

PANDEMIC PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE SUBMISSIONS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Arizona	4
Colorado	9
Conneticut	11
Delaware	15
Georgia	18
Maryland	21
Massachusetts	26
Ohio	29
Pennsylvania	31
South Carolina	34
Tennessee	37
Texas	40

Since the first Cronin Club Luncheon at NASPO's Annual Conference in 1970, the George R. Cronin Awards for Procurement Excellence have been dedicated to uplifting and highlighting the projects and efforts of public procurement officials across the country.

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 Cronin Awards Committee suspended the traditional awards process. In its place, the Committee chose to highlight the enormous response efforts undertaken by state procurement offices across the country. Named Pandemic Procurement Excellence (PPE), the committee created an alternate project to give procurement officials a platform to share their stories of pandemic procurement.

All submissions received are provided in this document, or in a video file, depending on the submission type. These submissions showcase the integral role of procurement officials and the effect of their efforts in saving lives and helping to move the nation forward.

States across the country faced different challenges at different times, but common themes emerged from the submissions: procurement officials serving as first-line-defense against fraud, partnerships and collaborations being created to identify solutions, staff working around the clock to meet the needs of their citizens, the implementation of innovative processes, and, perhaps most importantly, procurement taking a strategic position at the executive table during the initial response to the pandemic.

Procurement officials leaned into the response required to fight the pandemic, and we, as a committee, and the NASPO organization applaud those efforts. We understand the sacrifices and effort that came with meeting the challenges presented, and we are grateful to the states who shared their stories. While not every state is represented in the document and videos, we know that each state has similar stories to share, and the experiences of the pandemic will shape procurement offices for years to come.

As a committee, we look forward to resuming the George R. Cronin Awards for Procurement Excellence in 2021, but we sincerely thank our members for doing the work that needed to be done and for helping us share their stories in this way.

Sincerely,

The 2020 Cronin Committee

Pandemic Procurement Excellence Submission
ARIZONA

STATE OF ARIZONA COVID-19 PROJECTS



Much like most other states right now, things look very different for Arizona's State Procurement Office (SPO) than they did six months ago. Though Procurement is often associated with the phrase: 'everyday is different', the COVID-19 Pandemic added to the possibilities of a particular day like adding to the possibilities of playing Roulette when doubling the numbers on the wheel available for draw. The once more stable and anticipatable nature of our projects and strategic initiatives is now anything but predictable. This unprecedented global health pandemic has hurled our team into an unfamiliar frontier, where the environment is ever-changing and the old ways we used to operate simply aren't applicable any more. Where once we were able to walk by a colleague's cube to say good morning, we now engage with our teams through entirely virtual environments. Much of our time now is spent tirelessly working to find a best fit solution for a customer, which in today's world, more often than not has to do with PPE, sanitary supplies, and other COVID-19 related projects and services.

The work has been exhausting and the incoming pipeline of urgent projects never seems to slow. Out of necessity, the team has had to become subject matter experts on a variety of new and complex topics and disciplines (many of which were previously completely unfamiliar to the majority of the team assigned to the project). Requests from customers have come in from every corner of the enterprise, and have resulted in our team doing everything from standing up and running a PPE warehouse operation to unloading trucks in the sweltering Arizona summer to standing up a program to distribute 2 million masks to the public.

One of the things that has made us most proud of our team during these challenging times is observing their relentless commitment to excellence and doing whatever it takes to best serve our customers. The team has worked long hours, late nights, evenings, and weekends. Whatever is needed to get the job done, they do it with a high level of professionalism and team collaboration. Through every challenging project, each and every member of the team has stepped outside of their normal job responsibilities to ensure that our customers' needs are met. I am often impressed with how much they have accomplished with such limited access to resources.

Their hard work and dedication have contributed to the success of many high-profile projects, which have advanced Arizona's COVID-19 response efforts, including:

- Development and management of the MaskUpAZ Initiative, which will distribute 2 million masks to vulnerable populations across the state
- Sourcing and distribution of critical PPE and sanitary supplies to/for:
 - Nearly 100 homeless, domestic violence, and women's shelters
 - All 15 Arizona counties to ensure volunteers and voters are safe for the upcoming elections in a range of settings
 - Arizona Enrichment Centers, which provide childcare to Arizona's essential workers
 - State agency partners
 - COVID-19 testing sites for state employees
- Purchase and delivery of raw materials to manufacture 60,000+ cloth facial coverings for essential state employees
- Standing up and running a PPE warehouse (which we refer to as the SPO Depot) for state agencies and other external customers

The team has learned and grown so much from these critical initiatives. Though all of the projects have been challenging, they have also been once in a lifetime opportunities to grow and learn. We greatly appreciate their steadfast commitment not only to serve our customers, but also to serve their fellow teammates. In a time when the workload seems unmanageable and the problems seem unsolvable, this spirit of camaraderie is the encouragement that keeps us moving forward.

STATE OF ARIZONA VIRTUAL INTERN GRADUATION



Along with many of the more obvious obstacles associated with the current public health emergency, learning how to effectively work 100% remotely was one of the more challenging issues that our teams were faced with over the past several months. Many things that happen and come together quite easily in person are surprisingly difficult to translate into virtual mediums. Events and large meetings were one of the areas that the team found to be especially complex in this new virtual environment.

As was the case with many other students across the world, the Arizona State Procurement Office (SPO) had four interns scheduled to graduate in the spring semester. Their commencement ceremonies were all scheduled to be held online/virtual only. Our interns were all very disappointed that they would not have the opportunity to experience a traditional graduation ceremony to formally recognize their achievements and to mark the end of their respective degree programs.

Our team overwhelmingly agreed that it was important to still create that memorable recognition experience for our interns, even if it was to be held virtually. The SPO Operations team worked together to plan a meaningful and memorable graduation celebration to recognize the achievements of our interns and ensure that they had a memorable experience to mark the end of their higher education journeys and display our connection and support for each other.

On May 7th, SPO held a virtual Graduation Celebration for our three undergraduate Supply Chain students and one graduate Public Administration student. This [event](#) included:

- Individual recognition of each graduate by their supervisor and additional influential mentor
- Recognition by agency and SPO Executive Leadership
- Highlights of each individual's major projects and accomplishments during their internship
- Personalized graduation certificates
- [Video message with well-wishes from colleagues](#)
- [Personalized recognition and Congratulations message from the Governor](#)



Overall, the event was a huge success. The graduating interns were very appreciative of the experience and even said it was better than their ASU graduation! In a time when there is so much going on and so many challenges to be overcome, it was really nice to stop for a moment to celebrate and engage as a team in a meaningful way. It was our way to establish our office as an employer of choice, a leading intern development office and enhance our employee engagement with our existing team, recent hires and new hires converting to full time roles. We also strive to build a connected intern alumni network for ongoing professional associations with this great group of people.



Pandemic Procurement Excellence Submission
COLORADO

PPE SUBMISSION: STATE OF COLORADO

Submitter: Sherri Maxwell

Colorado's State Purchasing and Contracts Office (SPCO) has played an integral role in the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. From assisting the Office of Emergency Management with the efficient procurement of pandemic-related items to the fast-tracking of vital contracts, to ensuring all agencies have access to the most up-to-date information and resources, the SPCO has stepped up to the challenge.

Sherri Maxwell, Chief Procurement Officer (CPO) and John Chapman, State Purchasing Manager, have participated in a multi-agency effort to open five alternative care sites (field hospitals) across the state. Sherri has kept the state procurement community informed of COVID-19 related procurement activities, created a centralized FAQ for all state employees, and has held time aside each week for procurement professionals to ask their pandemic-related questions and to give special circumstance purchasing approvals and contract extensions as needed. In an effort to streamline procurement processes during this challenging time, Sherri has authorized the use of electronic signatures, and granted blanket approval for state agencies and Institutions of Higher Education to make purchases using certain cooperatives. She has also approved and promoted the use of electronic submission systems and conducting bid openings via video conferencing.

John assisted in the setup of Amazon Business COVID-19 supply accounts to help agencies across Colorado easily access the PPE and other items they need. The State Purchasing Agreement team has compiled lists of state price agreements that handle COVID-19 related items and services such as personal protection equipment (PPE). This list has been published on the SPCO's website and promoted to state employees via the SPCO newsletter. For agencies that needed help sourcing PPE through the price agreements, John and his team jumped in to get quotes.

Nate Weatherford, Manager of the Central Contracts Unit within SPCO and his team have made themselves available to assist state agencies on the front lines with vendor agreement reviews, contract modifications, and waivers of contract regulations. With the assistance of the Army Corp of Engineers, Colorado has readied multiple makeshift hospitals to deal with the potential influx of COVID-19 cases, and the Central Contracts Unit assisted in preparing the leases. At the request of the Governor's office, the Central Contracts Unit have recommended and reviewed proposed suspension of statutory requirements for the procurement of goods and services related to Colorado's pandemic response to temporarily remove administrative requirements and provide for a more rapid and efficient response to the pandemic.

SPCO's Supplier Diversity Liaison, Barb Musick, has assisted with the compilation of the COVID related resources that are available to all state agency procurement units. Additionally, Barb has taken the lead on responding to thousands of pandemic-related vendor emails.

As this global pandemic continues to put Colorado's public procurement professionals to the test, the Colorado SPCO is ready to lend their support and expertise wherever possible.

Pandemic Procurement Excellence Submission
CONNECTICUT

CONNECTICUT PANDEMIC PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE SUBMISSION

CT Pandemic Procurement Context:

On March 10, 2020, Governor Lamont declared a public health emergency to bolster Connecticut's effort to contain Covid-19. Within a week, state offices closed, and all state procurement staff were required to work from home. Department of Administrative Services (DAS) leadership quickly realized this was no temporary disruption, but a full-blown pandemic that would require urgent action to meet the evolving needs of the state. What started as some team members logging extra hours suddenly shifted to nearly 90% of the procurement team focused on personal protective equipment (PPE) sourcing, often 14-hours a day, 7-days a week.

For CT's procurement team, this wasn't just a complex challenge to conquer. CT was one of the hardest hit states in the country, and most staff intimately knew individuals impacted. Multiple colleagues were hospitalized and fighting for their lives. As one staff member highlighted, "This wasn't just a hypothetical exercise. We were doing this for our colleagues, our families, and our neighbors." As much of the state felt paralyzed by the realities of the pandemic, DAS Procurement played a unique role in giving purpose to those on the sidelines. For business and philanthropic leaders eager to help source PPE, DAS Procurement offered an outlet for partnership. For small businesses out of work due to stay at home orders, DAS Procurement helped to empower companies to change their business models, retool, and ultimately transform the state's supply chain.

As staff tried to manage new work environments and time commitments, a new normal slowly developed. Whatever their previous roles or responsibilities had been, all staff now had to navigate the complexities of international supply chains, politics in all echelons of government, and multifaceted public-private partnerships to get the job done. As one staff member commented, "So many people were contacting their state representatives or DAS to do whatever they could to help CT citizens. Ordinary citizens retooling factories, donating PPE, and selling goods at cost. A complete outpouring of care and concern for each other in a time of need."

CT Pandemic Procurement Response:

CT took a range of innovative steps to effectively procure critical goods and services, while ensuring proper controls remained in place to prevent fraud and abuse. The following activities highlight some of the most crucial efforts:

1. **Implemented a systematized process to vet and source PPE.** With hundreds of new leads daily, DAS Procurement needed an organized approach to efficiently assess and follow up on inbound PPE solicitations. With nearly all staff recruited to assist with the effort, DAS Procurement generated a collaborative Excel tracker shared via Microsoft Teams to capture key information related to each lead. Utilizing standardized outreach protocols, assigned DAS Procurement staff used their expertise and relationships with subject matter experts to validate the viability of each lead.

As many of the leads originated outside of the United States, DAS Procurement developed unique partnerships, such as an arrangement with Alibaba, to help vet factories in China. As one contract specialist commented, *“It was a very stressful time trying to figure out if the PPE products vendors were offering were actually viable and trying to get them to understand CT couldn’t just pre-pay for products prior to delivery. The more I stood my ground the more I could see things shifting and it seemed like my efforts were starting to pay off.”* All of these efforts focused on efficiently procuring critical supplies, while de-risking PPE transactions as much as possible.

2. **Created an interactive dashboard to inform PPE reporting.** During the early days of the crisis, a critical need became evident: how can DAS Procurement share progress on sourcing and procuring much needed PPE with emergency command staff and executive leadership? As a solution, DAS Procurement partnered with the Department of Corrections to create a daily dashboard capturing data from its internal sourcing tracker to report on the procurement of PPE directly to the Governor’s Office and other key partners. This included information on units ordered/received by product, total spend, items donated, and total leads vetted. These easy to visualize statistics became frequent talking points for both CT’s Chief Operating Officer and the Governor in daily public news conferences.
3. **Drafted Executive Orders issued by the Governor to streamline procurement processes.** As the crisis unfolded, DAS’ legal team realized certain statutory procedures were impacting the ability to efficiently and effectively procure essential goods and services. With the support of the Department of Administrative Services, the Office of Policy and Management, and the Attorney General’s Office, Governor Lamont issued two executive orders, 7Z and 7GG, to facilitate the emergency procurement of critical goods and services. Given unique supply chain constraints, these orders were essential to streamline processes for a multitude of procurements. Furthermore, the orders mitigated disruptions in care for vulnerable populations impacted by human service procurements.
4. **Established longer-term supply chains and supported new service areas.** DAS Procurement did not just ensure a temporary reprieve of PPE shortages for the state. It acted proactively, leveraging new vendor relationships to establish longer-term agreements to obtain PPE on a consistent basis. As of July 2020, CT had nine standing orders for ongoing PPE receipt into 2021 for over 80 million individual PPE items. As emergency PPE sourcing stabilized, DAS procurement shifted to support other state agencies in procuring critical services related to the Covid response. Despite these services being outside its statutory responsibility, DAS served as partner entity to help source Covid-19 lab testing facilities, contact tracing staffing support, community resource coordinators, and an audit of Covid responses by long-term care facilities.
5. **Utilized ESF7 Group to transform how critical supplies were delivered across the state.** Following the activation of the State’s Emergency Support Functions, the ESF7 Group took the lead in coordinating purchasing with the private sector. As one ESF7 member commented, *“Throughout the Covid-19 response, we were able to build a multifaceted team of members from different agencies who never worked together. It was amazing to see how we were able to overcome obstacles and communicate across agencies.”* Through daily 8:00am calls, the ESF7 Group established sourcing priorities for the day, answered questions, and offered a forum to share ideas. Indeed, the ESF7 Group helped to provide structure

and facilitate critical collaboration between state agencies (including the military) to secure and distribute PPE.

Long-Term Impact on CT Procurement

By the end of June 2020, CT's emergency procurement effort involved over 2,500 leads screened, with 470 deemed viable, resulting in 369 separate orders costing \$175 million. Most critically, nearly 66% of those orders had been received, demonstrating the careful balance of efficiency with protecting the state from fraud. These statistics reflect all the incredible efforts across the state to ensure front-line workers, non-profits, and residents were properly resourced in their fight against Covid-19.

This emergency period is about much more than sourcing specific goods. While it is still difficult to assess the full effect, Covid-19 is already impacting the long-term trajectory of procurement across the state. DAS Procurement is now exploring a strategic reassessment related to its capacity, agility, and resiliency in light of this emergency period. The following questions highlight some of the core considerations:

- *How can we take what was deregulated during this emergency, make it permanent, and operate more efficiently in the new norm?*
- *How can we leverage a new value chain of converting procurement manuals into tools and templates, followed by new training, to ultimately further empower client agencies?*
- *How can we better incorporate data metrics to measure our results and better tell a story about our successes and failures?*
- *How do we redefine our collective paradigm of purpose and structure given new needs across the state?*

Beyond these key questions, public procurement has been forever changed in CT. The increased profile of procurement processes is demonstrated by the dozens of procurement-related local news articles, and the creation of a direct line to the Governor. In Connecticut, the Covid-19 response has demanded more attention be paid to the strategic role public procurement plays not just in the daily operations of state government, but when emergencies strike.

As DAS Procurement Leader Carol Wilson summarized, *"I can proudly say, being a procurement professional for over 35 years, that this was the most important and memorable professional challenge I have ever faced. I owe deep gratitude to our DAS Procurement Staff and other colleagues who made our response so effective."*

Pandemic Procurement Excellence Submission
DELAWARE

DELAWARE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC RESPONSE 2020

State of Delaware Central Contracting Team Members:

Dean Stotler	Dustin Yerkes	Richard Holleger
Roxann Parker	Michael Bacu	Takeshia Kiah
Ninna Vaughn	Dennis Smith	Courtney McCarty
Pam Barr	Sandra Fullard	Carmen Herrera
Peter Korolyk	Luci Karnai	Silvia Goddard
Steven Chillas	Bruce Krug	Sarah Day
Necia Beck	Walt Gorman	

In March 2020, the State of Delaware Government Support Services (GSS) Central Contracting Team was activated as the logistics arm of the pandemic response for critical supplies and services during the Governor’s Emergency Declaration for Coronavirus-19. The entire team shifted to full time remote operations while also standing up 24/7 coverage which would last several months. The central team’s operations shifted from executing contracts for agency use to critical procurement and purchasing in support of emergency response. Working directly with the Emergency Operation Center at the State’s Emergency Management Agency (DEMA), the Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Office of the Governor, GSS Contracting accomplished amazing actions while working 100% remotely for the first time ever.

We Can Help. Supplier requests to help were received in all forms and by all parties throughout the State. At the onset, GSS identified their central contracting email mailbox as a Statewide central repository for these requests. The GSS MyMarketplace Team began organizing these into an on-the-fly resource tracker for PPE categorizing critical data points from a myriad of emails received into a meaningful solution for sourcing urgent needs. The GSS MyMarketplace Team quickly formatted and made these requests publicly visible on the State’s Open Data Portal as a new dataset, [I Can Help with Supplies During Coronavirus Response](#), inclusive of weekly updates available to both the public and private sectors. Later, the GSS Contracting and MyMarketplace Teams worked with the Government Information Center (GIC) and the Office of the Governor to develop a web portal that is now the [COVID Community Call-to-Action Portal](#), where vendors can submit their solutions directly on the site and have them become an available resource at [Coronavirus Supplies Search](#) as State and local businesses reopen. These requests, which now number 875 and increase each day, evolved from the initial solution created by the GSS MyMarketplace Team.

PPE Sourcing. At the onset of the COVID-19 emergency, the medical PPE supply chain was overwhelmed and fractured. The Emergency Operations Center sought out GSS Contracting to find critical PPE when the normal supply sources became despondent. Since the pandemic began, GSS Contracting has actioned requests for 13.7 Million critically needed items including masks, gloves, and hospital equipment valued at over \$3.5 Million.

Support for Local Businesses. GSS Contracting found amazing success where local businesses reestablished their operations to support COVID-19 needs. The team facilitated the purchase of 100,000 hospital face shields from a local business that customized vehicles now reconfiguring their operations to meet urgent public health needs for PPE. Over 69,000 individual bottles of hand sanitizer manufactured from local breweries were provided to both State Agencies and citizens to control the virus spread.

Responsible Purchasing. GSS successfully vetted and reviewed over 875 suppliers without prior relationships doing business with the State. Only Suppliers that passed the vetting process with favorable Better Business Bureau ratings, and Dun & Bradstreet ratings among several other criteria were engaged for critical item purchases. GSS' critical review was integral in preventing fraudulent business engagements.

Cleaning Supplies. GSS Contracting was quick to identify the onset need for specific and robust cleaning requirements surrounding COVID-19. Working with the Janitorial Services vendors on State contract, day porter services were expanded to more locations to regularly clean high touch areas. GSS coordinated the provision of over 600 gallons of hand sanitizer throughout critical State facilities as part of the cleaning services. In addition, protective suits, professional quality cleaning products, sanitizer, and spray bottles were delivered to Division of Facilities Management for their new cleaning requirement to keep State facilities operational and safe.

Personal Care Kits. GSS Contracting took the lead from the Emergency Operations Center when DEMA needed to focus on slowing the spread of COVID-19 in several hot spots throughout the State. These kits included bandanas, thermometers, and cleaning products. Initially, GSS delivered supplies for 10,000 kits and followed through expanding the number to 40,000 kits, over 250,000 individual items. Later, GSS Contracting also met an expanded request to create 20,000 Business Kits with items tailored to what local businesses would need to begin reopening.

Critical Services. GSS Contracting managed negotiations for an urgent critical need procurement to expand capabilities for Contact Tracing to control virus spread critical to Public Health responsibility to mitigate the pandemic. To aggressively manage virus hot spots, GSS Contracting secured contract agreements with two local hotels for necessary quarantine of citizens, also arranging laundry and food services for individuals to reduce spread. GSS Contracting also worked with key personnel to develop a Request for Proposals for a COVID-19 After Action Review to highlight successes and opportunities for the multiple pandemic response partners.

Delaware's Central Contracting has been extremely active, directly supporting the Emergency Operations Center and the Division of Public Health during the COVID-19 emergency. These accomplishments are unprecedented and truly demonstrate the value of procurement when needed most.

Pandemic Procurement Excellence Submission
GEORGIA

GEORGIA EMBRACES VIRTUAL CONNECTIVITY FOR ESSENTIAL TRAINING AND OUTREACH

One of the greatest challenges in our COVID-10 pandemic response has been overcoming the elimination of all in-person training and supplier outreach events to support ongoing social distancing measures. Georgia's central procurement office is located in downtown Atlanta, just steps from the capitol, where we regularly host in-person training events for procurement staff and orientation for new suppliers. Our instructors and outreach staff also routinely travel, conducting training and outreach events across the State at hosted sites, including Albany, Augusta, Macon, Kennesaw, Savannah and Valdosta just to name a few.

Our focus includes delivery of essential training to procurement staff through our certification programs and assisting suppliers interested in doing business with the State of Georgia in completing the supplier registration process and navigating our procurement systems. We have achieved significant growth in both programs. For Fiscal year 2019, the training team offered 110 live training classes, achieving a 32% over the previous year. And, through our supplier outreach efforts, the outreach team had engaged more than 2,000 supplier representatives during FY19, achieving a 248% increase over the previous year.

Our turning point came March 14th, with Georgia entering a Public Health State of Emergency and all non-essential travel for state government entities suspended. Our office immediately transitioned to 100% teleworking beginning March 16th with a statewide shelter in place order to go into effect by April 3rd. All existing in-person classes were required to be cancelled with no known date for when they could safely resume.

While we grappled with responses to the pandemic, we also had to set to work immediately in ramping up how we could delivery our training and outreach events virtually. We challenged ourselves to use the technology we already had on hand (GoToWebinar), a tool familiar to us and our customers, and then set to work in implementing our plan.

Key questions for procurement training included:

- Which courses to prioritize first for initial virtual delivery?
- How do we convert the content to be optimized for virtual delivery?
- What is the right class size?
- What do we communicate to students to support their participation?
- How can we make sure we are meeting our customers' needs?
- How do we keep training informative and engaging?

Our training team worked extremely hard to tackle these questions and ramp-up to offer virtual training. In one month, we were back in business with our first virtual training classes launched April 21st. By May 2020, we built our capacity to offer six of our instructor-led courses. Our goal is to offer all of our instructor-led courses virtually by the first quarter of FY20. We are steadily working on serving all students from our cancelled classes and those on the waitlist we developed through use of simple online survey.

Although our delivery method has changed, it is critical that our students continue to receive the same caliber of training. We have carefully monitored test results and have identified no impact to our students ability to demonstrate understanding of the course materials. We also revamped our online student satisfaction survey to gather input specific to the virtual delivery method and have consistently received positive feedback. Our instructors have reported ongoing updates to their training content and delivery to continue to adapt to student input and their increasing experience with the virtual environment.

Transition to virtual delivery for our monthly supplier training has expanded our reach to companies, with a steady increase in the number of suppliers that have joined virtually. We were able to successfully transition for our April 1st scheduled training with no interruption in the schedule.

With the support of our small business partners, including University of Georgia's Small Business Development Center, the Georgia Institute of Technology's Procurement Assistance Center and the Georgia Department of Transportation's State Sponsored Programs, we have embraced opportunities for virtual outreach with our small business partners. Our most recent partnership includes the Georgia Secretary of State's Office invitation to support the She LEADS Forum, which is designed to educate Georgia's women business owners on various topics and raise awareness to challenges and issues that they may face in growing their businesses. Through these virtual events, we were able significant increase our outreach during the final quarter of the year — and, incredibly, exceed the goal we had set to increase our outreach by an additional 10% over last year.

So, what have we learned? One of our biggest lessons has been the resiliency of our staff! They are willing to rise to any challenge with a “can do” attitude. Our instructors and outreach staff are so passionate about our students and suppliers and truly miss the in-person dynamic. But they have embraced virtual technology and how it has made it possible for us to continue to serve our customers safely. We also have a new appreciation for all of our online courses that have ensured training continued through our Learning Management System even during the one-month time period where we ramped up virtual delivery of our instructor-led training.

And our work continues! With the uncertainty of the current pandemic and the reduction to state budgets impacting travel, we know that virtual technology will continue to be a key component of our training and outreach delivery. So, our ongoing commitment will be to continue to grow in our expertise and utilization of technology. FY21 here we come!

Pandemic Procurement Excellence Submission
MARYLAND

MARYLAND LEADERSHIP IN PANDEMIC

Submitted by Dana Dembrow

This “story” is submitted to recognize the CPO for Maryland for PPE acquisition response to the coronavirus.

As you may know, Robert Gleason became CPO for Maryland on Oct. 1, 2019, when the newly created position came into existence. It was only a few months later, therefore, that the entire previously de-centralized and disjointed procurement structure in the State had to be thrown into emergency overdrive to procure innumerable services and commodities under life-or-death urgent conditions encountered in the face of disrupted supply chains. The coordinated teams that Bob assembled nonetheless have successfully acquired at this point in excess of a billion pieces of PPE at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars.

The chart of covid-19 hospitalizations in Maryland is an example of ideal trending. The month of April saw a steep incline in infections requiring hospitalizations, and sharp shortages of needed PPE, as was occurring across the country; but miraculously on May 1 the trend peaked and reversed as a gradual but consistent decline occurred throughout the months of May and June until the first of July, when we hit the objective plateau of cases, and, knock on wood, our trending graph has remained flat throughout this current month. At present we have plenty of unused surge capacity with many open hospital beds including ICUs with newly acquired vents, continued high volumes of lab testing, and thoughtful responsive leadership from the Governor’s office in the management of issues surrounding reopening of the economy based upon recommendations of public health experts basing their opinions on scientific data, all in the absence of any federal leadership whatsoever.

As coronavirus infection rates are studied in the years to come, the graph in Maryland will be used as an example of what an ideal “flattened curve” should look like on a chart. Largely unmentioned behind that chart will be the efforts of many procurement agents effectively managed by our new CPO.

MARYLAND STATE PROCUREMENT PANDEMIC PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE (PPE)

On the date of Governor Hogan's Covid-19 Pandemic State Emergency, March 5, 2020, Maryland's new CPO and Office of State Procurement (OSP) were in existence for less than 6 months. State Procurement offices were still in a formative stage. The nascent organization was a "work in progress" in the midst of significant statewide operational, organizational and cultural transformative changes. Added to this was a state procurement workforce reorganization, a new Procurement Career Group, of four levels of practitioner Procurement Officers I-IV and Procurement Managers I-IV. We just completed an RFP to implement a new multijurisdictional statewide eProcurement solution, eMaryland Marketplace Advantage or "eMMA". We also were beginning a new Procurement Training Academy to ensure standardized practices and ensure regulatory and statutory compliance.

As CPO, I discovered amazing agility and resilience in our new state procurement program office. Our State procurement officers, together with procurement teams across the state were ready, willing and able to respond in whatever way Maryland needed. The extraordinary consequence of our transformation effort was demonstrated through unexpected capabilities of all staff to pivot quickly to new urgent needs and a "new normal" of business under Covid-19.

Staff were primed for change and already had adapted to so many new and different ways. Procurement was immediately able to adapt to rapidly changing needs and circumstances to assist or State, and local government, respond to supply drastically needed personal protection supplies, in a marketplace that proved to be bare. We worked quickly to identify sources, waived standard timeframes through use of emergency procurement methods, coordinated with the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), the Comptroller and the Treasurer's Offices and others. Within weeks, DGS' project management team built the 250-bed field medical site (FMS) at the Baltimore Convention Center (BCC). We acquired and installed multiple 16-bed modular intensive care (ICU) trailers, tents, and other needs throughout Maryland. OSP worked with state private sector health-care systems and the Maryland Hospital Association and rapidly coordinated needs with the Supply Chain VPs at both University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) and The Johns Hopkins Health System (JHHS). Comprehensive lists of clinical, medical and other health and hospital-related durable and consumable medical equipment and supplies were developed with a key strategic supplier to meet state needs, at all times and all locations. Within two weeks, OSP was able to contract for acquisition of all necessary supplies and equipment, enabling the operational capabilities of the UMMS/JHHS clinical teams to open a 250-bed field hospital on the behalf of Maryland. Our efforts included numerous field medical sites throughout the State to augment private hospital ICU and surge capacity needs. Our Procurement Officers operated a generally unknown hospital-related supply categories and the State procurement team enabled Maryland Health to be mission-ready to meet our new life, health and safety needs. View the BCC FMS construction [here](#).

It has been extraordinary to see the new State team ramp up, learn fast, and use all their professional training, experience, knowledge and skills to meet the challenging circumstances acquiring construction, professional A&E services, commodities, services, IT and complex medical and hospital supplies and services.

In response to requests by Maryland's health care systems, Governor Hogan directed us to establish a care site at Fort Washington Medical Center and we were responsible for planning, design, and construction of a new Surge Response Tent. Over twenty contractors helped pull this project off in less than a week. Other sites were then established at Frederick, Jessup, Hagerstown, Annapolis, Baltimore, Germantown, and Randallstown. In total, Maryland DGS constructed over 60 tents, with all beds and equipment. Essentially, we set up fully functional small-scale hospitals. These structures augment much-needed bed capacity to the community members we serve. View [here](#).

Maryland Procurement staff worked with the Department of Commerce and others to leverage local manufacturing suppliers. An example is captured [here](#) on how to source and deliver specialized masks.

Our team renovated the existing [Takoma Park Adventist Hospital](#).

[Here](#) is a look back at our State team's incredible work.

We also developed "Maryland Strong – Roadmap to Recovery" to quickly and safely get our citizens back to work and businesses reopened. We were tasked to ramp up our PPE supply, and we secured and are continuing to receive over 170,000,000 pieces of PPE for use throughout Maryland. This included: 13,400,000+ N95 masks; 45,900,000+ KN95 masks; 95,500+ gallons of hand sanitizer; 31,500,000+ surgical masks; 24,800,000+ gowns; 52,200,000+ gloves, 2,000,000+ face shields; 64,000+ containers of disinfecting wipes; 510,000+ goggles; 4,000+ Tyvek suits; and 200,000+ coveralls for use throughout Maryland. Maryland has sourced and received almost 100 million pieces of critical life, health, and safety products.

To provide better assurance, we developed a process to vet supplier responsibility. This helped Maryland Procurement develop and adopt a deliberative, systematic program to acquire supplies as quickly as possible.

Following this, we worked to help meet the Department of Health's needs together with Maryland's Departments of Emergency Management Services, Transportation, Commerce, Public Safety and Corrections, the Treasurer and Comptroller, the Governor's Office, the Maryland Hospital Association, the University of Maryland Medical System, The Johns Hopkins Health System, FEMA, HHS and many others.

On our journey, and probably across the nation, our professionals learned about supply chain management; its importance, fragility, difficulty for insights into products, origins, standards, logistics, customs, and transportation. This can drive current and future needs for procurement training for better understanding supply chain management, incoterms, expediting, inventory management, customs laws, and better supply accountability up and downstream. As with any challenge, our profession and our association have a real opportunity to change things for the better, which is what Maryland does best.

The Maryland Office of State Procurement proved the value procurement delivers and what we achieve when we all work together to leverage procurement power. It delivers essential solutions to meet the needs of all our public bodies and the critical life health and safety needs of our citizens, whom we serve!

Sourcing suppliers for COVID-19

1.

DGS, MDH and MEMA staff direct suppliers to email resource.mema@maryland.gov along with following info for Commerce review:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Product data performance specs and descriptive literature for items proposed | 5. Domestic or overseas origin identified |
| 2. As applicable, product certifications, FDA approvals, etc. | 6. Lead time for order date |
| 3. Medical equipment and clinical supplies reviewed by MDH, UMMS, Hopkins licensed clinicians | 7. Shipping cost to Sparrows Point or Hanover, MD |
| 4. Price and quantities immediately available for each item | 8. Company name, W9, DUNS# |
| | 9. eMMA registration |
| | 10. SDAT registration |
| | 11. MBE/WBE or certified small business registration info |

2.

Commerce reviews and validates suppliers, sources, capabilities, etc. for DGs ordering.

1. Firm's D&B number
2. Credit and risk profile acceptability
3. Add vendor to shared Commerce sourcing spreadsheet (MEMA, DGS, MDH) as approved for further sourcing consideration
4. All firms responded to and thanked

3.

DGS reviews and verifies source and products based on client needs and product ordering available for potential procurement.

1. Quantities available
2. Shipping and ordering timelines and locations
3. Product availability, client needs, specs, certifications, and other requirements established by MDH, MEMA, and others
4. Assess fair market value (FMV)
5. Seek vendor registration in eMMA
6. Check references

4.

DGS and Office of State Procurement (OSP) staff assess and procure based on current MDH and State needs.

1. Assess ability to meet exigent needs using factors for responsive, rational, reasonable (FMV), delivery, quantity, timing, etc.
2. Discuss during daily DGS staff call for deliberative decision-making and updates
3. Issue Blanket Purchase Order (BPO)
4. Advise MEMA and MDH clients, warehouse staff, other stakeholders
5. Update order status and delivery info in shared DGS spreadsheet with MDH and MEMA staff
6. Document checklist and records filed as a contract record

Pandemic Procurement Excellence Submission
MASSACHUSETTS

Submission by Kathleen Reilly:
Massachusetts PPE Emergency Procurement Team:
Maureen Barends, Katherine Orsini, Dan Billings, Brendan McCue,
Cameron O'Brien, Gustav Pearson, Julia Wolfe, Michael Woods

I am happy to nominate my core PPE team for the Pandemic Procurement Excellence Award. Not one person hesitated when asked to commit full-time to the difficult assignment of sourcing and buying PPE for Massachusetts. Despite the sudden startup of this operation, all from home, with no roadmap to follow, they brought energy, resourcefulness, patience, and resilience to the effort without complaint.

While participating in this startup in a Command Center support role, the team found that the downward pressure of managing demand, shifting strategies and careful tracking intensified the teams' activities, and the fragility of the PPE supply chain and increased competition for product required long days, often 7 days a week for the first 45 days, and continuing through May. It is notable that half of the team were only in their OSD Sourcing Manager roles for a year or less, and yet they provided excellent work from start to finish! Fortunately, although the unknown needs, specs and timing were daunting, the team worked closely with our statewide contract vendors and were able to leverage business relationships and contract terms to successfully fill three warehouses with over 100 million pieces of PPE over 3 months!

The main challenge we found was that there was no definitive stopping point regarding quantity of PPE items needed. In other words, how much is enough? An impossible question at the beginning and through the middle period, and a little more precise once a demand model was created in May. The frenzy of working in this mode made it difficult to continue the pace at which the team was working over the long haul and was exacerbated by our separateness. When you are in the office, there are ample opportunities to commiserate, collaborate or just take a break for a few minutes and change the subject. Working remotely sometimes makes it feel unnatural to just call someone and share what's going on in your day, and it also becomes easy to never stop working; there wasn't really an end of day like there would be traveling from the office at night.

That said, what has been a huge positive result of dealing with the emergency was the demonstration of resilience in a scary and unknown period of time. Time and again, the team would face obstacles, such as canceled orders, delivery delays, etc., yet always found a way to solve the problems. Resilience is an excellent quality and one that is hard to interview for when hiring people, yet this process allowed us to see in real time the abilities of staff to pivot, regroup and resolve issues as they came up.

I am so proud of the work this team did, particularly because "buying" is not at all a part of any of our job descriptions, yet there was no ramp up, they immediately jumped in and got the job done.

Nomination submitted by Kathleen Reilly

Maureen Barends, Director of Strategic Sourcing Services

It is with great pride that I nominate Maureen Barends, Director of Strategic Sourcing Services, for the Pandemic Procurement Excellence Award. Maureen was truly a superstar during this very difficult time. She selflessly dedicated herself to Massachusetts' effort to supply our hospitals, nursing homes, first responders and many other entities across the state with desperately needed PPE, while also leading the OSD Emergency Procurement Team in their coordinated efforts to source PPE.

Maureen has an extensive background in sourcing in the private sector, and in particular in the medical field. This expertise was invaluable to us as she was able to help all of us navigate that niche market, made even more difficult due to lack of US manufacturing capacity, and the challenges of purchasing through China.

Maureen and I worked closely throughout the emergency period, strategizing approaches, attending meetings with the MA Command Center, MA Emergency Management Agency, and several teams of consultants and other agencies, and sourcing supplies ourselves in order to "fill the warehouse."

It was Maureen's methodical and organized approach to this emergency that truly was a saving grace. She worked 7 days a week for weeks on end to keep up with the multitude of things we needed to take care of to make the effort a success. She was instrumental in helping shape the PPE tracker that we used to track all order data and used her professional experience and formidable negotiation skills to gain excellent pricing and commitments from our suppliers.

Because Maureen is also the Director of Strategic Sourcing, she tapped certain Sourcing staff to work full time on the effort. Her leadership of the group directly resulted in the many wins we achieved throughout the months of sourcing, and it made me proud of her and the excellent staff she supervises. Meanwhile, she also delegated her regular sourcing oversight to two senior managers, all the while keeping her eye on the projects that continued while she was sourcing and tracking orders full time.

Keeping up the pace of 7 day a week work with such a singular focus is exhausting, and Maureen persevered. I am grateful for her dedication to the Commonwealth, and for hanging in there even when others may have given up. There were plenty of lost deals, frustrations, and difficult issues to tackle, and she kept going! Resilience, dependability, and confidence are all attributes Maureen possess, and for which I am thankful.

Maureen cares about her staff, she made sure to touch base with each of them and as a group once a week, and insisted that they not talk about work, but about how they were holding up, whether they needed anything, how could she help? Given that the pandemic shut us down so suddenly and knowing that everyone has their own unique challenges when working from home, caring for family members and finding time to rest, her efforts to reach out to her staff were welcomed and appreciated. That is how you build and maintain team cohesiveness, even in such times as these.

I can honestly say that Massachusetts would not have been as successful in their PPE planning, sourcing, tracking, etc. if Maureen was not a part of it. The fact that she was a great leader in the process was icing on the cake! She is a valued employee, and her value shone bright during this difficult time!

Pandemic Procurement Excellence Submission
OHIO

OHIO PPE SUBMISSIONS

Submitted by Todd Gable

Here are a few examples of Procurement challenges Ohio faced associated with the COVID-19 PPE response:

The shifting supply availabilities, shifting demand projections, funding questions, financing questions, shipping and logistics availability, imports/customs/tariffs, supplier verification, defining product quality and the large quantities...the challenges go on and on. It would take a while to weave a comprehensive story.

To provide a simple, relatively small example, we were working with a local 3-D printer to produce and deliver face shields. The supplier could not handle the quantity we were requesting because they were limited by available staff, equipment, and material resin. We were able to shift and quickly develop a weekly delivery and payment schedule that worked. Here are a few excerpts from their follow up email:

“Thank you for reaching out! We’ve delivered 2 shipments, and everything is flowing well. (As a result of your order) We have hired furloughed workers (doubling our pre-COVID workforce) to be able to deliver more units. We are serving Native American tribes, nursing homes, homeless shelters and lots and lots of small dental, optometry and pediatric offices who cannot get PPE from typical sources.

We have also kicked off an injection molding tool with an automotive partner who is furloughed. This tool will make 100K visors at a rate of 15000 per week and will be production-ready in 2 weeks. This has allowed our company to reduce the cost of those shields to everyone.

Such a blessing. I am truly grateful for your guidance through the state purchasing process.”

The work done every day by state procurement professionals supports our agencies and citizens in ways we do not often get to fully see and appreciate. An emergency response can throw that impact into sharp focus. Thank you to all the managers and staff that support and lead those efforts. Thank you to the Ohio Leadership Team for that support.

Pandemic Procurement Excellence Submission
PENNSYLVANIA

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

PANDEMIC PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE (PPE)

The Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Tom Wolf, declared a State of Emergency effective Monday, March 6, 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 30, 2020, the Department of General Services (DGS) Bureau of Procurement (BOP), became the centralized procurement office for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and was tasked with completing all purchases of PPE for the Commonwealth.

With a team of approximately 70 procurement professionals, support staff, and managers that have never worked remotely, BOP needed to swiftly mobilize to ensure the response was successful. As the team gathered their laptops and supplies from the office and established network connectivity, individuals were called upon to serve in new and unfamiliar roles. Under the guidance of the Department of the Community & Economic Development and PEMA, BOP, was tasked with the roll-out and management of a COVID19 Response Portal to manage the hundreds of suppliers reaching out to the state offering PPE products. The teams needed to establish a centralized emergency warehouse location for the receipt and distribution of goods, set up and stock emergency patient overflow care facilities in known hot spots across the Commonwealth, develop processes and procedures, and provide training on the emergency processes in response to the crisis.

The BOP faced many challenges early on, including the development of processes and procedures to guide the team in uncharted territory. Staff was asked to perform tasks they were not familiar with which required procedures and training to be quickly developed and deployed. It was not perfect out of the gate, but by making use of software that supported collaboration, such as Office 365 and Skype for Business, the team could refine processes and procedures and effectively communicate, which enhanced the processes.

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) submitted the first wave of product requests in mid-March, and the BOP immediately began working to locate products. Searching existing contracts, reaching out to suppliers that responded through the COVID Portal, and locating potential foreign suppliers for the product was a challenging process. Verifying the product specifications and quality became a key part of the purchasing process. The BOP Quality Assurance (QA) team, in concert with the Department of Health (DOH), established a process to request and track samples and document the results of the product review, to mitigate the risk of procuring counterfeit products.

Complicating our purchasing efforts was the global competition for the limited products available, changing export rules in China, counterfeit products, changing Federal Drug Administrations (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, price gouging, and risk of the product being delayed in customs or confiscated by FEMA. For months, the BOP team worked countless hours 7 days a week, including late nights to speak with contacts in Southeast Asia and other global entities to locate acceptable products. Purchasers and support staff remained in close contact with the suppliers through the order, receipt, and quality review processes. The teams' dedication enabled them to quickly, negotiate non-standard terms, when to permit advance payment terms with the support of Budget Office and adapt to incoterms.

Arguably one of the biggest challenges faced by the BOP team was understanding PPE product specifications, and the standards and certifications established by the FDA and CDC. The Transportation Team, who typically buys roadway material including aggregate, asphalt, concrete, and road salt, faced a steep learning curve when they became the primary purchasers of the N95 respirators and 3 ply medical masks. Not only were they challenged to understand the specifications and overall market, but they also had to navigate the ever-changing regulations and exporting rules from foreign countries, including China. They also had to place a greater impetus on vetting potential suppliers to ensure they were dealing with reputable companies and avoiding cases of fraud. For a team that normally purchases from a well-established base of in-state suppliers for their commodities, this was no small task. To date, the Transportation Team has secured over 11 million N95 respirators and 3-ply medical masks. The Supplier Support and Development Team stepped forward to assist with the development of the COVID Portal, supplier vetting, and to purchase garments including isolation gowns and coveralls. When not responding to this crisis, this team manages the cooperative purchasing program (COSTARS) and their normal day-to-day activities include answering phone calls and emails, managing cooperative contracts, hosting webinars, and crafting a quarterly newsletter.

Throughout this pandemic, we have learned how adaptable, driven, and reliable our employees are. Switching focus to the purchase of PPE was not a seamless transition and often required teams to “adjust on the fly”. The teams adapted to telework by carving out at home workspaces and overcoming challenges such as uncomfortable furniture, working in the presence of family and pets, power/Wi-Fi outages, and learning to use collaborative software tools. Much like a family, the teams have happily interacted and shared their challenges and successes during virtual team meetings, providing much needed personal interaction. Some were surprised how quickly they adjusted to working from home, how much they have accomplished, feeling relaxed, and more productive. While many team members have found they enjoy teleworking, others miss the routine of getting dressed and going into the office, being with their colleagues, and are trying not to become lax in physical activity or exercise. Understanding the importance of the mission drove everyone to overcome the challenges they encountered.

BOP continues to operate under the State of Emergency, as the Centralized Procurement Office for PPE, work closely with PEMA and DOH as they continue to closely monitor COVID19 and the Commonwealth’s PPE needs. To date, the team has successfully bought over 34 million units of PPE products, laptop computers to mobilize multiple agencies, and thousands of gallons of sanitizing and disinfecting products. We are proud of our employees and what they have been able to accomplish under such extraordinary circumstances to support both health care workers, agency personnel, and constituents during this pandemic.

Pandemic Procurement Excellence Submission
SOUTH CAROLINA

TEAM SOUTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES PPE SUBMISSION

The South Carolina Division of Procurement Services (the Division) has a long-standing relationship with the South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD). During emergency response, Division staff are embedded in the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in support of Emergency Support Function #3 (ESF-3) – Public Works & Engineering and ESF-7 – Logistics Management & Resource Support. Typically, our activations are in support of natural disasters (hurricanes, floods, and severe weather). Our team is arguably among the most experienced in the nation in emergency response with a cumulative activation time of 62 days between 2015-2019 (Hurricanes Joaquin 2015; Matthew 2016; Irma 2017; Florence 2018; Dorian 2019). We regularly support State Agencies as well as political subdivisions in sourcing supplies needed for emergency response and are confident and proud of our ability to respond and serve the citizens of South Carolina.

While confident and proud of our abilities, COVID-19 has shattered all records and upended our normal course of business operations in an emergency. The Division is currently on Day 126 of supporting emergency operations in response to COVID-19. Historically, we have up to 4 staff members actively working at the SEOC during emergency activations. In this response, our office manned the SEOC with a team of two alternating staff members for 84 days while the remainder supported emergency operations remotely from their homes. Staff made heroic, unprecedented strides in adjusting to a remote workplace, added additional workload for emergency procurements, and maintained on-going work.

In a typical hurricane response, ESF-7 serves a supporting but crucial role. In this event, ESF-7 has been at the very center of the State's response to COVID-19. Over the last four months the procurement team located vendors with commodities in high demand world-wide and completed purchase agreements that supported state, local, private and volunteer organizations. Procurements ranged from food and water to medical equipment and cleaning supplies. Purchase agreements were made for over 55 different types of commodities including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Most of the Division staff were unfamiliar with these types of commodities. The staff had to overcome challenges verifying standards through the CDC and FDA to ensure quality products were procured. Also, we became much more aware of the importance of lower levels of the supply chain and impacts of raw material availability, customs requirements/inspections, and holidays in other countries. Much of the State's response heavily relied on the ability of the procurement team's success. Two of our most critical successes were the establishment of the PPE Warehouse Operation and COVID-19 Vendor Review Process.

After the Governor declared a State of Emergency on March 13, we quickly realized that smaller purchases and drop shipments of PPE and other supplies were not feasible in the current environment. Based on experience with receipt and distribution of water and food supplies during previous hurricane events, SCEMD and the Division worked closely to establish and supply a PPE Warehouse which would be used to receive and distribute product across the State. The PPE warehouse location was identified, staffed, and began receiving deliveries by March 27, two weeks after the State of Emergency was declared. PPE purchases for the warehouse included 2,374,845 N95 masks, 3,542, 975 surgical masks, 812,514 units of eye protection, 9,966,581 surgical gloves, and 2,588,446 hospital gowns and protective suits. The State has utilized this ware-

house to provide PPE to state and local authorities as well as to support several critical missions during this event. The critical missions included:

1. SC Election Commission Support — Primary Elections were held as scheduled on June 9. Supplies such as face shields, gloves, disinfecting wipes, masks, and cotton swabs were sourced and provided to supply 2261 voting precincts across the state. In all 767,187 ballots were successfully cast.
2. SC Department of Social Services — Coordination of delivery of PPE and cleaning supplies to 740 childcare centers across the State. This was a vital mission for these facilities to reopen and maintain operations in order to provide childcare for essential workers.
3. Return to Work Project — The State is currently in Phase 2 of a three phase Return to Work Project. Our office has coordinated with EMD, DOT, and the Department of Administration to provide face shields, protective eyewear, masks, hand soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, disinfecting wipes, gloves, and plexiglass dividers to 76 state agencies in an effort to return staff to the workplace safely.

Based in part on the success of the PPE Warehouse, the SC Legislature has authorized the establishment of a statewide stockpile, which includes a 28-day supply of PPE, to be managed by EMD in consultation with the State Fiscal Accountability Authority.

Another challenge was the volume of “offers to help” from the vendor community. This is a common occurrence during an emergency; however, there was (and still is) an exponential increase in the volume of these offers in this event. These offers were received by government procurement officials across the state as well as by medical facilities (hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, etc.). In normal circumstances, we would rely on existing contract vendors which have already been through a responsibility check. However, due to circumstances surrounding the pandemic, we were forced to utilize alternate suppliers. Many of the vendors who reached out were unknown to our staff or were newly formed. Our office partnered with the SC Hospital Association to set-up a program to collect and vet information from these vendors. Our Business Operations Staff were trained to perform high-level verifications on all vendors offering pandemic-related supplies and services. This included searching the SAM.gov website, various Secretary of State websites, and the Dun & Bradstreet website for reports and findings. Information was consolidated into a spreadsheet published on the Division’s website for use by the public. Currently, 549 vendors have been reviewed and added to our listing. By having this information consolidated into a single location, agencies have been able to streamline their sourcing processes and have identified suppliers that could meet their needs.

Pandemic Procurement Excellence Submission
TENNESSEE

THE STATE OF TENNESSEE CENTRAL PROCUREMENT OFFICE – MEETING THE COVID CRISIS WITH ADAPTABILITY AND TEAMWORK

Tennessee is always ready for an emergency, having its share of past adverse events that required a systematic government response. In the Volunteer spirit, the State has built a coordinated response infrastructure that can quickly come together to meet events head-on. Likewise the Tennessee Central Procurement Office was created in 2011, designed from the ground up with a focus on flexibility, customer service, and collaboration, not least in times of crisis.

Our dedicated emergency response agency, Tennessee Emergency Management Agency and pre-existing State Emergency Operations Center coordinate crisis response. As in the past, the CPO has integrated seamlessly with TEMA and the SEOC to spearhead the procurement response to the COVID-19 crisis.

While leaning in with staff dedicated to the COVID effort, the CPO is carrying its full load of ongoing work in a remote fashion, in high spirits and strong camaraderie. Our ability to power through is due in part to the strong interpersonal bonds and collaboration we designed into our organization, as well as specific programs and tools we have piloted and deployed years before this crisis.

CPO Contributions to the Emergency Response

The CPO is an integral part of the State’s highly-organized COVID response approach, and we are meeting the challenges of this pandemic through staff effort, policy, and unique purchasing solutions.

The State’s crisis approach includes a live operations center, which we have staffed with eight in-person CPO personnel, pulling from a volunteer rotation of 25 employees. Working in a crisis center during a pandemic, while trying to find creative solutions to new problems is challenging, but we are happy to do our part.

To meet the challenges ahead, an early step was to develop targeted policy adaptations. We worked with our oversight authority – the State Comptroller of the Treasury – to execute blanket rule exceptions to facilitate email solicitation submissions. We also added specific federal requirements (e.g., CARES Act) to the contract template, adjusted the standard response hour from 2:00 to COB for flexibility, and added MCC codes and increased PCard spend thresholds. We streamlined forms/processes to focus on essential information when using COVID-relevant contracts, and facilitated easier access to restricted lines on our Emergency Services contract. We also benefitted from a prior approval process automation that allows a dozen approval types to be expedited via routing in our ERP.

Our direct procurement work has involved State-wide coordination of PPE purchases across all units of government, as well as intensive acquisition of key commodities and services. The CPO approved 30 emergency request contracts or POs (most negotiated and executed through the CPO), valued at nearly \$100 million, and additional TEMA-related spend of nearly \$120 million across over 1,400 transactions, acquiring in excess of 100 million specific items. In addition to

PPE (which in turn, includes correctional facilities across the State), the TEMA-related purchasing includes cleaning supplies, medical supplies, food support for our Human Needs and Feeding focus groups (approximately 5 million pounds for food banks), and a broad array of other needs. We also leveraged our existing Clinical Lab Services contract, proactively coordinating with the Department of Health to supplement and expand testing at State labs.

One unique solution that was achieved with CPO support was the creation of alternate care sites to increase hospital capacity for treatment of COVID-19 patients in the State's two largest metro areas. The CPO developed a suite of contracts to help establish these sites, including 14 new contracts plus an expansion of three existing contracts, and covering services such as medical staffing, medical oxygen, pharmacy, x-ray services, food, linen, biomedical waste, custodial services, security services, temperature screening services, etc. In addition to developing the contracting vehicles and procuring supplies valued at approximately \$4M for the sites, the CPO obtained over \$1M in surplus medical assets for only the cost of freight.

CPO Adaptability and Teamwork

All of the work going into the emergency response has obviously taken away staff resources otherwise focused on day-to-day operations of the CPO. Thankfully we are a flexible organization, with team structures that emphasize collaboration, and allow ready balancing of tasks and individual workloads. Despite the number of staff volunteering with TEMA, we have supported one another to maintain work flow and quality. Even our physical space — which we miss very much — was intentionally designed to reinforce teamwork and cooperation. Simultaneously, we have adapted to approaches that allow us to connect closely with customers, and deployed tools that help us coordinate no matter where we are.

As the world is learning, working remotely has its challenge — thankfully we have had several years of practice in this model under a unique Tennessee program called Alternative Workplace Solutions. AWS was developed in 2016 to reduce the State's real estate footprint while furthering business relationships with customers, and we were involved from the start. Our focus was to have staff flexibly work from alternative locations when possible — including on-site with client agencies — which has helped ease the COVID remote work transition. We arrived at this situation familiar with working together both in person and remotely, and have also built strong customer agency relationships due to increased exposure in the pre-COVID world.

Supporting our collaboration model, we use technology tools to stay connected and work. We shifted negotiations to video, and developed fully-remote onboarding practices. Our file-sharing platform (OwnCloud) reduces in-person contact and physical media use for files too large for email, and facilitates public document sharing like protests and FOIA requests. Our Jabber platform provides a fully-encrypted one-stop communication center that is endorsed by the State's technology authority, allowing us to check colleagues' availability, place individual/group calls, send individual/group chats, screenshare, etc., all integrating with Outlook and SharePoint. We are comfortable with Jabber through our experience with AWS, feeling as close to our colleagues as if they were sitting next to us. This has made the transition to post-COVID remote work easier to adapt to and thrive in.

Pandemic Procurement Excellence Submission
TEXAS

PANDEMIC PROCUREMENT EXCELLENCE

STATE OF TEXAS – 2020

Submitted by Bobby Pounds, Chief Procurement Officer
Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts,
Statewide Procurement Division

The Statewide Procurement Division (SPD) of the Texas Comptroller’s office (CPA) is Texas state government’s central procurement office for non-IT commodities and services. SPD also functions as a procurement oversight agency, offering technical assistance and training to more than 200 agencies and certifying more than 5,000 procurement and contracting professionals statewide. Our goal is to procure goods and services in ways that result in best-value contracts, leveraging the state’s buying power while meeting the needs of our state and local customers.

Procurement is complex in the best of times. We must develop fair and open solicitations, conduct vendor meetings and negotiations while following specific statutes and rules as well as agency-specific procedures, ensuring compliance and transparency throughout the entire process. Throw in a pandemic, shelter-in-place directives and the need to completely overhaul our processes in response, and one can see how procurement could easily turn into chaos. How do we handle approvals? How can we meet with vendors? How much additional time will new measures require? The questions and issues were endless and crucial.

SPD is a proud partner with the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM), supplying personnel and resources to help procure supplies and services in the event of disasters — as the pandemic surely is. Following the guidance of TDEM executive staff, SPD is providing procurement, resource tracking and inventory follow-up for many of the items being purchased during the pandemic. SPD placed one full-time employee at TDEM’s State Operations Center to assist with purchasing while using four other staff members who worked remotely to track resources and provide inventory follow-up. Texas also takes part in a weekly multi-agency call to discuss how the pandemic is progressing and to develop strategies to combat the rise in cases by procuring essential items and following state mandates and guidelines.

Unlike hurricanes and other natural disasters, COVID-19 has been an event with no clear beginning or end. It has forced our staff to drop some day-to-day functions and put normal procurements on hold as the state’s numbers spike. SPD also was forced to limit our certification courses when a number of our trainers were redirected to assist TDEM with procurement. As a result of the pandemic and expanded teleworking, SPD began offering certification courses online via webinars. As of mid-July, SPD has held 18 classes and trained more than more than 450 students virtually since mid-March.

The beginning of the pandemic in late February attracted the attention of numerous untested vendors, some offering masks for as much as \$9 each. The same was true for gloves, gowns and other much-needed items. While some initial purchases may have been made at a higher dollar mark just to get the state in position to handle the crisis, we quickly established a vetting process that weeded out inadequate vendors and identified those who could meet our needs with reasonable and transparent pricing.

It's safe to say that quality control has been our biggest challenge in the pandemic. Texas even received "samples" of items that, once delivered, proved to be nothing more than empty boxes. As a result, we began to keep running lists of fraudulent and reliable vendors. One surprising result of the pandemic, however, has been the use of non-standard vendors who were able to provide what we needed, consistently, quickly and in quantity. For example, the best face shields Texas has purchased were supplied by an automobile manufacturer.

I'm proud to say that the Comptroller's office was ahead of the curve as the COVID-19 pandemic began to spread. CPA began greatly expanded teleworking in mid-March, when other agencies were still in the office, sorting out their telework policies. We began meeting with the deputy comptroller in February to address how we could transition to a telework environment. This included developing processes for procurement transaction approvals, moving to an Acrobat "fill and sign" format and using DocuSign for more complex scenarios requiring a chain of approvals, such as nepotism forms. These new processes required a coordinated effort between executive, SPD, legal and IT staff and has proven to be extremely efficient and very successful.

Our staff showed extreme adaptability and initiative in providing vital assistance to state agencies and local governments, while also learning to adapt to ever-changing procurement processes as the pandemic and teleworking progressed. If there's one thing the pandemic has shown us, it's that we can succeed in a telework environment. The days of five-day-a-week office hours may be gone. We don't know what the new normal will look like in terms of the office environment, but I'm delighted to say that Texas met this pandemic head-on with little or no impact on the customers we serve daily.