

# COSTARS Connection

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

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Spring 2022



Tom Wolf, Governor  
Curt Topper, Secretary



## The COSTARS Program Report Card

### A brief overview of COSTARS Fiscal Year 2020 Statistical Report

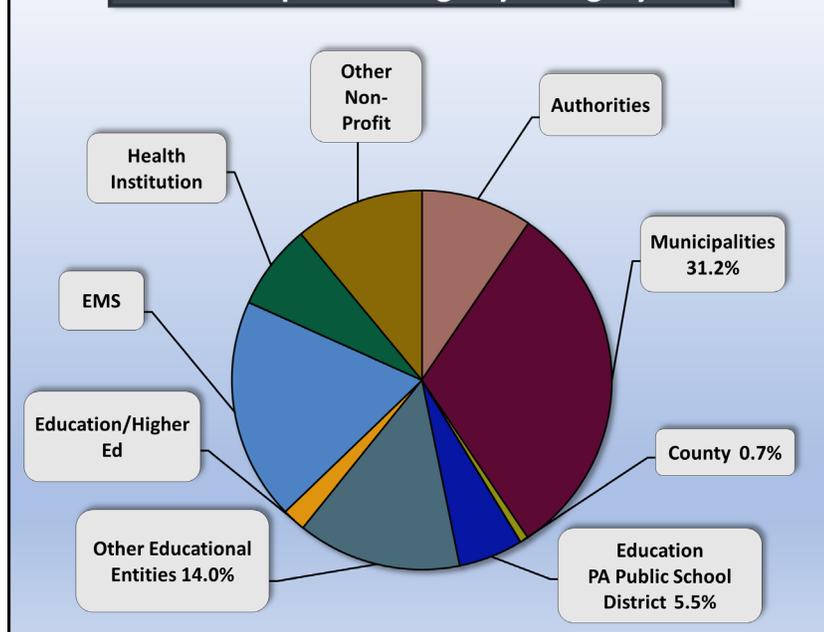
By Felicia Campbell, COSTARS Marketing Manager

The COSTARS team's mission is to provide our members with cost-savings opportunities in procurement through COSTARS-exclusive and statewide, COSTARS-participating, competitively bid contracts. Each year, we analyze reporting to gauge the program's servivability for the year and visualize how the members utilize the program, through demographics and contract performance. Through evaluation of this data, the COSTARS team gains insight into the evolving needs of our members and can make program improvements to remain aligned with their needs.

We recently completed our data assement for Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) and found that the program continues to show member growth, but as we near the total available universe of several member categories, rapid member growth is no longer in the forefront of the program's focus. Through our data discoveries, we are beginning a pivot to invest more of our efforts on educating members on the cost-benefits of comparing offerings across both COSTARS-exclusive and statewide, COSTARS-participating contracts as well as highlighting contracts that members may be less familiar with. We are also educating non-participating, statewide suppliers on the benefits of program participation to increase choice and procurement for members.

This year's assesment showed that Sullivan county had the highest percentage of COSTARS participation among different member categories in FY20 at 84 percent. Allegheny county continues to hold the highest quantity of members with 763 participating organizations!

**Membership Percentage by Category FY20**



**OVERALL SPEND:**

- Overall spend increased by 13.5 percent to \$1.3B.

**MEMBER GROWTH:**

- Joint municipalities (2.8 percent growth).
- Fire, rescue, ambulance (2.4 percent growth).
- Authorities/Commissions (2.2 percent growth).
- Crawford county had the highest growth, with 12 percent.

**HIGHEST USE OF COSTARS-EXCLUSIVE CONTRACTS BY MEMBER CATEGORY:**

- Education entites (excluding higher education) 43 percent of the total COSTARS-exclusive spend.
- Municipal Governments 19 percent of the total COSTARS-exclusive spend.

Continued on Page 4



# Are You a COSTARS Superstar?

By Jarod Ganci, COSTARS Marketing Manager

Whether you are a new member or have been purchasing from COSTARS contracts for years, these are best practices you can follow to help you become a COSTARS superstar!

First, it is extremely important to regularly update your member profile. You want to do this at any time you have changes to details for your organization, such as address, phone number, contacts, or a change in the primary contact role. This will ensure that you don't miss regular communications from the COSTARS team.

Second, COSTARS superstars are always audit ready. The stress of an audit is reduced when members are prepared with the correct information. For each COSTARS transaction, your files should include a copy of the COSTARS supplier contract, the contract overview, the purchase order submitted to the supplier and an overview of the original price and discounted price.

Third, superstar members are proficient in using the Member Quote Kit. We encourage members to receive three to four quotes when procuring supplies and services through COSTARS to ensure the best value for their spend. The Member Quote Kit helps members easily organize and compare quotes and can be used for all purchases - even when purchasing outside of the COSTARS contracts. This resource can be found by visiting [www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS](http://www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS) > Member Information - located under the Member Resources section.

Lastly, COSTARS superstars are aware the COSTARS contracts are a resource for more than just procurement. When purchasing outside of the program, utilize COSTARS contracts for price benchmarking. Because COSTARS contracts are competitively bid, using these contracts as a resource in out-of-program purchases provides members with peace of mind that quotes received are in the ballpark of cost-effective pricing. COSTARS contracts can also help members during their grant application and budgeting processes to estimate commodity costs. Detailed information such as itemized project costs and data on the impact of the project to the community can help propel the application to the "A" list!

Following COSTARS program best practices like these will allow you to be not just a COSTARS member, but also a COSTARS SUPERSTAR!

## The Importance of a Member Profile

The screenshot shows a member profile form with the following fields and callouts:

- Member ID:** 8887
- Organization Name:** Department of General Services - COSTARS
- Address:** 555 Walnut Street, 6th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17104 (Callout A)
- County:** Dauphin
- Phone:** 7177836241 (Callout B)
- Email Address:** fecampbell@pa.gov (Callout C)
- Member Category:** Other Non-profit (Callout C)
- Proof of Public Funding:** Select File (Callout C)
- Information to Share with COSTARS Suppliers:** Address, Phone Number, Fax Number, Email Address (Callout D)
- Contacts (At least one):** (Callout E)
- House District:** h103
- House Rep. Name:** Rep. Patty Kim (D)
- Senate District:** s015
- Senator Name:** Sen. John DiSanto (R)

Job Title*	First Name*	Last Name*	Phone-Extn*	Fax	Email Address	Primary Contact	Associated?	Delete
Marketing Manag	Felicia	Campbell	7171111111		fecampbell@pa.gov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	

A COSTARS member's profile has significant importance to the program and is the only resource for our team to connect with the members to convey important deadlines and program updates that can affect your procurement process. If you have missed announcements on deadlines around our Sodium Chloride program or other important COSTARS emails, it is likely your member profile includes outdated information about your organization or authorized contacts within your organization. **It is a member's responsibility to regularly update their organization's profile to ensure the information is current. Consider a member profile "yearly check-up."**

Area "A" in the graphic pertains to the organization. The address in this section should reflect the street address for your organization not a P.O. Box. This address affects an area that auto-populates with your legislative information which helps the COSTARS team in our analysis of the program's performance.

The best practice in populating the email address in area "B" is to use an email address that directs to someone in your organization that understands COSTARS and not just the importance of the communication being received from us - but also who that information may affect in their organization.

When registering as the *non-profit member category* in area "C," organizations will need to upload proof of public funding on a yearly basis. One of the eligibility requirements for a non-profit organization is that they must receive local, state, or federal public funding for the procurement of products and services.

In area "D" you can define the methods on how you want to be contacted by COSTARS-authorized suppliers. If you opt out of all communications from suppliers, you may miss out on special COSTARS offers, so we recommend allowing for email communications at least.

Area "E" is where you indicate the individuals from your organization that are associated with your member profile. In here, you will define who your primary contact is (area "F") and you can have several contacts *associated* with your membership (area "G").



# The Importance of a Member Profile (cont.)

## Need to make changes to your organization's member profile?

Visit [www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS](http://www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS) > Member Information > Members Area > COSTARS Registration/Login and enter your username and password.



- Type your member ID in the drop-down field.
- Select the correct organization from the pop-up box that appears.
- Select the **"Update Member Details"** button to make changes to your organization's profile.

To choose a new primary contact in your member profile:

1. Uncheck the previous primary contact.
2. Select the primary contact box for the appropriate new primary contact.
3. Save the record.
4. Once you have saved the record, a trash can icon will appear to the right side of the old primary contact.
5. If they are no longer with your organization, select the trash can icon.
6. Save the record once more to complete this change.

## Is your contact listed as "not associated" with your member profile?

Visit [www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS](http://www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS) > Member Information > Members Area > COSTARS Registration/Login and enter your username and password.



- Type in your member ID in step #1 field.
- Select the correct organization that appears in the pop-up box.
- Check the checkbox under step #3 to certify that you are authorized to represent your organization.
- Select the **"Submit Association Request"** button.

You will then find your organization in the pop-up box under the Existing COSTARS Membership section at the top of the page and can update your membership details.

*Members involved in more than one member organization are able to associate their credentials with multiple organization profiles.*



**COSTARS MEMBERSHIP**

**Existing COSTARS Membership**

You are currently associated with the member organizations listed in the dropdown below. Select your organization and click the appropriate button below to proceed. If the organization you represent is not listed, proceed to **Membership Association Request** below.

--Select--

Update Membership Details Complete Salt Participation

**Membership Association Request**

If you know that the organization you represent is already an approved COSTARS Member and you need to associate with the member (to update membership details or complete salt participation), follow the steps below:

1. Enter organization name (partially or fully) or Member ID - it should display the matching list  
Enter Organization Name or Member ID
2. Select organization from list (must be selected from list in order to complete the request)
3. Check the box below to self-certify that you are authorized to represent the organization  
 By checking this box I understand that I am self certifying my authorization to represent this organization.
4. Submit request by clicking the Submit Association Request button below

Submit Association Request

If your organization is not a COSTARS Member, proceed to **New COSTARS Membership** below.

**New COSTARS Membership**

Click button below to submit new COSTARS membership application.

If your organization already has a COSTARS Member ID, **DO NOT** submit a duplicate membership request.

New COSTARS Membership

## Need to add new contacts to your member profile?

New users must first register at the Keystone Login page to create a username and password. To register yourself at the Keystone Login page visit <https://keystonelogin.pa.gov/Account/Register>. Keystone Login is a single, secure user credential that is used to log in to multiple online services from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Because this is a single user credential, we recommend each contact within a member profile holds individual credentials.

Once an individual has registered for a Keystone account, they will need to associate those Keystone credentials with their organization's COSTARS account. Follow  instructions to complete the association process. Our COSTARS Training Center at [www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS](http://www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS) > COSTARS Process-Online Trainings offers step-by-step tutorials on how to [Update a COSTARS Member Profile](#) and the [COSTARS Member Association Request](#) process as well as many other educational resources.

# GreenGov Council News

The GreenGov Council is leading by example!

Based on the Pennsylvania GreenGov Council annual report, commonwealth agencies have reduced energy usage by 12.3 percent totaling savings of over \$8 million.

In 2019, Governor Wolf signed an executive order to establish the commonwealth's first climate goals to combat the rising dangers of climate change. He set a goal to reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 26 percent by 2025.

Due to the hard work and initiatives set forth by all commonwealth agencies, they are well on their way to achieving that goal.

Has your organization set goals to reduce energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions? Follow in the footsteps of the GreenGov Council and visit [www.dgs.pa.gov/greengov](http://www.dgs.pa.gov/greengov) to learn more information on how to reduce your organization's impact on the environment, as well as explore other GreenGov initiatives.

## We Hear You

By Jarod Ganci, COSTARS Marketing Manager

Providing phenomenal customer service has always been a key goal for the COSTARS team.

To exemplify the importance of customer feedback, we decided it was time to create a section in the COSTARS Connection newsletter where we share member and supplier feedback. If one program participant has a question or feedback to share, there is a good chance that many others experience similar situations. It doesn't make sense for us to provide direction to one program participant when the answer could benefit many.

We'll start this new series with a recap of feedback received from the recent 2022 COSTARS Contract Needs/Program Assessment survey sent to members. We wanted to get a better idea of pitfalls members experience when using COSTARS for procurement. Respondents identified two challenges with the website. They expressed that it was confusing to search/find contracts, and the website wasn't perceived as user-friendly.

Rest assured, the COSTARS team is currently brainstorming ideas on how we can improve in these areas, and we will continue to provide updates on our progress in upcoming newsletters.

At any time, do not hesitate to share feedback on how we can make procurement through COSTARS more efficient at [GS-PACostars@pa.gov](mailto:GS-PACostars@pa.gov). The COSTARS team takes the feedback of our program participants seriously. We *do* hear you!

## The COSTARS Program Report Card (cont.)

### CONTRACTS:

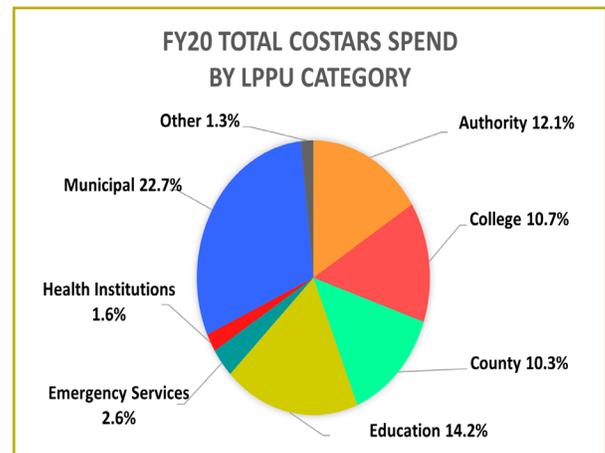
- Among COSTARS-exclusive contracts, the two contracts with the **highest increase in sales** were COSTARS-7 Foods at 95 percent and COSTARS-41 Stormwater Management Products and Services at 192 percent.
- Among statewide, COSTARS-participating contracts, those with the **largest reported sales percentage increases** were:
  1. Security, Surveillance, and Fire Systems ITQ.
  2. Commercial Grade Food Service Equipment.
  3. Unified Communications & Voice Services.
- Statewide COSTARS-participating contracts, with the **greatest amount of sales to COSTARS members** were:
  1. Construction/Heavy Duty Type Power Equipment.
  2. Wired Communication Services (Voice & Data).
  3. ITQ for Maintenance, Repair and Testing for Surveillance, Security and Fire Systems Services.

### SUPPLIERS:

- The number of suppliers on COSTARS-exclusive contracts increased by 16 percent to 1,923.
- The number of suppliers on statewide, COSTARS-participating contracts increased by 6 percent to 401.

### SMALL AND SMALL DIVERSE BUSINESSES:

- Small businesses comprised 39 percent of COSTARS-exclusive vendors.
- An additional 5 percent were small diverse businesses.
- Small and small diverse businesses accounted for 20 percent of the total COSTARS-exclusive contract sales.



# COSTARS in the News



## February

**The Citizen's Voice and Sunday Voice** - The City of Wilkes-Barre's new ice skating rink on Public Square will officially open at noon Saturday, Mayor George Brown announced Thursday. Brown's administration chose Sport Resource Group, a vendor in the state's COSTARS cooperative purchasing program, to provide the standalone rink system. The mayor has said the 23-foot by 73-foot rink's synthetic ice surface will be easy to maintain and is portable. He hopes the rink will attract more visitors downtown and provide a venue for creating fun family memories for area residents.

**Daily Courier** - State Sen. Pat Stefano (R-32) conducted first-responders funding workshops in Perryopolis and Somerset counties. Stefano, Senate Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee chairman, recapped measures the General Assembly has taken to assist fire and emergency medical services. Randy Padfield, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency director, and Thomas Cook, acting state fire commissioner, provided an overview of funding opportunities under their agencies. Felicia Campbell, Department of General Services marketing manager, discussed the state COSTARS cooperative purchasing system, and Joe Marsicano and Chris Yniguez, Senate grants specialists, offered guidance about applying for grants.

**Standard Speaker** - Carbon County commissioners approved an agreement with Trane U.S. Inc. of Wilkes-Barre for scheduled service on the heating, air conditioning and ventilation units at the county prison under a COSTARS contract.

**The Journal** - The City Council of Corry approved the purchase of two new 2022 Ford Interceptor SUV police cruisers. The cruisers will be purchased from Laurel Ford of Windber under the COSTARS program. COSTARS is the commonwealth of Pennsylvania's cooperative purchasing program for cities, towns, and municipalities.

**The Times Leader** - The Wilkes-Barre Area School Board approved the purchase of two 2022 Chevrolet Silverado 2500 regular cab pick up trucks, including an eight foot Boss steel plow and a mini LED amber light bar; a 2022 Chevrolet Silverado 4500 dump truck with a 10 foot Boss steel plow, under-tailgate spreader, two amber LED lights in the grill and a mini LED lightbar on the cab shield. All three vehicles are being bought through COSTARS, a state cooperative purchasing program. They also approved a contract with United Heating and Air Conditioning of Pittston Township to replace the hot water heaters at the Solomon/Plains Educational Complex, also through COSTARS.

**The Times Herald** - More than \$12.3 million in contracts were recently authorized by the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners. Among the authorizations was a contract with Glick Fire Equipment Company, of Bird in Hand, Pennsylvania, allocating resources for a "field communications vehicle." The vehicle would "provide on-site communications and command support for large and small scale incidents". Public safety officials suggested the use of a contract from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's cooperative purchasing program to purchase the vehicle from the Lancaster County company, according to the contract. An agreement with Emergency Vehicles Inc., of Lake Park, Florida, secured a hazmat response vehicle through a state COSTARS contract in order to respond to incidents involving hazardous materials.

## March

**The Tribune-Democrat** - The Greater Johnstown School Board approved a series of motions to purchase new scoreboards in the district. "We have to replace what hasn't been replaced for 20 years because it supports a big part of our school district culture, which is athletics," Superintendent Amy Arcurio said. The district approved the purchase, with the use of the COSTARS contract program, of a scoreboard for Trojan Stadium; Doc Stofko Gymnasium; the Trojan Softball Field; and a new marquee at the high school. All of these will be supplied by Daktronics Inc. and will be paid for out of the general fund.

**The Reporter** - Last fall, Lansdale's borough council's budget talks for 2022 included discussion on how to use roughly \$1.78 million in funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and various federal COVID stimulus bills. In February, each borough department began reporting on possible projects that could tackle local infrastructure needs, while meeting the federal requirements for use of those funds. Each department gave an update on their proposed projects during their March 2 committee meetings, including an update on two big-ticket items for the borough's electric department. In the February list, that department requested funds for use on four projects: a roof repair, an overhead garage door replacement, relay upgrades and lot repairs and replacements. Electric Committee Chairman Andrew Carroll reported this week that the estimated dollars may go farther than initially expected, due to lower-than-expected prices for two of the projects found by Electric Superintendent Andy Krauss via the state's COSTARS program. "We decided to look at alternative bidding methods, so Andy put it out on COSTARS, and received several bids back," Carroll said, well below the estimate by the borough's engineer last year. "So, a substantial savings against the initial estimates, let alone against the other COSTARS bidders," he said.

# PA Supplier Portal Help Desk

A frequently asked question received by the COSTARS team, by suppliers participating in the COSTARS program, is how to regain access to the [PA Supplier Portal](#). The PA Supplier Portal is a secure website providing **authorized account administrative users** access to self-manage their account data and is the **only** method to maintain supplier information. **The Office of the Budget will not make changes to supplier data via any other process due to security concerns.** Within this portal, suppliers can access the COSTARS Supplier Gateway where they pay annual administrative fees to continue participation in the program as well as upload quarterly COSTARS sales data.

Though the PA Supplier Portal is the access point for the COSTARS Supplier Gateway, this system is managed by the Office of the Budget. Because it houses sensitive financial information for suppliers, only they can help regain access for the users. The Office of the Budget provides support for the PA Supplier Portal through a help desk email address to ensure all requests are being handled in the order they are received.

If you experience PA Supplier Portal log in issues in the future, visit <https://www.budget.pa.gov/Services/ForVendors/Pages/PASP-Admin-Support.aspx>. On the right-hand side of the page, there is a grey box listing the email address to send your request to as well as a list of items you need to include in the email, so the help desk has all the information needed to provide a resolution.

This webpage also provides a "How To" section with numerous step-by-step tutorials on how to address other changes suppliers may want to make within the portal as well as troubleshoot additional issues they may experience.

**ATTENTION: Use Microsoft Edge or Chrome for accessing the PA Supplier Portal.**

*Do not use Mozilla Firefox or Safari Browsers.  
Do not use cell phones or tablets to access the portal.*

## PA SUPPLIER PORTAL HELP DESK QUICK FACTS

**PA Supplier Help Desk Email Address:**  
[ra-pscsrportal@pa.gov](mailto:ra-pscsrportal@pa.gov)

**All emails sent to the PA Supplier Portal help desk by an organization's representative must include:**

1. Tax ID number.
2. Vendor number.
3. Description of the problem and/or screen shots documenting the error or issue.
4. Chief Operating Officer's (individual who handles overall operations): name, title, email address, phone number.
5. Chief Financial Officer's (individual who handles accounting operations): name, title, email address, phone number.

## The Procurement Toolbox



**Have you improvised during a project because you don't have the right tools?**

**You may be successful, but are you efficient?**

COSTARS and Procurated have partnered to provide local public procurement units the tools needed for efficient and informed procurement. These tools, paired together, equip procurement professionals with cost-effective contracts and feedback on past supplier performance.

COSTARS members can benefit from ratings and reviews created by peers on previous experiences with suppliers and provide feedback for the benefit of all in the government and public sector procurement community.



**PROCURATED**

**TOOLS FOR EFFICIENT PROCUREMENT**

<https://www.procurated.com/>

## COSTARS in the News (cont.)

**The Times Leader** - The Wilkes-Barre City Council approved the purchase of 70 self-contained breathing apparatus face pieces, fit testing for masks and eleven self-contained breathing apparatus tanks from Witmer Public Safety Group of Coatesville for the Wilkes-Barre City Fire Department through the state cooperative purchasing program, COSTARS.

### April

**Times Leader** - The Wilkes-Barre City Council approved the purchase of a vehicle for the police department to use for undercover work. The vehicle will be purchased with asset forfeiture funds through the Pennsylvania cooperative purchasing program, COSTARS.

**Times Herald** - Montgomery County recently obtained seven 2022 Ford Explorers for the county's Adult and Juvenile probation offices through Whitmoyer Ford of Mount Joy through their PA COSTARS contract.

**The Meadville Tribune** - The Meadville Area Water Authority voted to approve a tank-relining project with Liquid Engineering Corporation of Billings, Montana. The contract was arranged through COSTARS, the state's cooperative purchasing program. The new lining, which consists of a spray-on epoxy, is expected to extend the life of the tower, maintain water quality and help prevent accumulation of debris inside the tank.

# 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.

## Upcoming Events

May 22-23: PSAB Annual Conference & Expo

June 7: COSTARS Webinar: A Guide to COSTARS Marketing

May 25: Equipment Show & Training Day Moshannon Valley COG

June 8: PTAC (North Central & Northwest) Supplier Event

June 2: PTAC (Southwest) COSTARS Supplier Marketing Tips

June 13: PAHRA Spring Conference & Expo

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 COSTARS Marketing at toll free telephone number 1-866-768-7827 or email to [GS-PaCostars@pa.gov](mailto:GS-PaCostars@pa.gov). The COSTARS Marketing Team's Calendar of Events is also available on the COSTARS website on the COSTARS Program Resources page.



Visit our Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/PAGenServices/>



Visit our Twitter page at: <https://twitter.com/PAGenServices/>



Visit our LinkedIn page at: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/pagenservices/>

## COSTARS Connection

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

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