



## Government Procurement and eCommerce

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The PA eCommerce Association would like to thank Bob Imoff, Director of the Procurement Technical Assistance Center, Northcentral Regional Planning and Development Commission and Robert Brown, Director of the Procurement Technical Assistance Center, SEDAC-Council of Government for providing information on government procurement.

*To locate broadband in your geographic region:*

### Search for Broadband Availability

<http://www.newpa.com/broadbandSearch.aspx>

### Request Broadband Service

Bona Fide Retail Request Program (BFRR)  
This consists of a program developed and implemented by participating Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers (ILECs) in order to attract and aggregate requests for services.

To view our webinar series and/or listen to our podcast series on broadband availability and eCommerce, visit:  
<http://www.paecomm.org>

**Q. Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTACs) offer substantial assistance to small businesses looking to enter the government market: obtaining bids; procurement histories; contact people at government facilities – the list is almost endless. Talk a little about the PTACs – your mission, how you are funded and educational opportunities.**

**A. Bob Imoff** - North Central is funded under a cooperative grant from the Defense Logistics Agency with matching funds provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development Enterprise Development Program. The PTAC mission is to locate contracting opportunities, educate companies on the procedures for working with the multitude of different contracting activities in the DOD, Federal and State and to assist client/companies with issues from quality control to the latest technology requirements such as RFID.

**A. Robert Brown** - We are one of 93 PTACs throughout the United States. SEDAC COG's service area is 18 counties within Central PA. We assist small and large business in government contracting by reviewing solicitations; training and technical assistance; online bidding resources and we walk them through the process of completing online vendor registrations. If a company is not in our service area they can locate their PTAC Center by going to [www.aptac-us.org](http://www.aptac-us.org) and contacting the PTAC closest to their business. We help business get on the right track within the federal, state and local government contracting processes and most importantly help them identify which agency or agencies are most likely to use their products and services.

We help larger businesses, too, with subcontracting plan requirements. Federal contracts that are awarded to large businesses over \$550,000 or more require small business participation as are construction contracts over \$1 million. We help the large businesses locate small, women, veteran, service-disabled veteran, Hubzone certified, and SDB's or disadvantaged businesses to help them fulfill their required goals. The federal agencies also have small business goals that they have to meet as part of the Small Business Act.

**Lets talk about specific examples where an internet connection is vital to engage in the government procurement process.**

**A. Bob Imoff** - A few examples are on-line registrations, market research, invoicing, DLA DIBBS Boards (Note: The DLA Internet Bid Board System (DIBBS) is a supplier's one-stop website for viewing solicitations and awards for DLA Business Systems Modernization (BSM) items. This system is separate and distinct from the current DSCC Internet Bid Board and the Procurement Gateway Systems. DLA DIBBS is a web-based application that provides the capability to search for, view, and submit secure quotes on Requests For Quotations (RFQs) for BSM items. DLA DIBBS also allows users to search and view Request For Proposals (RFPs) and Invitations For Bid (IFBs), awards, award modifications and other procurement-related information.)

**A. Robert Brown** - Internet connections are vital in many ways. Central Contractor Registration is the mandatory online vendor registration process for the federal

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government. The federal government also requires registration in the Online Representations & Certifications (ORCA) database. In addition a company should register their company in the online Small Business Administrations, Dynamic Small Business Search database. Veteran owned companies should register in all of the above along with the Vetbiz database located on the Center for Veterans Enterprise website. The link is <http://www.vip.vetbiz.gov/> Similarly, there is an online vendor registration process for the Commonwealth of PA on the new Pennsylvania Supplier Portal. The link is <https://www.pasupplierportal.state.pa.us>. Large and small businesses alike use an internet connection to download specs and military drawings; access the internet bid board; and to receive information from the daily bid notification service via email. The bid notification or bid matching service is typically a free service provided by the various PTAC's to help a company locate potential bidding opportunities. Some PTAC Centers may charge a small fee for this service.

***Q.** The daily bid match system offered by the PTACs is an extremely valuable and free tool for small businesses. The service is delivered via email to subscribers. Describe the bid match system offered by the PTACs.*

***A. Bob Imoff*** - Most PTACs utilize the Softshare Bid Match System to locate opportunities for regional companies.

***A. Robert Brown*** - Once a client contacts us, we work to identify keywords and other criteria that match their capabilities and the client will get the notices through their e-mail system. The bid notice program searches various local, state, and federal government websites where bid opportunities are posted.

***Q.** In addition to the bid match system, the PTACs offer resources to help small businesses research government markets. Can you mention a few of these resources?*

***A. Bob Imoff*** - Following enrollment of a new client in the Northcentral PTAC system it has been my procedure to supply the company with a CD containing links to various contracting agencies broken down by DOD, Federal, State and Other to eliminate the number of hours that a company could potentially spend researching information.

***A. Robert Brown*** - Some of the resources may include training on how to use the FedbizOps website [www.fbo.gov](http://www.fbo.gov), where the federal contracting opportunities greater than \$25,000 are typically posted. A company can also use this website to research previous contract awards. Another great resource used in research is the Fed Spending website [www.fedspending.org](http://www.fedspending.org). This database along with the Federal Procurement Data System <https://www.fpds.gov/> can be used to locate previous contract awards to help a company identify and target a particular federal agency that uses their products or services. We help businesses in a variety of ways – and each is personalized towards their specific needs. Last year we held over 20 training events and partnered with groups like the Small Business Development Centers, PA Bureau of Minority and Women Business Opportunities, the local Industrial Resource Centers such as MANTEC and the IMC, local Chambers of Commerce, and the HACC Business Startup Center. We can also assist the company by helping them prepare a capabilities statement that is typically used to highlight the products and services offered by a company. The capabilities statement is used in the marketing process to attract interest from federal agencies and large business prime contractors. The federal government is a \$300 billion market, not to mention opportunities available through state and local governments so the possibilities can be endless.

**Logon to [www.paecomm.org](http://www.paecomm.org) to view the webinar**



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**Q. The DOD eMall is an exciting new project for small purchases under \$3000. How does a small business become a vendor at the eMall and does that business need a website to catalog its products and services?**

**A. Bob Imoff** - Web presence is vital to any business in the new global economy and while it is not mandated by the DOD e-Mall system, it enhances the potential for companies to be contacted by government buyers.

The DOD EMALL strives to be the single web-based entry point for military and federal agency purchasers to find and acquire off-the-shelf, finished goods and services, from the commercial marketplace and government sources.

**A. Robert Brown** - The DOD E-Mall "Open Market" is for companies that want to sell commercial of the shelf products and services to agencies like the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Department of Homeland Security. This particular process is referred to as "Open Market". We can assist the company by helping them get set-up to sell on the Open Market for purchases not to exceed \$3,000. The small business must have a merchant account to accept a credit card to do business via the "Open Market" process. The DOD E-mall can also involve other processes or contracting mechanisms that are much more involved but the "Open Market" process is a great way to get started.

**Q. Talk about the trend of reverse auctioning and how it works.**

**A. Bob Imoff** - It is a type of auction in which the role of the buyer and seller are reversed, with the primary objective to drive purchase prices downward. In an ordinary auction (also known as a forward auction), buyers compete to obtain a good or service. In a reverse auction, sellers compete to obtain business. The prices that buyers obtain in the reverse auction reflect the narrow market which it created at the moment in time when the auction is held. Thus, it is possible that better value - i.e. lower prices, as well as better quality, delivery performance, technical capabilities, etc. - could be obtained from suppliers not engaged in the bidding or by other means such as collaborative cost management and joint process improvement.

The buyer may award contracts to the supplier who bid the lowest price. Or, a buyer could award contracts to suppliers who bid higher prices depending upon the buyer's specific needs with regards to quality, lead-time, capacity, or other value-adding capabilities. However, buyers frequently award contracts to incumbent (i.e. current) suppliers, even if prices are higher than the lowest bids, because the switching costs to move work to a new supplier are higher than the potential savings that can be realized. This outcome, while very attractive to buyers, is often strongly criticized by both new and incumbent suppliers.

**Q. The PTACs offer a continuous series of workshops and seminars on all of these topics. How does a business learn about events?**

**A. Bob Imoff** - Postings on the APTAC Web Site and through mass mailings to company databases maintained by the individual program directors at North Central Regional Planning.

**A. Robert Brown** - Businesses can become involved and aware of our trainings and events by becoming a client. They can become a client by calling 570-524-4491 or visiting "<http://www.sedacog.org/PTAC>" and completing an online request for assistance. They will become aware of trainings and events via e-mail after they have been enrolled as a client with our program.

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