

COSTARS Connection

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

Winter 2017
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Tom Wolf, Governor
Curt Topper, Secretary



COSTARS Continues Growth

By Bruce Beardsley, COSTARS Marketing Manager

With more members and suppliers than ever, the COSTARS program continues to make procurement in Pennsylvania easier, more efficient, and more cost-effective. In FY2015 (July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016), overall spend by COSTARS members grew by 6.4 percent to \$1,082,800,196! Use of COSTARS-exclusive contracts increased by 7.8 percent and members' piggy-backing from statewide contracts expanded by 4.7 percent. The number of COSTARS members rose by 2.4 percent to 8,442 as of June 30, 2016. There are currently 8,518 members. COSTARS-exclusive contracts were awarded or renewed to 1,315 suppliers, an increase of 10.1 percent compared to a year earlier. Of those suppliers, 673, or 51.2 percent, were Small Businesses.

The most utilized COSTARS-exclusive contracts were IT Hardware and Municipal Work Vehicles, while Wireless Communications and the Sodium Chloride (Road Salt) statewide contracts had the greatest use among COSTARS members. Contracts with the greatest one-year growth were Heavy Equipment Rental, Voting Systems, and Energy Consulting Services among COSTARS-exclusive contracts (See chart below of selected COSTARS-exclusive contracts). The statewide contracts with the largest increased spend by COSTARS members were Snow Plows; Equipment Maintenance; and Indoor Floor Cleaners, Polishers, and Vacuums. The average COSTARS sales volume among COSTARS-authorized suppliers was \$408,732, a slight increase from FY2014. The average Laboratory Supplies vendor generated COSTARS sales of more than \$1.2 million, the highest average among COSTARS-exclusive contracts. The renewal rate among COSTARS-authorized suppliers remained steady at 79.5 percent.

CONTRACT	FY2015 SPEND	CHANGE	AVG SALES/SUPPLIER
IT Hardware	\$180,265,973	-12.6%	\$883,657
Heavy Equipment Rental	\$438,888	+317.6%	\$62,698
Voting Systems	\$3,536,018	+200.3%	\$884,005
Laboratory Supplies	\$12,125,120	+8.6%	\$1,212,512
Municipal Work Vehicles	\$144,059,194	+25.6%	\$673,144
Emergency Responder Vehicles	\$50,478,286	+52.8%	\$586,957
Copiers, etc.	\$10,742,794	-22.5%	\$397,881
MRO	\$46,457,580	+20.0%	\$197,692

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COSTARS offers its members and suppliers many under-utilized opportunities to conserve energy and reduce energy costs. There are two COSTARS-exclusive contracts dealing with energy: COSTARS-28 Energy Conservation Management Supplies and COSTARS-30 Energy Consulting Services. COSTARS-28 is a materials contract that includes alternative energy equipment (solar, wind, etc.), control and efficiency components and software, low flow plumbing components, and more. The scope of COSTARS-30 includes brokerage services, energy audits, energy monitoring, analysis, and advice, and other energy consulting services.

Tera Akpan, the COSTARS Commodity Specialist assigned to both contracts, expressed "the importance for COSTARS Members to find methods to save on energy and the value of energy conservation for our environment." Although both contracts experienced substantially increased usage in FY2015 (29.2 percent growth for COSTARS-28 and a 195 percent increase on COSTARS-30), neither contract has reached its full potential, according to Akpan.

Our goal is to attract additional suppliers on the contracts in order for COSTARS members to achieve the maximum benefit. There are currently seven suppliers on COSTARS-28 and eight suppliers on COSTARS-30.

Recently, Ms. Akpan received a phone call from a COSTARS member that wanted to do a solar project and was having difficulty finding a COSTARS supplier that offered solar panels. A solar panel is designed to absorb the rays of the sun for the purpose of generating electricity and heating. Ms. Akpan succeeded in attracting two suppliers that now offer solar panels under their COSTARS-28 contract. Both suppliers have indicated on their contract that they offer the ancillary service of Assembly/Installation/Construction activities, which allows the supplier to install the solar panels as part of the COSTARS purchase consistent with all other applicable legal requirements. Among the suppliers who reported business on COSTARS-28 in FY 2015, the average COSTARS sales per supplier was over one million dollars, the third highest among all COSTARS-exclusive contracts. Qualifying for this market through COSTARS represents a great business opportunity!

Suppliers are urged to explore the opportunities of becoming a COSTARS-authorized supplier for COSTARS-28 Energy Conservation Management Supplies, or COSTARS-30 Energy Consulting Services. Please visit: <http://www.dgs.pa.gov/Businesses/Materials%20and%20Services%20Procurement/Supplier-Information/Pages/CostarsBiddingOpportunities.aspx> or call 1-866-768-7827.

If you have questions about these two COSTARS-exclusive contracts, you may contact Commodity Specialist Tera Akpan at telephone number 717-783-8368 or email her at takpan@pa.gov.

There are programs available for political subdivisions, including municipalities, counties, and school districts, such as the Solar Energy Program administered jointly by Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development and the Department of Environmental Protection under the direction of the Commonwealth Financing Authority to provide financial assistance in form of loans to promote the use of alternative solar energy in Pennsylvania. For more information go to <http://dced.pa.gov/programs/solar-energy-program-sep/#.WEb1Z4czWUk>.

In addition to these two COSTARS-exclusive contracts, there are multiple COSTARS-participating suppliers on the statewide Energy Supply and Services ITQ contract (#4400002702) which provides electricity generation and transmission, natural gas, and other miscellaneous energy services. Under this contract, the Penn State Facilities Engineering Institute (PSFEI), in collaboration with the commonwealth, conducted an electricity bid event on Dec. 16 for seven COSTARS members. The bid produced a total annual savings for those members of \$173,386 compared to their current contract and \$253,417 compared to their local utility's standard rate.

If a member would like to use the commonwealth's electricity procurement initiative and maximize their cost-savings, contact Pennsylvania's Energy Commodity Manager Greg Knerr at telephone number 717-703-2935 or email him at gknerr@pa.gov; or PSFEI's Scott Harford at telephone number 814-863-2090 or email him at SHarford@engr.psu.edu.

Energy Opportunities

By COSTARS Marketing Managers Bruce Beardsley and Claire Osborne



Electronic Payment Processing

By COSTARS Marketing Manager Bruce Beardsley



There's a new statewide contract for Electronic Payment Processing Services (Contract #4400016084) available to COSTARS members.

First Data Merchant Services was awarded the five-year contract effective Nov. 1, and they have agreed to participate in COSTARS. This contract offers COSTARS members the ability to accept and process electronic payments for merchandise, admissions, fees, licenses, permits, taxes, and other services. Bank cards, as well as Visa, MasterCard, Amex, and Discover can be processed.

In addition, other electronic payment methods such as Chip and Signature, E-Check, check scanners, online payment options (e.g., Pay Pal, Apple Pay, etc.), gift cards, and others are within the scope of this contract.

Processing fees are usually determined by an individual account's volume. But, by utilizing this statewide contract, COSTARS members will receive the same low rates as the state government, based on its high volume of transactions.

The full contract, including rates, is accessible from the COSTARS website by

searching statewide contracts on eMarketplace. For further information or to sign up, contact Dan McCurdy of First Data at 717-576-7200 or Daniel.McCurdy@firstdata.com.



COSTARS Continues Growth, cont'd.

Top sellers among COSTARS-authorized suppliers were Dell, CDW Government, LAM Systems, and IntegraONE. Top users among COSTARS members were City of Philadelphia, Allegheny County, Penn State University, and City of Pittsburgh. The average COSTARS spend among members was more than \$128,000.

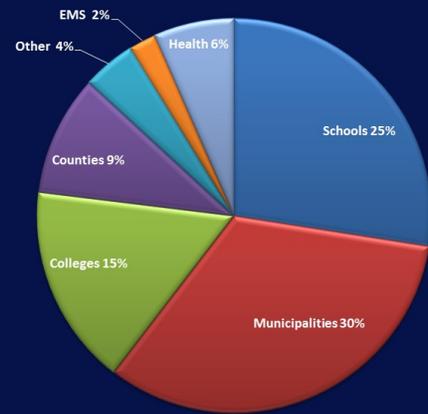
Among Pennsylvania's 67 counties, Allegheny County had the most spend with highest number of members. Fulton County had the largest two-year spend increase, followed by Perry County. Northampton had the largest percentage increase in members since FY2013, with Clinton County coming in second. Centre County's members had the largest average spend.

Municipal governments represented 31.0 percent of total COSTARS spend and non-college, public and non-profit private educational spend totaled 24.4 percent of the total. College spend represented an additional 15.0 percent of the total. Among COSTARS-exclusive contracts, municipal governments dominated the spending on Heavy Equipment Rental, Waste, Recycling & Material Handling Containers, and Municipal Work Vehicles. Non-college educational entities were the biggest users of the Energy Conservation Management Supplies, Signage, and Groundskeeping contracts. Colleges were the main users of the Laboratory Supplies contract.

In total, COSTARS members saved an estimated \$244 million using the program, including \$64 million in transactional savings (savings realized by using already-bid statewide and COSTARS contracts) among government members.

Among the thousands of COSTARS transactions, 86.7 percent were below the \$19,400 bidding threshold, indicating that many members use the program routinely, even when public bidding would not be required, because of their confidence in the suppliers and the ease of the program.

FY2015 TOTAL COSTARS SPEND BY LPPU CATEGORY



COSTARS Member Hands-on Computer Workshops Were a Success!

By Kim Bullivant, COSTARS Marketing Manager

In October and November 2016, COSTARS marketing managers traveled throughout the commonwealth to instruct a number of hands-on computer training workshops for more than 100 elected and appointed municipal officials and administrators, school district personnel, fire and police departments, educational and health-related nonprofit leaders, college administrators, and other public entity personnel who oversee purchasing or procurement.

The workshops provided participants with a detailed overview of the COSTARS program and step-by-step instruction for using the COSTARS website with a live Internet connection.

Participants gained a full understanding of how the COSTARS Program can help them save money on essentially all of their equipment, commodity, and service needs; resulting in a more effective and efficient purchasing experience.

Attendees were very satisfied with the workshops and felt that they would be able use what they learned when purchasing materials and services through COSTARS in the future. Below are some comments from workshop attendees.

"Nice course. First one I have taken. Will look for others to expand my education in use of COSTARS."

"Look forward to playing with the site now that I have a basic understanding."

"I took COSTARS courses before, but this hands-on course taught me more than I ever knew - very good course."

"Good class...very informative."

Additional suggestions for future workshops included a full-day course as well as more in-depth interactive website training via Webinars.

The COSTARS team would like to thank the PSATS organization for hosting these workshops.



COSTARS Marketing Manager
Claire Osborne
instructing a hands-on workshop.

Road Salt Participation Agreement Reminder

It's time to reserve your road salt for next winter by signing up for the 2017-18 Pennsylvania Statewide Sodium Chloride contract.

To sign up, members must complete the 2017-18 Salt Contract Participation Agreement that can be accessed by selecting the orange bar at the top of the COSTARS Members Area of the COSTARS website. The Participation Agreement is a simple one-page form that can be completed and submitted electronically.

The last day to enroll is March 15, 2017.



PA Procurement Expo

Pennsylvania Department of General Services' Bureau of Procurement will sponsor a statewide Public Procurement Expo and Conference on Sept. 6 and 7, 2017 at the Harrisburg Farm Show Complex.

It will be a two-day event featuring hundreds of Pennsylvania state government and COSTARS contract suppliers exhibiting their products and services and networking with thousands of staff and officials of state agencies and COSTARS member entities.

Stay tuned for further updates!



Happy New Year from WEX and Sunoco!



Receive 15¢ off per gallon by purchasing more of your fleet fuel at Sunoco!

If your Sunoco volume between January-March 2017 exceeds the number of Sunoco gallons you purchased during the same time in 2016, you'll receive our exclusive New Year's fuel rebate for the Commonwealth of PA on every incremental gallon.*

EXTRA SAVINGS ARE A CARD SWIPE AWAY!

- Ask your drivers to fuel their business vehicles at Sunoco January-March 2017
- Fuel purchases should be made with the State of PA Sunoco Universal Fleet Card
- We'll compare your Q12017 and Q12016 Sunoco fuel volume
- And credit your account with a rebate on each additional gallon fueled during the 2017 time period

Better yet, you'll continue to receive the valuable everyday fuel savings you've come to enjoy through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's statewide contract with Sunoco.

FUEL MORE OFTEN AT SUNOCO TO SAVE



Have questions?

Contact Customer Service at 866-747-4440



* COSTARS customers who were actively fueling in the State of PA Sunoco Universal Fuel Card Program as of 12/31/15 - and are currently an active customer - are eligible to participate. A fuel rebate of 15¢ off/gallon on incremental gallons purchased at Sunoco with the State of PA Sunoco Universal Fleet Card during January - March 2017 compared to January - March 2016 will be credited to the customer's April 2017 account invoice.

DGS COSTARS Collaborates with BDISBO Promoting Small Diverse Businesses



By Audrey Smith, BDISBO Procurement Liaison

The Department of General Services (DGS) COSTARS Cooperative Purchasing Program announces an administrative fee reduction for DGS-verified Small Diverse Businesses (SDBs). Effective Oct. 3, 2016, companies verified by DGS Bureau of Diversity, Inclusion and Small Business Opportunities (BDISBO) as minority, woman, veteran, service disabled veteran, disability-owned, or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual (LGBT)-owned small business enterprises, will be entitled to a discounted annual administrative fee for renewal or newly awarded COSTARS-exclusive and COSTARS-participating statewide contracts.

The per contract administrative fee for businesses in the COSTARS program is \$1,500, discounted to \$500 for DGS self-certified Small Businesses (SBs) and now further discounted to \$166 fee for DGS-verified SDBs. The intent of the fee reduction is to encourage and ensure open and equitable contracting opportunities for these businesses and level the field of access for our SDB owners.

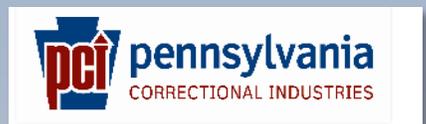
DGS, through BDISBO's Small and Small Diverse Business Programs, maintains a strong commitment to providing training, technical assistance, and support for small and small diverse business owners to compete for prime and sub-contracting opportunities with the goal of promoting the economic growth and success of these businesses.

BDISBO assists SDBs and SBs on "How to do Business with the Commonwealth" and with contracting opportunities. Working in concert with our COSTARS procurement team, BDISBO's goal is to continue to promote access in governmental contracting.

For information or assistance on BDISBO's programs, or becoming a DGS self-certified small business or a verified small diverse business contact 717-783-3199 or access the link below:

<http://www.dgs.pa.gov/Businesses/Small%20Business%20Contracting%20Program/Pages/default.aspx#.WG9-K6Mo6tE>

PA Correctional Industries Saving Money While Retraining Inmates



PA Correctional Industries (PCI) provides a synergistic opportunity for COSTARS members to generate procurement savings while investing in the retraining of inmates to learn work habits and skills that will make them desirable employees and productive citizens upon release.

PCI is a bureau of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) that manufactures high quality products and sells them at competitive prices to state and local government agencies and other tax-supported and non-profit institutions through the COSTARS program. PCI operates as an independent business, generating its own working capital and receives no monies from the general fund. They produce and sell more than 3,000 different items including bags, apparel, recreation equipment, toiletries, furniture, printing, signage, housekeeping products and much more. In addition to manufactured goods PCI offers laundry services. PCI encourages applicable businesses to promote continued work experience and training for PA inmates as a preamble to their reentry into the community.

A Letter of Agreement has been established between the Department of General Services (DGS) and DOC allowing commonwealth agencies and eligible COSTARS Members to purchase PCI products and services without the need for a formal bidding process. The Letter of Agreement reference number is PCI-LOA-2014 and can be viewed on eMarketplace (search contracts

PCI's catalog is available online at www.pci.state.pa.us. There is no minimum order unless otherwise specified by PCI. PCI may include shipping/handling charges in their quote for specialty materials. To obtain quotes and subsequently purchase, COSTARS Members should contact PCI Customer Service at 717-425-7292, or email pci@pa.gov. PCI Customer Service will create a sales document and process billing which will generate an invoice upon shipment/delivery.



COSTARS Webinars Coming Soon to a PC Near You!

By Kim Bullivant, COSTARS Marketing Manager

Starting in February, the COSTARS team will be hosting quarterly member and supplier webinars. Webinar topics include:

Members

- Submitting a user registration.
- Submitting a member association request.
- Searching COSTARS-exclusive contracts.
- Searching COSTARS-participating statewide contracts.
- Understanding COSTARS contract overview.
- Understanding COSTARS vendor contract.
- Submitting a road salt contract agreement form.
- Viewing online training modules and presentation.
- Viewing COSTARS Calendar of Events.
- Locating important COSTARS Program updates.
- Searching the Supplies and Surplus website.

Suppliers

- Registering as a vendor with the commonwealth.
- Locating supplier resources.
- Viewing online training modules and presentation.
- Self-certify as a Small Business or Small Diverse Business.
- Viewing COSTARS bidding opportunities.
- Bidding on a COSTARS contract.
- Pay the COSTARS administrative fee.
- Access the COSTARS member list.
- Reporting sales.
- Download the COSTARS logo.
- Tips for marketing to COSTARS members.

In addition to learning more about the COSTARS Program and website, participants will have the opportunity to speak with commodity specialists who will answer specific contract questions.

Watch your email for a Webinar announcement in the coming weeks or contact us at 1-866-768-7827 for the schedule.



COSTARS Online Training Modules - Making the Website More User Friendly

By Kim Bullivant, COSTARS Marketing Manager

In response to concerns about navigating the COSTARS website, the COSTARS team developed online training modules via the uPerform[®] platform that provide practical training for all processes performed by members and suppliers on the COSTARS website. Users have the option to view and print a step-by-step guide, watch and interact with a simulated tutorial or use a guided help feature when learning how to use the website.

Many members and suppliers have benefitted from COSTARS online training which is reflected in a recent analytical review of training module usage since 2013.

- COSTARS website online training modules have been accessed more than 5,700 times.
- Member training modules were viewed 2,957 times.
- The most heavily-accessed member training module was "Search COSTARS Exclusive Contracts", with 1,038 views.
- Supplier training modules were viewed 2,831 times.
- The supplier training module accessed the most was "Bidding on a COSTARS Contract" with 823 views.

If you'd like to learn more about using the COSTARS website for a variety of processes including: completing a user registration; searching contracts; bidding on a COSTARS contract; and many more, please visit the COSTARS website at www.costars.state.pa.us.

For member training, go to the Local Government & Schools tab/COSTARS (Cooperative Purchasing)/Member Information, then select the yellow Members button. From the Members Area page, select the Training Center link on the left-hand side of the page.

For supplier training, go to the Businesses tab/Materials & Services Procurement/COSTARS Supplier Information. In the center of the Supplier Information page, select the COSTARS Training Center link.

Newsletter Index

By Bruce Beardsley, COSTARS Marketing Manager

Do you want to know more details about the commonwealth's Universal Fleet Card? How about information regarding Procurement Technical Assistance Centers? Interested in using the statewide Small Package Delivery contract? Considering purchasing from UniqueSource or PA Correctional Industries? Looking for more information about other cooperative purchasing programs? Are you a prospective supplier who wants to review COSTARS sales statistics?

These topics and more have been written about in past issues of the *COSTARS Connection*, the quarterly newsletter published by the COSTARS Team. It is sent electronically to the email of record of all COSTARS members and suppliers, plus hundreds of "Friends of COSTARS", at time of publication. It is also distributed at COSTARS-attended events and is available on the COSTARS website.

Now, in honor of the tenth anniversary of the first *COSTARS Connection* newsletter, we have compiled an index of past topics to make it easier for you to search, access, and "read all about it."

The index is included as a pull-out section in this newsletter. An electronic version will be posted on the [Program Resources](#) page of the COSTARS website and each topic will be hyperlinked directly to the newsletter issue in which the topic appears. Please note, however, that older articles may include information which is no longer current, but are provided for historical purposes.





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Training - Online	Winter, 2014 Summer, 2014	Autumn, 2014 Autumn, 2015		

U

Uniforms	Spring, 2013 Spring, 2015		
UniqueSource	Summer, 2014 Winter, 2015		
UPS	Summer, 2009 Winter, 2012	Autumn, 2013	

V

Vehicles	Summer, 2009 Autumn, 2009	Autumn, 2011 Winter, 2012	Autumn, 2012 Winter, 2013	Autumn, 2013
Vending Machines	Spring, 2011			
Vendor Number	Fall, 2007 Autumn, 2009	Summer, 2010		

W

Waste Recycling and Containers	Summer, 2012			
Weatherization Materials	Summer, 2009 Winter, 2012			
Westmoreland City Volunteer Fire Department	Summer, 2014			
WEX	Autumn, 2016			
Where Do I Find	Winter, 2013 Spring, 2013	Autumn, 2013 Summer, 2014	Winter, 2015 Summer, 2016	

Please Note: Older newsletters may contain outdated information as it relates to contracts, policies, etc. Please refer to the latest versions of the *COSTARS Connection* newsletter for the most up-to-date information.

An online version of this index and recent editions of the *COSTARS Connection* newsletter can be viewed on the Program Resources page of the COSTARS website at www.costars.state.pa.us. From the Local Government and schools tab at the top of the page, select the COSTARS (Cooperative Purchasing)/Program Resources links.



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

- Nov. 16** COSTARS Hands-on Educational Member Workshops hosted by PSATS - West Chester
- Nov. 17** COSTARS Hands-on Educational Member Workshops hosted by PSATS - Wilkes-Barre
- Nov. 18** COSTARS Hands-on Educational Member Workshops hosted by PSATS - Schnecksville
- Nov. 30** SEDA-COG Supplier Workshop York
- Jan. 12** Doing Business with PHA Philadelphia

Upcoming Events

- Jan. 19** PA Boroughs Association Webinar Online
- March 8** Montgomery County Intermediate Unit Norristown
- March 21-24** PASBO Annual Conference Pittsburgh
- March 30** SEDA-COG Supplier Workshop Harrisburg

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.

Bidding Threshold Increase - 2017

The PA Department of Labor and Industry has announced an increase in the local government bidding thresholds beginning Jan. 1 as follows:

- Any contract or purchase under **\$10,700** requires no formal bidding quotations.
- Any contract or purchase between **\$10,700 and \$19,700** requires three telephonic or written/email quotations.
- Any contract or purchase greater than **\$19,700** requires the formal bidding process as prescribed by law.

As permitted under Act 72, purchases pursuant to the COSTARS Program of any amount, require no formal bidding process by the local government since the contracts have been awarded by the commonwealth through its approved competitive bidding process.



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.

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