

General COSTARS Program FAQ's

What is "COSTARS"?

"COSTARS" is the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's cooperative purchasing program for local public procurement units ("LPPUs") and state-affiliated entities. The COSTARS approach to cooperative purchasing uses the purchasing power of local entities plus the commonwealth, to obtain more competitive pricing and choice than individual purchasers might be able to obtain on their own. It also provides a more efficient and effective procurement process for COSTARS members and suppliers.

How did the COSTARS Program get started?

The passage of the Commonwealth Procurement Code ("Procurement Code") permitted LPPUs and state-affiliated entities to engage in cooperative purchasing with the Commonwealth. Initially, the Department of General Services (DGS) limited the LPPUs' cooperative purchasing options to certain statewide contracts. In spring 2004, DGS developed the COSTARS Program to increase the cooperative purchasing options available to its members. In 2004, the General Assembly passed an amendment to the Procurement Code that expanded DGS's authority, allowing DGS to enter into contracts exclusively for the benefit of LPPUs and state-affiliated entities.

Who may purchase from a COSTARS contract?

DGS administers COSTARS exclusive contracts for the exclusive use of LPPUs and state-affiliated entities that are currently registered with DGS as COSTARS members. DGS estimates several thousand entities within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are eligible to become COSTARS members. More than 9,000 have already registered for the COSTARS program, and the list of registered members continues to grow. Commonwealth executive and independent agencies are not eligible to register as COSTARS members and may not utilize COSTARS exclusive contracts as a procurement vehicle.

Are COSTARS members eligible to purchase from any other Commonwealth contracts?

Yes, many statewide contracts awarded by DGS are also available to COSTARS members when suppliers agree to participate in the program. Statewide contracts are published on the PA eMarketplace. Each contract will specify whether the supplier has agreed to sell to COSTARS members. A "Yes" within the COSTARS column means the supplier has agreed to sell to COSTARS members. A "No" within the COSTARS column means the contract for a specific supplier is not available to COSTARS members.