-7827 or email to GS-PaCostars@pa.gov. The COSTARS Marketing Team's Calendar of Events is also available on the COSTARS website on the COSTARS Program Resources page.



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Published by the Pennsylvania Department of General Services

Curt Topper - Secretary, Department of General Services
Janice Pistor - Chief Procurement Officer
Stacey Logan-Kent - COSTARS Program Manager

Ken Hess - Deputy Secretary, Department of General Services
Kim Bullivant - Chief, Supplier Development and Support Division
Felicia Campbell - COSTARS Marketing Manager

Further information on the COSTARS program is available by phone at 1-866-768-7827 or by visiting the COSTARS website at www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS.

At DGS, our mission is to help government operate more efficiently, effectively, and safely - delivering exceptional value for all Pennsylvanians.