

COSTARS™ CONNECTION



The Commonwealth's Cooperative Purchasing Program

The Importance of Small and Small Diverse Business Certification

Jarod Ganci, COSTARS Marketing Manager

Small businesses are the backbone of the economy in Pennsylvania, and they play a crucial role in creating jobs, boosting economic growth, and fostering innovation. However, they often face a host of challenges, from limited resources to fierce competition. To position a small business for success, business owners should consider gaining small business certification with the Bureau of Diversity, Inclusion and Small Business Opportunities (BDISBO) with the Department of General Services (DGS).

There are benefits to acquiring small business certification with DGS. One powerhouse benefit is the significant reduction in administrative fees for participation in [COSTARS](#), the Commonwealth's cooperative purchasing program. COSTARS allows eligible businesses to supply goods and services to municipalities, school districts, healthcare non-profit organizations, authorities, fire/rescue/ambulance companies, and other tax exempt, non-profit entities that receive public funding for the procurement of supplies and services. By participating in this program, small businesses can gain access to a vast customer base and increase revenue potential. The administrative fees to participate in the COSTARS program can be cost prohibitive for many small businesses. However, Small Business (SB) and Small Diverse Business (SDB) certification through DGS can substantially reduce these fees for eligible businesses making it easier and cost-effective to participate in the program.

Many organizations, including state and local government, focus on supporting small businesses when selecting potential suppliers, and many have goal-setting figures around certain business classifications. By becoming certified, businesses may increase their potential to be selected as a supplier for government contracts, which can be a significant source of revenue for small businesses.

Certification can also help businesses stand out in a crowded marketplace, by differentiating SB/SDB or Veteran Business Enterprise (VBE) from their competitors. This is especially true in industries where there are many established players, and it can be challenging for new businesses to gain a foothold.

Finally, certification through DGS can provide access to a wealth of resources and support. The Department of General Services offers a range of services and resources to help SB/SDB/VBE companies succeed, including training and education programs, networking opportunities, and marketing support. By taking advantage of these resources, small businesses can increase their knowledge, expand their networks, and grow their businesses more effectively.

Self-certification as a Small Business:

1. Register for a Commonwealth Vendor Number at the [PA Supplier Portal \(www.pasupplierportal.state.pa.us\)](http://www.pasupplierportal.state.pa.us).
2. Visit the Bureau of Diversity, Inclusion and Small Business Opportunities (BDISBO) [PRISM Portal](https://bdisbo.primcompliance.com/) at <https://bdisbo.primcompliance.com/> and create a username and password.
3. Log in.
4. Click **Start Application** twice.
5. Enter your Tax ID.
6. Enter your Commonwealth Vendor Number.
7. Select **Find Me**.
8. Select the business classification you wish to certify under (Small Business, Small Diverse Business or Veteran Business Enterprise.)

For help attaining your Small Business certification, use BDISBO's [Application Guide](#) that walks users through the process.

Eligibility Requirements for Small Business self-certification:

- Business must be for-profit in the U.S.
- Business must be independently owned.
- Company must not be dominant in its field of operation.
- May not employ more than 100 full-time equivalent employees.
- May not exceed a three-year average gross revenue of \$38.5 million regardless of business type.
- Must upload the first page of the company's three most recent federal tax returns.

For SDB/VBE verification, you will need an approved certification from a third-party such as:

- Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC).
- National Minority Supplier Diversity Council (NMSDC).
- Unified Certification Program (UCP).
- U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Business Development Program.
- National LGBT Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC).
- VetCert (VetBiz).
- Disability:IN.

2023 Liquid Fuels Funds Allocation

According to the **Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's** (PennDOT) website, <https://www.penndot.pa.gov>, PennDOT has committed \$470.2 million in liquid fuels funds to help municipalities maintain their roads and bridges. The 2023 liquid fuels funds allocation is approximately 3 percent higher than what was committed in 2023. Municipalities may view the **allocation list** by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/PennDOTLFPAllocation>.

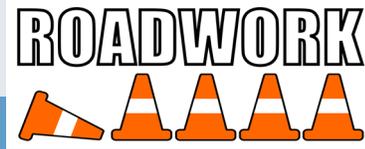
Allocation to certified municipalities is determined by population and miles of locally owned roads. Eligibility requirements for liquid fuels state:

- A road must have a minimum of 33-foot right-of-way in a township and 16 feet in a borough.
- The drivable surface must be a minimum width of 16 feet and the road must be a minimum of 250 feet in length.
- If the road is a dead-end, it must have a cul-de-sac (turnaround) with a minimum 40-foot radius.
- A road must be maintained in such a condition that can be driven safely at 15 mph.

View the **Policies & Procedures for the Administration of the Liquid Fuels Tax Act 655 - PUB 9** document at <https://tinyurl.com/LiqFuelsPPub9> to see a list of acceptable expenditures within the use of these funds.

Liquid Fuels funds can also be used to acquire acceptable goods from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's surplus program. To learn how to purchase from the federal and state surplus programs, visit <https://tinyurl.com/SurplusOpportunities> and read the article on pages 2 and 6 of the **Summer 2022 COSTARS Connection** newsletter about these programs. This article can be viewed by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/COSTARSSummer2022>.

To qualify for future liquid fuels funds, municipalities must submit annual reports MS 956 Annual Use Report, MS 965P Project and Miscellaneous Receipts and MS965S Record of Checks through the dotGrants system. Municipalities must also comply with the Liquid Fuels Tax Act 655, Section 2.6. View the **dotGrants Annual Liquid Fuels Report Reference Manual** at <https://tinyurl.com/dotGrantsRefManual> for information on how to access and utilize the dotGrants system.



COSTARS members have access to numerous competitively priced contracts through the COSTARS program where they can purchase, with liquid fuels funds, the acceptable materials and services needed to complete roadway and bridge upgrades, maintenance, and repairs.

| | |
|------------|--|
| 4400022316 | Bridge and Highway Maintenance Materials |
| 6100048512 | Bituminous Stockpile Patching Material (Cold Mix) |
| 6100047339 | Liquid Bituminous Materials |
| CN00038692 | Aggregate & Anti-Skid ITQ |
| 4400023757 | Asphalt Materials ITQ |
| 4400019935 | Construction/Heavy Duty Type Power Equipment |
| 4400018848 | Road Surface Patching Equipment - PennDOT Spec'd |
| 4400023368 | Snow Plows P-DOT Spec'd |
| 3830-01 | Plow Maintenance & Repair Parts |
| 4400025715 | Tires, Auto, Truck, OTR & Farm |
| COSTARS-18 | LED Traffic Signal Modules and/or Housings |
| COSTARS-24 | Traffic Signs |
| COSTARS-25 | Municipal Work Vehicles |
| COSTARS-26 | Passenger Vehicles |
| COSTARS-33 | Street Lighting, Parking Meters and Street Furniture (AKA Streetscape) |
| COSTARS-38 | Heavy Equipment Rental |
| COSTARS-41 | Stormwater Management Products and Services |

We Want to Hear From You: Member Category "Other Non-Profit"

Members registered under the "other non-profit" COSTARS member category should be aware of an important deadline. Per the requirements of membership, organizations registered under this category must provide proof of public funding, each year, if classified as "other non-profit" to continue membership in the program.

We understand that providing proof of public funding may seem like an extra step, but it's necessary to ensure that the COSTARS program is being utilized by eligible organizations.

Continued on page 7.



Meet the New Members of DGS and BOP



Reggie McNeil

*Acting Secretary of
The Department of General Services*

Reggie McNeil is a proven leader with over 27 years of service to our nation and public schools. Most recently, he was the Chief Operating Officer of the School District of Philadelphia. McNeil has spent his career advocating for inclusiveness and greater transparency in government operations.

McNeil's long history of servant leadership began as a naval officer in the United States Navy Civil Engineer Corps. There he gained executive-level experience in facilities management that spanned procurement of goods and services, capital improvements, design management, maintenance production control, real estate, and staff development through training and coaching. He served as the top executive assistant to the Navy Systems Command, NAVFAC, responsible for the Navy's worldwide infrastructure and engineering services at the Navy Facilities Engineering Command.

After a 22-year career in the Navy, McNeil transitioned into public education serving as Executive Director of Capital Programs in the Charleston County School District in Charleston, South Carolina. He then served as the Chief Operating Officer of the School District of Philadelphia, the largest urban school district in Pennsylvania and the eighth-largest school district in the nation. Highlights of McNeil's career in public education include the development of a comprehensive district-wide school facility improvement plan, reducing backlog maintenance work orders by over 20 percent in less than one year, and improvements to customer service and processes.

McNeil earned a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Memphis, a Master of Science in Construction Engineering Management from the University of Florida, and a Technical Project Management Certificate from The Citadel. He is currently enrolled in Yale University's School of Management, pursuing a Public Education Leadership Certificate.

The Bureau of Procurement (BOP) in the Department of General Services (DGS) has recently welcomed three new members who will have a beneficial impact on participants of the COSTARS program.

Let us introduce...



Brian Esposito

*Chief Procurement
Officer*

Brian Esposito brings over 12 years of procurement experience to the Commonwealth.

Prior to his current position, he worked in various procurement roles for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority based out of New York City. During his tenure there, he was responsible for managing various contracts for goods and services, across various agencies, as well as negotiating costs and terms for materials, labor and services. Additionally, he is able to bring a unique perspective to procurement, and knowledge from "both sides of the table," since he has five years' worth of experience in sales, which allowed him to hone his skills in negotiating and public speaking. He has always operated with a cost-conscious mindset keeping the best interest of customers in mind and looks forward to providing the same level of dedication and detail to the Commonwealth.

Brian has earned a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Corporate Communications from the College of Staten Island, which is part of the City University of New York, and currently resides in Manalapan, New Jersey with his wife and three daughters. On the weekends he is either spending time outside with his family, barbecuing, or watching old "Simpsons" episodes.



Stephanie Sun

COSTARS Marketing Manager

her own means. She has worked for three Fortune 100 international corporations in three countries, China, South Korea, and the U.S., performing marketing and corporate philanthropy. She is passionate about utilizing her experience of living, working, and studying in various countries, communicating in four languages, and providing a unique perspective, to better serve diverse communities throughout Pennsylvania.

Stephanie earned a master's degree in Journalism and Media Management in China. She studied for her Ph.D. in International Relations in South Korea. After working for global companies, non-profit, and government at the county (Southeast PA) and state levels, she joins BOP continuing her commitment to promoting economic opportunities and development equity for diverse Pennsylvanians. You can contact her at ssun@pa.gov or 717-346-3838 with any questions or visit the COSTARS website at www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS.

COSTARS is pleased to introduce our newest member of the team, Stephanie Sun, COSTARS Marketing Manager. Stephanie is a proud immigrant moving to the United States (U.S.), as an adult, to build a new life on a new continent - on her own and by

Water Recreation Prep

Felicia Campbell, COSTARS Marketing Manager

Maintaining a pool is a never-ending task. When the chemicals become imbalanced, a pool-keeper suddenly has a science project on their hands! As a personal pool owner, I have faced some challenges for the past two years after having my concrete pool resurfaced. High pH levels caused algae buildup and in turn caused plenty of hours spent on the internet to find the solution to my dilemma. Now that we are in the spring season, it is time to focus on pool chemistry and upkeep so as temperatures rise, we are ready to splish-splash safely.

In my many hours doing pool research, I stumbled across a plethora helpful resources for those responsible for maintaining public pools, hot tubs, hydrotherapy tanks, and splash pads. Public water recreation can cause skin and respiratory illness spread, but the Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that one of the leading causes of recreational water illnesses (RWIs) is a microscopic parasite, *Cryptosporidium*. The parasite has an outer shell which makes it very tolerant to chlorine, allowing it to survive for days in a pool with optimum chemistry.

The [CDC's Healthy Swimming](#) website recommends steps to avoid the spread of RWIs in public pools:

- Gain operator and chemical handling training.
- Schedule fully trained operation staff during high demand times like weekends.
- Free chlorine levels should always be between 1–3 parts per million.
- pH levels should be between 7.2–7.8.
- Test pH and disinfectant levels at least twice per day (hourly when in heavy use).
- Keep accurate records of disinfectant/pH measurements and maintenance activities.
- Ensure filtration and recirculation systems are maintained according to manufacturer recommendations.
- Restrooms, showers, and diaper changing areas are to be cleaned and verified as safe environments.
- Limit the number of swimmers allowed in the pool at one time.
- Scrub pool surfaces to remove any slime layer.
- Weekly or monthly, pools should have a portion of water drained and replaced, depending on usage and water quality.
- Use a biocidal shock treatment on a daily to weekly basis, depending on water quality and frequency of water replacement.
- Establish a preventative maintenance program to ensure equipment or parts remain in good working condition.
- Provide disinfection guidelines for fecal accidents and body fluid spills.
- Develop employee policies and communication chain dealing with staff members who are ill with RWIs (i.e. diarrhea).
- Create large group orientations, such as for young children, and bathroom break policies to promote healthy swimming.
- Educate pool users and parents about RWIs and appropriate pool use (i.e., no swimming when ill with diarrhea).

The CDC offers similar recommendations for the operation and management of public hot tubs, splash pads and hydrotherapy tanks by aquatics professionals at their **Healthy Swimming Operation and Management** page via <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/aquatics-professionals/operation-maintenance.html>.

The [Pennsylvania Department of Health's](#) (DOH) website provides fantastic resources and links to aid in your water safety measures. These resources can be found by visiting the **Bathing Places Resources** page on the DOH's website at <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/Bathing%20Places/Pages/Resources.aspx>. As mentioned before, the CDC recommends public aquatic professionals to maintain records of chemical and maintenance activities. The Department of Health provides documents like a Daily Log Sheet, Monthly Records and even a CDC Water Contamination Response Log on this webpage.

COSTARS members have access to competitively priced contracts through the COSTRARS Program. Some contracts that may help to extend the value of your budget dollars in pool maintenance include:

COSTARS-14 Recreational & Fitness Equipment and Services
(Water Equipment Category - pump/filtration systems.)
(Stand Alone Services - maintenance and repair of pool surfaces,
pool building facilities and pump/filtration systems.)

COSTARS-15 Water & Wastewater Treatment Consumables
(Chemicals and filters.)

4400018828 Water Treatment Services ITQ
(Services to repair or replace water treatment system equipment.)



Statewide Contract Highlight - Equipment Maintenance Program

In efforts to reduce costs, increase accountability, increase management control and improve coverage, the Department of General Services (DGS), participates in the State of New York's contract for their **Equipment Maintenance Program**, contract **4400024336**, viewable on **eMarketplace** (<https://tinyurl.com/eMarketplaceSearch>.) This contract is COSTARS-participating, so COSTARS members seeking a supplier to maintain valuable equipment should explore this contract, currently held by The REMI Group.

This Equipment Maintenance Program is utilized by many of the Commonwealth's agencies and commissions. In 2022, the Commonwealth realized a savings of over \$452,000 from use of the contract! Twenty-seven COSTARS members participated in this program in 2022, with nine of them being new participants, and experienced an overall savings of more than \$176,000 last year!

Per contract terms, by entering into a maintenance service agreement using this contract, state agencies and COSTARS member organizations will be provided a quote with, at a minimum, a 27 percent discount unless being quoted based on a prior Equipment Maintenance Program Contract. If a maintenance contract is unavailable, then the prevailing market cost of comparable vendor maintenance coverage with the same level of service will be used to establish a quote.

By utilizing this contract, users can be confident that the contractor is following strict guidelines to ensure that equipment serviced maintains the same standards of the product originally purchased. The contract terms state that the contractor must apply all Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) mandatory engineering changes to all covered equipment at no extra cost and must restore all contract covered equipment to original functionality, as defined by the OEM.

Below is a condensed list of applicable equipment covered under this maintenance program:

To view the complete applicable equipment list, visit [eMarketplace](#) and search by contract 4400024336.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Dental Amalgamators Curing Lights Oral Cameras Pressure Irrigation Systems Root Apex Locators</p> | <p>Financial & POS Barcode Scanners Cash Registers Check Scanners Currency Scanners Currency Sorters</p> |
| <p>Eye Care Autorefractors Corneal Topographers Cryosurgical Units Lasers Retinal Cameras</p> | <p>Food Service Equipment & Vending Machines Ovens Sealers Slicers Refrigeration</p> |
| <p>Research & Laboratory Analyzers Centrifuges Chromatography DNA Sequencing Particle Counters</p> | <p>Law Enforcement Breathalyzers Defibrillators Fingerprint Systems In-Car Video Systems Laptops</p> |
| <p>Surgery Ablation Systems Electrosurgical Units Microscopes Surgical/Exam Lights Ultrasounds</p> | <p>General Office Archive Writers Automated Filing Systems Mail Inserters Mail Sorters Shredders</p> |
| <p>Medical & Imaging Arrhythmia Computers Cardiac Output Computers CT Scanners Mammography Units Portable X-Ray Machines</p> | <p>Uninterruptible Power Supply Equipment*</p> |
| | <p>IT Services & Generator Maintenance (additional terms apply)</p> |

The method to book service under the Equipment Maintenance Program is to contact The REMI Group's Dispatch Center at 866-296-4847 or by emailing dispatch@theremigroup.com.

If you have questions specific to The REMI Group, contact their Account Manager, Amy Powell, at 704-517-1108 or amy.powell@theremigroup.com.

The following equipment categories are excluded from this maintenance program:

- Communications Equipment.
- Digital Production Equipment.
- Information Technology (*Archiving Appliances, Back-up Systems, Data Management Systems, Laptops, Mainframes, Network Devices, Network Storage, PCs & Peripherals, Servers, Printers.*)
- Security/Surveillance Equipment.
- Equipment Outside of Agencies' (or Members') Control and Responsibilities: *Many facilities occupied by Commonwealth agencies (or COSTARS member organizations) are managed by private lessors on a full-service basis. Some equipment in these facilities may be outside of the control and responsibility of Commonwealth agencies (or members.)*
- Other Equipment: (*Agricultural [grounds-keeping type power equipment], Construction [heavy duty type equipment machinery], Electrical Goods, Elevators, Engines, Escalators, HVAC, Lift Equipment, Light Duty Electrical Equipment, Machinery, Manufacturing Equipment, Motorized Equipment, Tanks, Turbines, Vehicles, Water Storage Vessels.*)

* Batteries for an Uninterrupted Power Supply [UPS] should be purchased from the IT Peripheral contracts.

February

The Tribune-Democrat - The Richland High School board approved the purchase of LED lighting at the high school and field house, saving the district tens of thousands of dollars a year. This will be made through Scott Electric, which represents a state piggyback contract through COSTARS, Pennsylvania's cooperative purchasing program.

The Times Leader - Wyoming Valley West School Board approved the purchase of whole-body scanners that work more quickly than metal detectors. The purchase is from AES and is being done through the state COSTARS system, a cooperative purchasing program that lets school districts make purchases at prices already negotiated by the state.

The Standard-Speaker - Black Creek Township Supervisors ratified the advertisement for quotes or bids for a 2022 or 2023 Chevrolet Silverado 2500HD, regular cab, 6-speed automatic, 4WD with plow mount, and opened a bid from Bonner Chevrolet under the state COSTARS contract. The township had no bid from a local dealer, and once realizing that Bonner participates in COSTARS under a state contract, they awarded Bonner a contract to purchase the truck.

The Times Leader - The Pittston Area School Board approved contracts, with Computer Visionaries through COSTARS, to replace the fire alarm systems at the high school and at Martin F. Quinn Primary center.

COSTARS, a cooperative purchasing arrangement, lets districts piggy-back onto contracts and purchase arrangements already made by the state.

March

The Express-Times, Web Edition Articles - The Northampton County Executive said that six pickleball courts are planned at the county's Louise W. Moore Park and will be completed by Keystone Sports Construction of Phoenixville through a COSTARS cooperative-purchasing contract.

The Times-Tribune - Scranton rolled out its first fleet of electric vehicles: 10 Chevrolet Bolts for the Code Enforcement Office. Scranton's new vehicles and 10 charging stations were secured through the state's COSTARS cooperative purchasing program.

The Latrobe Bulletin - The Ligonier Township Municipal Authority approved the purchase of 5,000 feet of 8-inch pipe through COSTARS.

The Daily Item - The Line Mountain School Board approved the purchase of 24 wireless microphones and accessories through Eslinger Lighting Inc, of Enola, under COSTARS contracts.



AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH

From the Office of the Budget - PA Supplier Portal

Step-by-step instructions and additional information can be located at www.budget.pa.gov > SERVICES > FOR VENDORS > PA Supplier Portal Admin Support.

Send questions to RA-PSCSRMPORTAL@pa.gov.
For quickest service, provide:

- 1) Tax ID.
- 2) Vendor Number.
- 3) User ID--if you are the administrative user.

COSTARS questions, such as paying the administrative fee or sales reporting, should be sent to RA-PACOSTARS@pa.gov.

The PA Supplier Portal is a vendor self-managed site maintained by registered, vendor administrative users. It is the administrative users' responsibility to maintain organizational information, including:

- 1) Creating additional users--bidders or administrative users.
- 2) Inputting a bank account for direct deposit payments.
- 3) Maintaining addresses--default remit-to address, ordering addresses, and shipping addresses.

All users accessing the PA Supplier Portal must have their own unique User ID. Log in information should never be shared. All email addresses should be personally identifiable, business-specific, and only accessible by the individual user.



If a User ID is already taken, the system will provide the error message: "User ID is not available." Simply select a different User ID and resubmit.

We Want to Hear From You (cont.)

The types of public funding that qualify include grants, subsidies, and other forms of financial assistance that are provided by local, state, or federal government agencies. These funds must be specifically designated for the procurement of products and services.

When submitting proof of public funding, it's important to include documentation that clearly indicates the source of the funding, the amount received, and how the funds were used. Examples of acceptable documentation may include grant award letters, funding contracts, and receipts that show payment for products and services.

Members under this category will receive an email in May as a reminder to upload documentation of this funding in their organization's member profile. **The deadline to submit proof of funding will be June 30, 2023.**

If you have questions regarding this deadline, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at gs-pacostars@pa.gov or by calling 866-768-7827.



On The Road Again

| | |
|-------------|--|
| April 4 | COSTARS Webinar: Search Contracts Like a Pro! (member presentation) |
| April 6 | Doing Business with the PA Convention Center Procurement Event |
| April 24-27 | Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS) Annual Conference |
| May 4 | Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) Southwestern PA Commission |
| May 9 | COSTARS Webinar: Using Procurated Ratings and Reviews in Your Sales Strategy |
| June 4 | Pennsylvania Association of Housing & Redevelopment (PAHRA) Spring Conference |
| June 4 | PA State Association of Boroughs (PSAB) Annual Conference & Exhibition |
| June 6 | COSTARS Webinar: Procurated - A Tool for Informed Procurement Decision-making |
| June 8 | Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) Southwestern PA Commission |

Do you want COSTARS to present at your upcoming event? Contact COSTARS at 1-866-768-7827 or email GS-PaCostars@pa.gov.

View our full event calendar at www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS > Program Resources.

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Published by the
Pennsylvania Department of General Services

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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.