

COSTARS Connection

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

Volume 11, Issue 3
Summer 2017

Tom Wolf, Governor
Curt Topper, Secretary



PA Purchasing Expo & Forum Nears

By Bruce Beardsley, COSTARS Marketing Manager

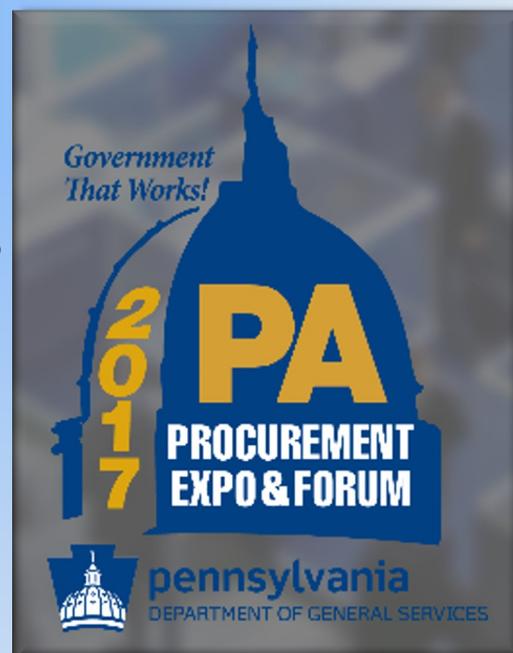
It's less than 50 days until the first ever Pennsylvania Public Procurement Expo & Forum, to be held at the Harrisburg Farm Show Complex on Sept. 6 and 7. Full details can be found in the special two-page Expo Preview * in this current newsletter, as well as up-to-the minute news and registration at www.paprocurementexpo.com.

Local elected officials and procurement administrators, as well as end-users of supplies and equipment, will find much to see, do, and learn at the Expo, including networking with hundreds of your colleagues and suppliers, choosing from more than 50 educational break-out sessions on topics important to COSTARS members, and visiting exhibitors who will be displaying their newest and most innovative materials and services. State government officials, as well as COSTARS staff, will be on hand to answer all your questions.

In this age of tight fiscal constraints on all levels of government and non-profits, every COSTARS member has a responsibility to their stakeholders to spend their resources efficiently and effectively. That's the purpose of this Expo and we recommend that every COSTARS member send at least one representative to the Expo. The admission costs were kept low (starting at \$25 and parking is free!) so that learning one new negotiating technique, or one innovative time-saving product, or one available grant will produce enough taxpayer savings to generate a substantial return-on-investment for your constituents.

Attend Wednesday morning's General Session to hear an exciting, dynamic public speaker, retired fighter pilot Lt. Col. Waldo Waldman, share the secrets that helped him overcome claustrophobia and a fear of heights and kept him alive while flying combat missions in Iraq and Serbia. Governor Wolf has also been invited to speak about his "Government that Works!" initiative that is quietly transforming state government and saving millions of taxpayer dollars.

As attendees enter the Main Exhibit Hall, they will come face-to-face with, perhaps, their most valuable insight: Rows and rows of first-class suppliers who offer a vast array of quality goods and services, most of which are available through the COSTARS program to be purchased easily and quickly without a local, time-consuming, and expensive formal bidding process (because the state has already awarded contracts through its bidding procedures). The bottom-line result is a more cost-effective and efficient "Government (and non-profit) That Works!"



* See Expo Preview insert



The Value of the Logo

Have You Met COSTARS' Star Man?

By Kim Bullivant, COSTARS Marketing Manager

Along with the many updates and enhancements made to the COSTARS Program and its website throughout the past 12 years, the COSTARS logo has evolved as well. Although some modifications have been made to the logo over time, one thing remains the same – a small golden figure affectionately known to the COSTARS team as “Star Man!” Who is Star Man, you might ask? Just look at one of the four versions of the COSTARS logo, and you’ll be sure to spot him somewhere within the logo.

Initially, Star Man occupied a large white star, located front and center on the logo. After a few years, the logo was revamped and he became part of a long string of stars. Although shrunken in size, he retained his distinguished position at the center of the logo. In 2014, the COSTARS team, with the assistance of the Department of General Services Publications graphic design team updated the logo once again by adding the new COSTARS tag line, “The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Cooperative Purchasing Program. Passport to Business Opportunity and Procurement Savings.” As always, the change did not affect Star Man’s position on the logo.

In an effort to offer a variety of logo options to COSTARS suppliers for their own marketing purposes, an additional logo was created sporting a lighter, more vibrant version that now has a prominent position on the COSTARS website. Although some of the unseasoned COSTARS employees thought it may be time for Star Man to retire and go his merry way; others who had been there since the inception of the program, and its beloved Star Man, made sure he retained his esteemed position as the focal point of the logo (although he was moved slightly to the left).

There’s more to the logo than a few stars and a small yellow Star Man! On several occasions, members have told us they customarily prefer to purchase exclusively from COSTARS contracts and therefore, look for the logo when searching for suppliers via websites, publications or at events. By finding that logo, COSTARS members are assured they will have the opportunity to achieve more competitive pricing, product selection, and increased savings! Additionally, suppliers have successfully used the logo on their websites, business cards, flyers, ads, and other materials to market their company to COSTARS members. In fact, suppliers who display the logo at marketing events, e.g., tradeshows, conferences, etc., find that members are more likely to visit their booth, giving them the opportunity to present their company and its products and services; an invaluable advantage in today’s highly competitive market.*

Although the COSTARS Program will undoubtedly experience continued growth in the coming years and the logo might eventually receive another update or, perhaps a whole new look, one thing you can be assured of is, COSTARS’ Star Man will live on!

** The COSTARS logo is trademark-protected and may only be used by COSTARS-authorized suppliers according to contract terms and conditions.*



Contract News

Scope Expansions, Clarification, Contract Updates

COSTARS-14 Recreational & Fitness Equipment contract has been amended to include Gymnasium Dividers (such as divider curtains, nets and portable partitions).

COSTARS-22 Weatherization Materials contract has been cancelled. DGS will no longer accept bids in response to this solicitation. Refer to Solicitation/Bid Number COSTARS-8 Maintenance Repair & Operation Equipment & Supplies which has been amended to include Weatherization Supplies & Materials such as Replacement Windows, Replacement Doors, Weather Stripping, Insulation, Vinyl Windows, Replacement Exterior Doors, Storm Windows, Storm Doors, Spray Foam, Caulking, Sealants.

** All contract items shall comply with the U.S. Department of Energy – Weatherization Assistance Program for Low-Income Persons – Title 10, Section 440.21 – Appendix A Standards for Weatherization Materials, specifically attached and incorporated into this contract.*



Road Salt Contract Renewed

By Bruce Beardsley, COSTARS Marketing Manager

Pennsylvania's Bureau of Procurement (BOP) has announced that the commonwealth's Sodium Chloride (Road Salt) contract has been renegotiated and renewed for the 2017-18 season. For most counties, prices will remain "frozen" or even reduced for next winter and suppliers will remain the same. Only Cambria and Franklin counties will experience a small increase of \$1.75 per ton (see map).

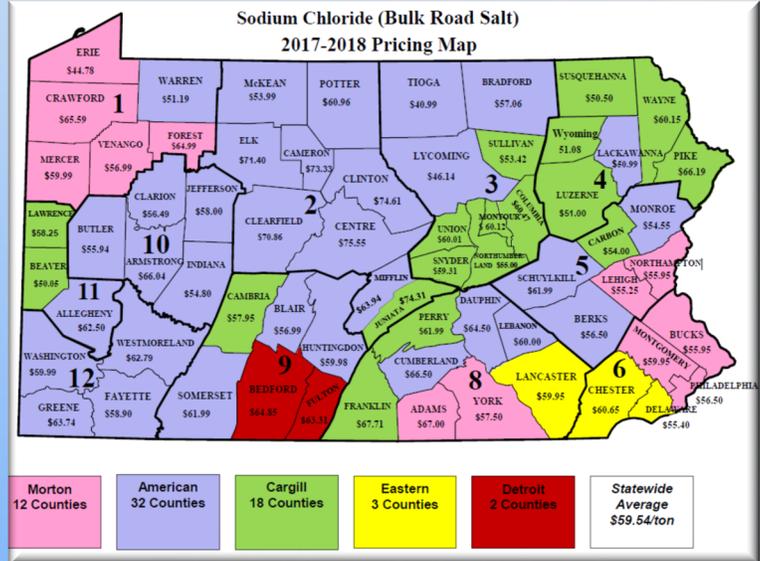
In addition, all the suppliers, except Cargill, have waived the minimum order requirements for the current 2016-17 season due to the mild winter. This means that if a municipality signed up for 300 tons and only ordered and received 100 tons this season, their contractual obligation for the remaining 80 tons (60 percent of 300) to be ordered by July 31 has been waived.

Cargill has agreed to allow COSTARS members to order their 2016-17 allotment until Dec. 31, 2017 (a 6-month extension) in order to meet the 60 percent contractual minimum order requirement and not assess storage fees until Jan. 1, 2018. In addition, members serviced by Cargill may revise their 2017-18 Salt Participation Agreement tonnage requirements until Sept. 30, 2017. To make revisions, please email COSTARS at GS-PACostars@pa.gov.

The BOP team has worked diligently and creatively over the last several years to generate taxpayer savings at all levels of government. In every county, the 2017-18 road salt prices are significantly below the prices of 2015-16! Over those two years, COSTARS members' local taxpayers have saved more than \$20 million on this single contract! Another \$20 million was saved by PennDOT.

Participating members can help BOP maintain a strong bargaining position with our suppliers and keep prices low in the future by carefully reviewing needed salt tonnage requirements every year. Although BOP was successful in adjusting minimums and storage fees this year, such adjustments are not likely to continue. Approximately 20 percent of COSTARS accounts have not achieved their 60 percent contractual minimum order requirement this winter and could have been liable for thousands of dollars of storage fees had the requirement not been adjusted.

While it is recognized that weather is increasingly unpredictable and members need to keep residents "safe, rather than sorry," overestimates translates into additional costs to suppliers which, at some point or in some way, will translate into higher prices for our members. Another way to keep costs low and ensure adequate supplies is to order salt as early in the season as your storage capacity allows.



COSTARS Member and Supplier Webinars

Virtual Learning Simplifies COSTAR Website Processes

In May, COSTARS staff provided educational Webinars to members offering virtual guidance on navigating the COSTARS website, searching contracts, and submitting a bid item workbook.

Some Member Webinar participants said that having already searched contracts via the website in the past, this Webinar served as a refresher. Others who were new to the website, or haven't used it in a while, left the Webinar feeling reassured that the processes they had been following to search contracts were correct. Additionally, participants learned the difference between COSTARS-exclusive and COSTARS-participating statewide contracts and how to search both to compare pricing. Tips for successfully negotiating with suppliers to get the best price by using the COSTARS Member Quote Kit were also covered.

The next Webinar will be held on July 20, from 10 a.m. to noon for COSTARS suppliers and prospective suppliers. The Webinar will focus on COSTARS contract search and marketing to COSTARS members. Stay tuned for additional COSTARS-exclusive and statewide COSTARS-participating contract-focused Webinars coming soon.





PROCUREMENT EXPO & FORUM

Government That Works!

SEPTEMBER 6-7, 2017

www.paprocurementexpo.com

Registration is Open!

Register at

www.paprocurementexpo.com

If you are involved in public procurement
as a decision-maker, administrator,
user or supplier

You can't afford to miss this event!

HIGHLIGHTS!

**Parking Included
with Registration**

Lunch **11:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.**

Enjoy a buffet lunch on Wednesday and Thursday and mingle with the exhibitors. Tickets (included with full admission) are required. Concession stands are available for Expo Only attendees.

COSTARS Corner **Both Days**

Meet with your COSTARS Commodity Specialists in charge of specific contracts to ask questions, discuss your concerns, suggest ideas to improve, or just to put a face along with the voice. Specific schedule will be posted on the website and in your program booklet.

General Session **Wed. 8:45 - 10 a.m.**

TENTATIVE: Department of General Services Secretary Curt Topper greets attendees and introduces Governor Tom Wolf (invited) who discusses "Government That Works!"

CONFIRMED: Get inspired and motivated as Air Force fighter pilot Waldo Waldman reveals his life and death lessons about teamwork and how to overcome obstacles, adapt to change, and break performance barriers.

Networking Event **Wed. 4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.**

Join your fellow attendees and exhibitors in an informal atmosphere to discuss this first-time event, while enjoying light refreshments. Open to all.

Exhibits **Wed. 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.** **Thurs. 8:30 a.m. - 3p.m.**

Browse through hundreds of exhibits representing state agencies and businesses that offer equipment, supplies, and services to COSTARS members and ready to offer information, demonstrations, and advice.

Workshops **Both Days**

Choose from more than 50 workshops designed to increase your procurement knowledge and skills. Workshops will be held on Wednesday from 11 a.m. until 4:45 p.m. and Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Specific time slots and rooms will be posted on the website and in your program booklet.

Computer Lab **Both Days**

Attendees and suppliers will have the opportunity to work with knowledgeable instructors to register as a supplier and explore the COSTARS website. Specific time slots will be posted on the website and in your program booklet.

Speed Networking **Both Days**

Suppliers will have the opportunity to meet one-on-one with state agencies and larger COSTARS entities to discuss how to get additional business.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Waldo Waldman

Lt. Col. (ret.) Rob ‘Waldo’ Waldman - The Wingman – is a professional leadership speaker and author of the New York Times and Wall Street Journal bestseller Never Fly Solo. He teaches organizations how to commit to excellence, prepare for change, and engage to win while sharing his experiences as a combat decorated F-16 fighter pilot and businessman.

Waldo overcame massive claustrophobia and a fear of heights to become a highly experienced fighter pilot with over sixty-five combat missions in Iraq and Serbia. He believes the key to building a culture of trust lies with your wingmen – those in your life who help you to overcome obstacles, adapt to change, and achieve success.

Waldo is a graduate of the U.S Air Force Academy, holds an MBA with a focus on Organizational Behavior, and is an inductee into the prestigious Speaker Hall of Fame.

Registration Types & Fees

Full Admission (includes admission to General Session, educational breakout sessions, Expo, parking, lunch, breaks, networking event)

Early Bird Registration--Payment received by July 31, 2017

Two Days at \$100; One Day at \$65

Registration--Payment received after July 31, 2017

Two Days at \$120; One Day at \$75

Expo Only (includes admission to Expo, parking, breaks, networking event)

Early Bird Registration--Payment received by July 31, 2017

Two Days at \$50; One Day at \$25

Registration--Payment received after July 31, 2017

Two Days at \$60; One Day at \$30

Educational Workshops

The following is a partial list of workshops to be held during the event. Exact days, times, and descriptions will be posted on the event website and in the program booklet.

- 📖 **What is COSTARS?**
- 📖 **It's Electric!**
- 📖 **COSTARS Members' Success Stories.**
- 📖 **Positioning Your Company for Government Business**
- 📖 **Positive Procurement Impacts—Saving Money and More!**
- 📖 **Save with Surplus!**
- 📖 **How to Bid on a COSTARS Contract**
- 📖 **Shape Up! Get LEAN! Continuous Improvement Techniques**
- 📖 **How to Search Contracts & Negotiate with COSTARS Suppliers to Save Taxpayer Money**
- 📖 **How to Market Your Business to COSTARS Members, Report Sales, & Pay the Administrative Fee**
- 📖 **COSTARS Supplier Success Stories**
- 📖 **Are You Getting the Best Value? What is an ITQ?**
- 📖 **COSTARS for Roadmasters & Public Works**
- 📖 **Purchasing for Police & EMS Services**
- 📖 **Notes from an Auditor**
- 📖 **Purchasing for Recreation**
- 📖 **Grants: What's Available & How to Get Them**
- 📖 **Best Practices & Considerations in Procurement for Local Government & Schools**
- 📖 **It's GO-Time: Tracking Taxpayer Savings**

Exhibitors

Exhibit booths and Champion upgrades still available!

COSTARS is Becoming Lean!

By Claire Osborne, COSTARS Marketing Manager

The Governor's Office of Transformation, Innovation, Management and Efficiency (GO-TIME) is working to modernize government operations in order to deliver better and faster services, resulting in reduced costs. One of GO-TIME's initiatives is the implementation of Lean across the commonwealth.

The underlying mindset in Lean is one of continuous improvement, where the improvements made are just steps on an unending path to perfection. Continuous improvement is rooted in the idea of understanding what adds value for customers, identifying waste, and eliminating waste to make any process more efficient. Waste elimination typically leverages the idea of "creativity over capital" (i.e., using the resources at hand to improve rather than spending significant amounts of money).

As an early adopter of the initiative, the Department of General Services (DGS) was designated by GO-TIME as its model agency. In this role, DGS is one of the agencies who is furthest along in adopting and using Lean practices.

As part of its ongoing efforts in implementing these Lean practices, DGS recognized COSTARS presented an opportunity for improvement specific to searching the COSTARS contracts on the website. Upon review of the process using Lean tools, DGS determined that our Members were dissatisfied with the amount of time that it took to find goods and services when looking to purchase using COSTARS. Eric Decker, Assistant to the Deputy Secretary for Administration and Mary Fox, Assistant Counsel with DGS's Office of Chief Counsel, led the COSTARS team through a Root Cause Analysis of the current condition, which included talking to and surveying COSTARS Members about the contract search process and mapping the process in detail from start to finish. Ultimately, we decided to focus on the COSTARS Exclusive Contract search.

Although we recognized the potential for numerous improvements, we initially focused our problem-solving on the Keyword search option which appeared to be the source of some of the problems experienced by the COSTARS Members. Our Keywords search option, which appears to be an easy way to locate specific suppliers of a desired item, instead lists all the suppliers under a particular contract. As a result, COSTARS Members had to search through multiple suppliers to find which one carried their specific item, adding both time and frustration to the purchasing process. To fix this issue, we have been working with DGS's Information Technology (IT) Office to tie the Keywords to each Product Category. Once this is completed, only the suppliers that carry that specific Product Category will be displayed, making it more likely that the listed suppliers sell the specific item the COSTARS Members need.

Our COSTARS Commodity Specialists have also been working to name the keywords appropriately and add more keywords to each Product Category. Once finished, we will send the final list to our IT Office so they can complete the change to our system. We will also add some Quick Search Tips to the Contract Search Page to give our members "at-a-glance" assistance with the search process. You can look for these changes soon!

We hope that our first step towards continuous improvement of the COSTARS website will make the search process easier, better, faster, and less expensive. As our next step in the improvement process, we intend to survey our membership to confirm that the implemented solution actually solved the problem. We look forward to continually improving COSTARS-related processes to make them more user-friendly and effective for our Members and Suppliers.

If you would like to learn more about Governor Wolf's GO-TIME office or the Lean Implementation Initiative, sign up for the workshops occurring at our PA Procurement Expo at the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg this Sept. 6 and 7 or visit <https://www.governor.pa.gov/go-time/>.



COSTARS TIP: COSTARS often communicates to our members and suppliers through mass emails which can be mistaken by your computer's SPAM protection as junk mail. To ensure that you are not missing important information from COSTARS, make sure your system allows emails from GS-PACostars@pa.gov.



COSTARS On The Road

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. Marketing Managers Bruce Beardsley, Kim Bullivant and Claire Osborne travel throughout the commonwealth speaking at conferences, workshops and seminars sponsored by associations, suppliers, universities, legislators, chambers of commerce and others.

Recent Events

May 7-8 PA Boroughs Assoc. Annual Conference Hershey	May 25 Prospective Supplier Workshop Slippery Rock
May 12 Representative Rothman Presentation Camp Hill	May 25 Representative Keefer Prospective Suppliers Presentation Dillsburg
May 18 Berks Facilities Managers Meeting Reading	May 31- June 1 JARI/PTAC Government Procurement Expo/ 27th Annual Showcase for Commerce Johnstown
May 18 Oil Region COG Oil City	July 5 Prospective Supplier Workshop-Clarion Co Commissioners/Clarion University SBDC Clarion
May 18 Representative Dush Member Event Jefferson County	July 18 Supplier Workshop- MANTEC, PTAC SE PA and SEDA COG - York
May 19 PASBO Northwest Facilities Managers Meeting Erie	

Upcoming Events

Aug. 3	Diverse and Minority Business Forum Temple University - Philadelphia
Aug. 10	Erie Area Council of Governments Workshop -Erie
Aug. 11	Fayette County Business to Business Expo Lemont Furnace
Aug. 16	Annual Luzerne County Association of Township Officials Conference & Convention - Shavertown
Sept. 6-7	PA Procurement Expo & Forum - Harrisburg
Sept. 10	PA Municipal Authorities Conference - Hershey
Sept. 20	Susquehanna River Basin Commission's Public Water Supply Assistance Program's Fall 2017 Workshop - Williamsport
Sept. 28	Aviation Council of Pennsylvania Workshop Greensburg
Oct. 13-15	PA Boroughs Association Fall Leadership Conference - Pocono Manor

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 Bruce Beardsley at 717-214-3432, email: bbeardsley@pa.gov; Kim Bullivant at 717-346-2678, email: kbullivant@pa.gov; or Claire Osborne at 717-346-3838, email: cosborne@pa.gov. The COSTARS Marketing Team's Calendar of Events is also available on the COSTARS website on the [COSTARS Program Resources](#) page.



Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter to begin receiving COSTARS updates! Remember, this does not replace important updates we send to you via email, so please be sure to maintain your member and supplier information in the COSTARS system.

Visit our Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Costars-PA-Department-of-General-Services/904261462952351?ref=hl>

Visit our Twitter page at:

<https://twitter.com/COSTARSNews>.

COSTARS Connection

Curt Topper - Secretary, Department of General Services
Ken Hess - Deputy Secretary for Procurement
Jenny Doherty - Chief Procurement Officer
Dawn Eshenour - Chief, Supplier Dev. & Support Div.
Bruce Beardsley - Marketing Manager
Kim Bullivant - Marketing Manager
Claire Osborne - Marketing Manager

Further information on the COSTARS program is available by phone at 1-866-768-7827 or by visiting the [COSTARS](http://www.costars.state.pa.us) website at www.costars.state.pa.us.

Published by the Pennsylvania Department of General Services
Editor: Bruce Beardsley

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

