



PTAC TALK



January 2017

Special Edition

A newsletter of the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning & Development Commission's Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC).



Proudly serving the northwestern Pennsylvania counties of Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango and Warren.

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YOUR NORTHWEST COMMISSION PTAC TEAM:

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Happy New Year!

It's that time again... Another special "New Year's edition" of *PTAC TALK*. This issue includes some updates and reminders for the year ahead. As always, [contact the PTAC](#) for assistance with any of your government contracting questions!



Want a refresher on the types of services we provide here at the PTAC? [Check out our video.](#)

Wishing all a happy and prosperous 2017!

Changes to PTAC Counselors' Assigned Counties

Government Contracting Manager **Cris Pierce** will be moving on to new opportunities in 2017. Cris was a great leader at the Northwest Commission, as she advanced and nurtured the Commission's Government Contracting program. She was a truly great mentor and colleague to all of us here at the Commission, and we wish her well in her new endeavors.

Effective January 3, 2016, the geographical areas assigned to the Northwest Commission Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) counselors will change as we transition.

Businesses in **Erie and Warren counties** will be assisted by Government Contracting Specialist **Robyn Young** who may be reached at 814-677-4800 ext. 130, or by email at robny@northwestpa.org.

Those located in **Clarion, Crawford, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer and Venango counties** will be assisted by Government Contracting Specialist **Melissa Becker**, melissab@northwestpa.org, 814-677-4800 ext 124.

2017 NDAA Increases DoD's Micro-Purchase Threshold To \$5,000

The 2017 National Defense Authorization Act will increase the DoD's micro-purchase threshold to \$5,000.

Under the conference bill recently approved by both House and Senate, the DoD's micro-purchase threshold will be \$1,500 greater than the standard micro-purchase threshold applicable to civilian agencies.

A micro-purchase is an acquisition by the government of supplies or services that, because the aggregate is below a certain price, allows the

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Visit our website:

<http://northwestpa.org/government-contracting/>



The Northwest Commission PTAC, which serves as a Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA).

QUICK UPDATES

COSTARS UPDATE: Reduced Administrative Fee for Small Diverse Businesses (SDBs)

When it is time to renew COSTARS-exclusive and COSTARS Statewide Participating Contracts, companies verified as a minority, woman, veteran, service disabled veteran, disability-owned, or LGBT-owned business enterprises by the Department of General Services Bureau of Diversity, Inclusion & Small Business Opportunities (BDISBO) will see a discounted annual fee!



To see if your firm qualifies as a DGS Self-Certified Small Diverse Business visit the [DGS website](#), and contact your PTAC Counselor for assistance with the certification process.

government to avoid many of the ordinary competitive requirements under the FAR, including small business set-aside requirements. The FAR's micro-purchase guidelines are set forth primarily in FAR 13.2.

Although there are many different thresholds, the FAR puts the general micro-purchase threshold at \$3,500. But Section 821 of the proposed 2017 NDAA will add a new section to chapter 137 of title 10 of the United States Code giving the DoD its own micro-purchase threshold of \$5,000. **READ MORE HERE.**

Source: <http://smallgovcon.com/statutes-and-regulations/2017-ndaa-increases-dods-micro-purchase-threshold-to-5000/>

TUTORIAL: All Small Mentor-Protégé Program

As noted in our [last issue of PTAC TALK](#), the SBA began accepting applications for the new "All Small" Mentor-Protégé Program.

As part of the eligibility requirements, potential small business protégés are required to complete an online training module. Per the SBA, the tutorial is "designed to help you answer the question, 'Is SBA's All Small Mentor-Protégé Program a good fit for my business?'" You will be provided relevant details to inform the answer to that question to include learning how small businesses fit into the federal buying marketplace."



To view the tutorial, go to <https://www.sba.gov/tools/sba-learning-center/training/sbas-all-small-mentor-protege-program>.

For more information on the new All Small M-P Program, visit the SBA's website: <https://www.sba.gov/navigation-structure/all-small-mentor-protege-program>. And, of course, contact your PTAC Counselor for assistance and information!

A NOTE TO SMALL BUSINESSES: Don't Ignore Sources Sought and Request for Information (RFI) Notices/Announcements

When an agency issues a Sources Sought or RFI, they are trying to identify sources and determine whether there is potential for a small business set-aside or obtain other market information for planning purposes.

The Sources Sought/RFI is a chance for vendors to influence the acquisition strategy.

Some vendors may not take the time to respond to a Sources Sought/RFI. Instead, they may focus their efforts on preparation for a bid when the solicitation comes out. For the vendor, however, the Sources Sought/RFI is

their chance to influence the acquisition strategy. If capable companies do not respond, the opportunity for a set-aside may be lost. It is for this

PASSHE Procurement Site Updated

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) announced an upgrade to its



supplier strategic sourcing portal on December 5th, 2016.

eBid Systems, the State System's procurement software provider,

recently released an updated procurement platform that supports PASSHE business processes and provides an enhanced modern supplier interface.

PASSHE expected full migration to its new website, passhe.procureware.com, by January 1, 2017.

During the transition process, PASSHE will provide support; contact Linda Venneri at lvenneri@passhe.edu if you experience any technical difficulty.

Online help documents and videos are also available at passhe.procureware.com (you must be logged-in to view these) by clicking the HELP button.

Changes Coming to SAM.gov

The General Services Administration's (GSA) System for Award Management (SAM) was always intended to integrate the full menu of the government's online contracting award systems. But after a launch of Phase 1 in 2012, there has been little mention of plans to fold in the additional components—until now.

In November, GSA's Integrated Award Environment Office shared with PTACs its development process and design framework for integration of all 10 legacy award systems, as well as FBO, FPDS, and systems for reporting sub-awards and past performance, into

reason that responding to a Sources Sought/RFI is so important. The PTAC encourages our clients to take the time to provide thoughtful input when responding to a Sources Sought/RFI. Don't just send a capabilities statement; vendors should put together a personalized package that concisely answers the questions asked in the Sources Sought/RFI.

The small business community's regular and reliable response to Sources Sought/RFI will ultimately increase the opportunity for their participation in government contracts. If there are questions with regard to a particular Sources Sought/RFI, we encourage clients to reach out and speak to the government point of contact provided in the notice.

REMINDER: Federal Contractor Minimum Wage Increase & Paid Sick Leave Effective 1/1/17



As featured in a previous issue of *PTAC TALK*, **beginning January 1, 2017**, the minimum wage for covered federal contractors will increase to \$10.20 per hour for hourly workers. For tipped employees, the minimum wage for federal contractors will increase to \$6.80 per hour.

[Check out the article in our 2016 4th Quarter Issue for additional information on this important change](#), as well as the **final rule on Paid Sick Leave that applies to all covered contracts solicited and awarded on or after Jan. 1, 2017**.

New FAR Rule Encourages “Constructive Exchanges” between Federal Agencies and Contractors

On November 29, 2016, the Department of Defense, General Services Administration, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration proposed an amendment to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (“FAR”) aiming to encourage pre-acquisition communications between industry professionals and federal agencies. This amendment is part of a five-year long effort by the Obama Administration to clarify that communications between potential government contractors and federal agencies are not only allowed, but encouraged.



The proposed rule would amend FAR 1.102-2(a)(4), which currently states that “[t]he Government must not hesitate to communicate with the commercial sector as early as possible in the acquisition cycle to help the Government determine the capabilities available in the commercial marketplace. The Government will maximize its use of commercial products and services in meeting Government requirements.” In the revised version, the following language would be added: “Government acquisition personnel are permitted and encouraged to engage in responsible and constructive exchanges with industry as part of market research . . . so long as those exchanges are consistent with existing laws, regulations, and promote a fair competitive environment.”

a modernized, single system—the **new SAM.gov**.

The system will unfold one quarterly release at a time. PTAC will keep you posted on all developments in this exciting and important initiative.



As always, please contact the Northwest Commission PTAC office with any questions you may have on any of the topics covered in this issue of "PTAC TALK"

There are a number of laws and regulations that may come into play during pre-acquisition exchanges with government officials... [READ MORE...](#)

Source: <https://www.insidegovernmentcontracts.com/2016/12/new-far-rule-encourages-constructive-exchanges-between-federal-agencies-and-contractors/>



Watch for 2017 Northwest Commission
PTAC events at:

<http://nwpaptac.ecenterdirect.com/events>
and
<http://www.northwestpa.org/calendar-of-events/>



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