

COSTARS Connection

The Commonwealth's Cooperative Purchasing Program

Passport to Business Opportunity and Procurement Savings

Volume 14 Issue 1
Winter 2020

Tom Wolf, Governor
Curt Topper, Secretary

COSTARS Partner Recognized for Innovative Energy Procurement Services

The [Penn State Facilities Engineering Institute \(PSFEI\)](#) energy team has been recognized by Governor Wolf for its work in procuring third-party energy supply for the Department of General Services (DGS). The National Association of State Chief Administrators (NASCA) [2019 Innovation in State Government Award](#) was presented to DGS for its energy supply procurement process — managed by PSFEI.

Through the use of PSFEI's custom developed web-based [Energy Risk Management Application \(ERMA\)](#), DGS — which manages the COSTARS electric procurement program — is able to receive price quotes and effectively analyze, evaluate and sign contracts the same day — usually within a three-hour time frame. Without the innovative approach provided by ERMA, it could take weeks or months for the commonwealth to finalize an energy supplier contract. And, when it comes to energy procurement, time is money. With energy prices subject to significant swings and continual changes throughout each day, the sooner the commonwealth can lock in good rates, the more cost savings agencies are able to achieve.

"DGS has more than 10,000 individual utility accounts across our agencies, so determining the most effective way to procure electricity and natural gas while following statutory procurement requirements can be a challenge," said Julien Gaudion, Deputy Secretary for Property and Asset Management for DGS. "PSFEI has helped us save a significant amount of time, money and energy."

Since July 2017, the [Invitation to Qualify \(ITQ\)](#) contract structure and account portfolio management capabilities provided by ERMA have enabled DGS to eliminate 384 weeks of contract review work for management and legal personnel, according to the NASCA executive summary. As a result, DGS has saved more than \$200,000 in personnel costs associated with managing purchase orders and reduced electricity and natural gas supply costs by \$8.3 million.

The next PSFEI energy procurement shopping event is slated for midspring 2020. Interested COSTARS members should contact Scott Harford, PSFEI, at srh18@psu.edu or 814-863-2090 for more information.

[Read the full story.](#)

\$158 Million

Since 2009, the Penn State Facilities Engineering Institute (PSFEI) has provided electricity procurement services to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, resulting in more than **\$158 million** in savings.

\$600

Working together with the Pennsylvania Department of General Services Bureau of Procurement, PSFEI has helped more than 135 COSTARS clients (representing over 1,925 electric accounts) save an average of more than **\$600 per month** in utility costs.

\$520,000

To date, a free utility bill review service conducted by PSFEI has identified more than **\$520,000** in refunds for participating members.



PennState
College of Engineering

**FACILITIES ENGINEERING
INSTITUTE**

The COSTARS team is pleased to announce a new electronic monitoring contract developed in response to feedback from the DGS Bureau of Procurement Operational/Facilities Team and COSTARS members. On April 30, 2020, the current statewide Electronic Monitoring contract #4400015767 will close.

Members who are currently purchasing services under the statewide contract should begin using COSTARS-42 Electronic Monitoring Services and Electronic Monitoring Equipment, Repair Services and Equipment Rental.

Does your company sell electronic monitoring products and services? We need you! Learn more about becoming a COSTARS supplier at <https://www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS/Supplier-Information/Pages/default.aspx>.



Electronic Monitoring Services:

- ♦ Radio Frequency (RF) Monitoring of Offenders.
- ♦ Global Positioning of Systems (GPS) Satellite Monitoring and Remote Tracking Services of Offenders.
- ♦ Remote Alcohol Monitoring of Offenders.
- ♦ Biometric Voice Verification: Contractor Provided Voice Analysis and Remote Compliance Monitoring of Offenders.
- ♦ Mobile Electronic Monitoring Services & Telematics such as: Passenger Vehicle Monitoring, Asset Vehicle Monitoring, Fleet Vehicle Monitoring.

Electronic Monitoring Equipment Repair Services:

- ♦ Radio Frequency Equipment (RF) Repair Services.
- ♦ Global Positioning Systems (GPS) Satellite Monitoring and Remote Tracking Equipment Repair Services.
- ♦ Remote Alcohol Monitoring Equipment Repair Services.

Replacement Parts for Electronic Monitoring Equipment

- ♦ Radio Frequency Equipment (RF).
- ♦ Global Positioning Systems (GPS) Satellite Monitoring and Remote Tracking Equipment.
- ♦ Remote Alcohol Monitoring Equipment.

Equipment Rental:

- ♦ Radio Frequency (RF) Equipment.
- ♦ Global Positioning Systems (GPS) Satellite Monitoring and Remote Tracking Equipment.
- ♦ Remote Alcohol Monitoring Equipment.

Electronic Monitoring Equipment:

- ♦ Remote Alcohol Monitoring Equipment.
- ♦ Radio Frequency (RF).
- ♦ Global Positioning Systems (GPS) Satellite Monitoring and Remote Tracking Electronic Equipment.
- ♦ Telematics System Devices such as GPS for Fleet Management.
- ♦ GPS Fleet Tracking and Asset Tracking Software.
- ♦ Electronic Monitoring Mobile Equipment.
- ♦ Electronic Monitoring Software.
- ♦ IT Hardware for Electronic Monitoring Equipment such as Servers and Data Storage sold in conjunction with the system.

To search for vendors under this contract visit www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS. Select the Member Information button, then select the blue Members Login button. On the Members Area page, select Search Contracts/COSTARS Contracts. To learn more and submit a bid for one of these contracts, visit www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS. Select the COSTARS Supplier Information button, then select the COSTARS Bidding Opportunities link.

Wolf Administration Putting Energy into Carbon Pollution Reduction

By Felicia Campbell, COSTARS Marketing Manager

On Jan. 10, Governor Wolf announced a 3 percent reduction in state government’s usage of electricity, natural gas and steam within commonwealth facilities. This announcement was made exactly one year after an executive order was signed, establishing a statewide goal to reduce carbon pollution.

The executive order also established an inter-agency GreenGov Council, co-chaired by the departments of Conservation and Natural Resources, Environmental Protection, and General Services. The Council is focused on implementing a five-year strategy to significantly increase state agencies’ energy efficiency.

In 2019 the Department of General Services, Bureau of Procurement, purchased 308,978 MWhs of Renewable Energy Credits (REC’s) offsetting 40 percent of the commonwealth’s total electricity load for the year. According to the EPA’s Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator, the commonwealth’s purchase leads to an annual offset of approximately 218,494 metric tons of carbon dioxide or the electricity use of roughly 26,164 average American homes for a year.

In addition to the purchase of Renewable Energy Credits, the Council has a goal for the state fleet to incorporate 990 electric or hybrid plug-in vehicles by 2025. They are currently collaborating with auto manufacturers and infrastructure vendors to provide charging stations.

The GreenGov Council invited the public to learn more about state government’s efforts to boost green and sustainable practices and give feedback on Friday, Jan.31. The commonwealth is leading by example and openly publishes the ideas, results and successes of the GreenGov Council’s mission. For sustainable practices you can implement in your organization, visit www.dgs.pa.gov/greengov for more information and checklists you may utilize.

The Department of General Services and the COSTARS team encourages our members and suppliers to join us in this endeavor to significantly decrease PA’s carbon pollution. COSTARS members have numerous suppliers who offer products and services to help PA communities exceed our sustainability goals.

COSTARS members have access to discounts on the products and services through:

- ⌚ Renewable Energy Credits can be found under parent contract #4400020024 (use description search “Energy Supply and Management Services ITQ”).
- ⌚ Alternate Fuel Vehicles can be found on COSTARS-25 Municipal Work Vehicles and COSTARS-26 Passenger Vehicles.
- ⌚ Energy Conservation products and services can be found on COSTARS-28 Energy Conservation Management Supplies and COSTARS-30 Energy Consulting Services.



GreenGov Council public meeting.

2020-2021 Sodium Chloride (Road Salt) Contract Registration Now Open

By Felicia Campbell,
COSTARS Marketing Manager

To register, members must complete the 2020-21 Road Salt Contract Participation Agreement which can be accessed by selecting the **orange bar at the top of the COSTARS Members Area after Jan. 2, 2020**. For any member without access to the DGS COSTARS website, a hard-copy of the Salt Contract Participation Agreement form can be obtained upon request by calling the COSTARS team at 1-866-768-7827. If filing by hard-copy, a completed Agreement must be submitted to DGS COSTARS and postmarked by no later than March 15, 2020, the enrollment deadline.

It is important to note that the Salt Contract Participation Agreement is legally binding. However, the Sodium Chloride (Road Salt) contract has built-in flexibility, requiring the member to buy only 60 percent of their prescribed needs in case of a light winter while allowing the purchase of 140 percent of their established volume at contract pricing during a severe winter. A member can review and/or edit their Participation Agreement anytime up to the enrollment deadline. A summary of the awarded contract(s) will be posted to the COSTARS Members Area Newsflash in August.

Late Requests

We are seeing a trend that Pennsylvania salt contract participants understand the perils of late requests. As salt demand increases, so does late-request pricing. Late requests take a toll on budgets, but worse yet is the toll entities pay when suppliers are not able to accommodate unanticipated demand.

Past-deadline requests have consistently decreased in the last three years: from 40 late requests in 2017, to 19 in 2018 and as low as 9 in 2019! Keep that downward trend going! The more prepared our salt suppliers are, the more prepared you will be for treacherous conditions.

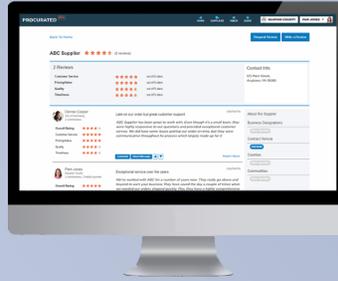
Delivery Timeframe

Road Salt is delivered between 5-7 business days depending on stockpile capacity. To avoid complications, don't wait for storm predictions to order. **Plan ahead** or **increase your stockpile** to be prepared for the unexpected.

Training

For more help with the online Road Salt registration process, visit the Members Area Training Center at www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS > Member Information > Members Login > Training Center link and select the **Register for Sodium Chloride Road Salt Contract** link under the **Member Training** heading.

Don't forget to check out a special weather-related message from the COSTARS News Desk at <https://www.facebook.com/PAGenServices/videos/1526783467460079/>.



Using Procurated to Find COSTARS Suppliers

The partnership between COSTARS and Procurated (www.procurated.com) has already generated thousands of reviews about hundreds of suppliers thanks to the contributions of COSTARS members from across the commonwealth. Procurated continues to gather in-depth reviews of Pennsylvania suppliers in order to build the most comprehensive vendor performance management tool so you can easily access information from other procurement officials that have already worked with suppliers you are considering.

Past performance is the best indicator of future success, so Procurated has made it their mission to bring transparency to supplier selection and performance. Procurated's platform, which is free for all COSTARS members, provides a secure and private environment where public purchasers are able to share candid information about suppliers more efficiently than ever before. Procurated's closed system requires authentication before posting reviews, provides the option to submit a review with a name or anonymously, and does not allow suppliers to access reviews on the platform. All these steps are taken to give review writers the utmost confidence that their candid reviews will be seen only by their procurement peers across the state.

The Procurated platform is a resource to provide COSTARS members with an additional tool to use when determining best value. **Please take two minutes** to contribute to the community and help your peers across the commonwealth find great suppliers by writing a review on Procurated.com. Once you have written a review on the platform, you will gain access to other reviews about suppliers under consideration, ask review writers for additional information, and search for new suppliers in hundreds of product and service categories.

PROCURATEDTM
Because Every Decision Matters.



Important System Update for COSTARS Members

Recently, the PA Login Service you previously used to log into the COSTARS system to update your member profile or submit the Road Salt Participation Agreement form was changed to the PA Keystone Login System.

To ensure you have continued access to your COSTARS member account, please migrate your account to the new system by completing a new User Registration at <https://keystonelogin.pa.gov/>.

Once you have created a new registration, you can log into the COSTARS system with your new credentials.

Please Note: You must associate yourself with your organization in the COSTARS System again to obtain access to your account (option #2).

If you have any issues migrating your account to the Keystone Login System, please contact us at 1-866-768-7827.



Building Your Own Human Firewall

By Felicia Campbell, COSTARS Marketing Manager



Even the most secure companies can be compromised because of the human factor. Phishing attackers are skilled at their craft and often research personal information on social media to increase the chances the phish will follow the lure.

In December 2019, Anomali's Threat Research Team proved that the size or scope of an organization makes no difference to becoming a phishing victim. What they uncovered was an international cyberattack campaign primarily targeting government procurement services. This campaign targeted organizations in 12 countries including the U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Department of Commerce, Maryland Government Procurement Services, and DHL International courier service. The phishing emails directed the recipient, via lure documents, to a spoofed login page of a website trusted by the recipient.

Once the recipient typed their login and password, the attackers had their credentials. One way to avoid being hooked by phishing attacks is to become a Human Firewall. Not sure how to be an effective Human Firewall? Here are some email tips to avoid taking the bait.

* Address the Address

The quickest way to spot an imposter email is by checking the email address. John Doe (John.Doe@abc.com) may be a typical contributor in your email box. An attacker who has done their research knows you would trust an email from John so may send you an email from John.Doe@acb.com. A human firewall would notice the email did not come from your trusted associate.

* Spot the URL Impersonator

When receiving a link in an email, always check the validity of that link. Hover over the link with your mouse to make sure the URL in the pop up window matches the URL you see in the email. If they differ, that's a red flag.

Also verify the email address doesn't contain multiple domains. If you receive an email with a link included for a site like www.dgs.pa.gov and the email passed the email address and hover tests, you can continue with your inspection of the email with steps 3-10 below. If the link reads www.dgs.pa.gov.malacb.com, the link has a double domain name. Don't be hooked!

* Spelling & Grammar Police

If the email has poor spelling and grammar, you could be a phishing target. Legitimate organizations proof emails before sending. Also, because attackers often work globally, emails may have been translated from a different language making the message sound "a little off."

* Can I Have Your Digits?

Your internal alarms should start sounding when you are asked for personal information... Never, never provide personal information requested via email. If you think the email, or even a phone call, may be genuine, the best practice is to look up the published telephone number of the organization and call them directly to verify the contact you received was valid. Many organizations keep records of contact they have made and will be able to easily verify the contact you received was correct.

* Too Good to be True?

The adage "if it looks too good to be true, it probably is" is extremely applicable to phishing scams. Scammers will try to lure you with the "fantastic." Don't bite. There is very little chance that a real prince needs to transfer his fortune to your bank account...

* You're a winner!

This one is easy to spot. If you won a trip to Jamaica because your entry ticket was pulled as the winner – ask yourself "did I fill out a ticket to win a trip to Jamaica?" This is closely related to "too good to be true."

* Money, Money, Money, Money!

Requesting money? It's probably a scam, honey. Again, this is where you would want to call a published phone number for the real organization to confirm that you do not have a balance due.

* Beware of the Scare!

Many attackers will try to intimidate their targets with threats to close accounts. Don't fret. This is yet another example where calling the organization directly for verification is your best bet. Do NOT follow links in emails that include threats.

* Hello, it's the Government...

An offshoot of the scare tactic, scammers use official entities that we respect and want to obey to trigger us to take action. Most people are aware of the IRS phone scam that threatens the target with legal action by the IRS because of money owed. Government agencies do not use email or phone messages to convey important information like this. Hello, it's a scammer.

* Instinct

Trust your gut. You may look at all aspects of an email and though there is nothing glaringly wrong with it, something just feels off. Investigate more. Jump on the Internet and look at an organization's website. Is the logo in the email you received the same? If there is a signature on the email, does the company address match the address on the website? If the email is from a business associate, you can call them to make sure the email is legitimate.

These ten steps to preventing yourself from being the "catch of the day" are quick, easy and vital. Scammers are making big money with their phishing schemes. Don't let them take your money – be the Human Firewall!

Combine Human Firewall staff training with the most current IT firewall and security products to protect your organization from cyberattacks. COSTARS members receive discounted pricing through COSTARS-authorized suppliers under contracts:

- ◆ COSTARS-3 IT Hardware
- ◆ COSTARS-6 Software
- ◆ Statewide Contract #4400004480 Master Information Technology (IT) Services.

To learn more about these contracts, visit the COSTARS website at www.dgs.pa.gov/COSTARS. Select the Member Information > Members Login > Search Contracts link.



COSTARS IN THE NEWS

- ☞ The *Hampton Journal* recently reported that the Hampton Township Council approved the purchase of two Department of Community Services trucks for 2020, to be funded from the 2020 Capital Improvement Fund Budget. The trucks will be purchased through the COSTARS Program.
- ☞ In a January article of the *North Journal/Trib Live*, the McCandless Council approved the purchase of a 10-ton dump truck chassis through Pennsylvania's COSTARS cooperative purchasing program.
- ☞ According to the January edition of the *Butler Eagle*, Butler City Council purchased a 2020 Ford Interceptor SUV from Tri-State Motors through the COSTARS cooperative purchasing program.
- ☞ According to a November article in *The Daily Item*, Mahoning Township Supervisors approved the purchase of a new 2020 Ford hybrid SUV for the police department. The purchase is estimated to save about \$3,500 a year on fuel costs. The township made the purchase through the state's COSTARS cooperative purchasing program. "It means less of an impact to the planet and less of an impact to your pocketbook," Township Supervisor T.S. Scott told residents.

- ☞ In a December *Renewable Energy Magazine* article, the Derry Township Municipal Authority (DTMA) announced it is transforming its Clearwater Road Wastewater Treatment Facility into a highly sustainable operation via a \$15 million energy enhancement program. Design of the upgrades is being directed by environmental engineering and construction firm Brown and Caldwell who will assist DTMA with procurement of two generator engines through the COSTARS Program. "Increasing the production and beneficial use of anaerobic digester biogas as our fuel source to provide power and heat is significantly more efficient and environmentally sustainable than using electrical power from the grid or fossil fuels," said DTMA Executive Director Wayne Schutz.
- ☞ Recently, the *Butler Eagle* reported that Jeffrey Associates, a supplier under COSTARS-14 Recreation and Fitness Equipment, was awarded Cranberry Township's North Boundary Park Pavilion project. The township purchased a Rigidply pavilion as part of a senior project for a local high school student. The project's objective is to help the student learn the process of building a pavilion from understanding drawings, footing requirements, layout, and the actual construction.
- ☞ According to a February article in the *Daily American*, Berlin Borough Police Department's newest set of wheels hit the streets Jan. 29. During a borough council meeting, it was announced the 2019 Ford Taurus police cruiser is now in service. The cruiser was purchased through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's cooperative purchasing program, or COSTARS.



Submitted photo courtesy of Daily American

The COSTARS Team is always looking for stories in the news about COSTARS members who are saving money by purchasing through the COSTARS Program.

Tell us about your successful money-saving purchases and we will be sure to include them in our next edition of the *COSTARS Connection* newsletter!

Email your story to us at GS-PACostars@pa.gov or connect with us via our social media accounts (see links on page six of this newsletter).

Learning with COSTARS – Real Time!

Beginning this month, the COSTARS Team will be hosting monthly interactive webinars to educate potential and current members and suppliers about the COSTARS Program, new contracts, contract and program updates, as well as tips for searching contracts and completing a bid package.

Check out the schedule below and register for the webinar(s) of your choice!

- Feb. 25 COSTARS Member Advisory Group.
- March 19 COSTARS - Effective and Efficient Procurement.
- April 21 Do You Feel Secure With Your Safety Preparedness?
- May 12 COSTARS - We Connect Suppliers With Buyers! (Introduction to COSTARS for Potential Suppliers)
- June 2 Energize Your Bottom Line.
- July 21 Get Into Gear!
- Sept. 22 Equipped to Serve.
- Oct. 6 Purchasing and Fleet Card Programs - Forge Ahead With Discounts.
- Nov. 4 COSTARS - Effective and Efficient Procurement.



To learn more or to register, visit the Program Resources page of the COSTARS website at <https://www.dqs.pa.gov/COSTARS/Program-Resources/Pages/default.aspx>.



COSTARS On The Road

Upcoming Events

- ◆ Feb. 25 COSTARS Member Advisory Group Webinar
- ◆ March 12 Municipal Grant Seminar Sponsored by Senator Yaw -Williamsport
- ◆ March 26 Municipal Grant Seminar Sponsored by Senator Killion -Upper Chichester
- ◆ March 26 Conservation District Municipality Meeting Jefferson and Forrest Counties - Brookville
- ◆ March 19 COSTARS - Effective and Efficient Procurement Webinar
- ◆ April 9 Municipal Grant Seminar Sponsored by Senator Phillips-Hill - York
- ◆ April 9 Schaedler Yesco Expo 2020 - Hershey
- ◆ April 21 Municipal Grant Seminar Sponsored by Senator Mastriano - Chambersburg
- ◆ April 21 COSTARS - Do You Feel Secure With Your Safety Preparedness? Webinar
- ◆ April 29 SEDA COG "Save Money With COSTARS Seminar - Lewisburg
- ◆ May 3-6 PSATS 2020 Educational Conference & Exhibit Show Hershey
- ◆ May 7 10th District Procurement Event Sponsored by Senator Santarsiero - Chalfont
- ◆ May 12 COSTARS - We Connect Suppliers With Buyers! Webinar

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 Kim Bullivant and Felicia Campbell travel throughout the commonwealth speaking at conferences, workshops and seminars sponsored by associations, suppliers, universities, legislators, chambers of commerce and others.

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 Kim or Felicia at toll free telephone number 1-866-768-7827 or email to 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.

Members and suppliers - we want to hear from you!

- What do you like about the newsletter? What can we do to make it better?
- Tell us how you saved money by using the COSTARS Program.
- Tell us more about how you helped a customer get the best value for their money.



Email us at GS-PACostars@pa.gov with your comments!

Remember to Keep Your COSTARS Profile Up To Date!

To ensure your organization or business continues to receive important program and contract information from the COSTARS Team, update your information online today!

To access the online training module for step-by-step instructions visit:

Members: <https://www.copacustomhelp.state.pa.us/gm/folder-1.11.97278?originalContext=1.11.97211>.

Suppliers: <https://www.copacustomhelp.state.pa.us/gm/folder-1.11.97299?originalContext=1.11.97212>.



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/>



Check out our latest post honoring Presidents' Day!

<https://tinyurl.com/PresDayPost>

Remember, this does not replace important updates we send to you via email, so please maintain your member and supplier information in the COSTARS system.

COSTARS Connection

Curt Topper - Secretary, Department of General Services
Ken Hess - Deputy Secretary for Procurement
Janice Pistor - Chief Procurement Officer
Dawn Eshenour - Chief, Supplier Dev. & Support Div.
Kim Bullivant - Marketing Manager
Felicia Campbell - Marketing Manager

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.

Published by the
Pennsylvania Department of General Services

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

