

Welding Simulator Provides Real-Life Experience

Students in the Pre-Apprentice track of the Mountaineer Job ChalleNGe Program at Camp Dawson in Kingwood, West Virginia have a new tool to help them gain real-life experience in the classroom, thanks to a purchase made recently by the West Virginia National Guard with assistance from the Purchasing Division.

The tool, a welding simulator, provides a realistic solution to classroom training where users virtually learn proper welding techniques that would otherwise be difficult to master by just reading a textbook. The simulator mimics the look, feel and action of actual welding guns and torches and provides a faster learning experience in a safer environment.

“This is an example of the type of purchase that makes a difference in the lives of West Virginians,” said Purchasing Division Buyer John Estep. “The students will benefit greatly, and the experience will help improve their job prospects when they are



The new welding simulator acquired by the Mountaineer Job ChalleNGe Program will be used in their new welding track program. At the end of this program, the welding simulator will help students obtain their AWS Certification in Stick Weld and MIG Weld certifications.

finished with their education.”

The Mountaineer Job ChalleNGe Program provides graduates with career and technical education leading to industry-recognized certifications and job placement within that trade. In addition to the Pre-Apprentice track, the Program also includes tracks on manufacturing technology, medical, horizontal construction, and energy/safety.

The winning vendor for this solicitation was Airgas Inc. of Charleston.

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Vendor Registration Support for CARES Act Grants Sees Increase in Vendor Outreach

While the Purchasing Division is not involved with the development or application of Gov. Jim Justice's West Virginia CARES Act Small Business Grant Program, some Purchasing Division employees found themselves in an unexpected support role following its announcement.

“When the grant program was first announced, the Technical Services Unit received several dozen calls per employee, per day regarding the program and inquiries into each vendor's registration status,” shared Mark Totten, who manages the Technical Services Unit. “Many of these calls were from entities who did not have a vendor number with the state of West Virginia but needed one in order to apply for a CARES Act grant.”

For a small business to be eligible to receive grant funds, they must have a wvOASIS record in the state's ERP system. When individuals investigated the

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Despite Workday Challenges, Employees See Lasting Developments in Purchasing Process

It's hard to believe we're headed into September. The month of the autumnal equinox, days of recognition celebrating Labor and Grandparents Days (did you know the latter tradition began in West Virginia?), and the first days of fall sports is ordinarily full of fall decor, back to school shopping, cooler weather, and new routines. It is also smack dab in the middle of campaign season and one month closer to another seemingly historical election. This year, anyway.

So what will September look like this year? That's the thing, no one really knows. One thing is for sure, though. The last six months have been like no other. We have been overloaded with information from government officials, the media, and often our own inner circle. The information has been conflicting, many times controversial, and sometimes downright alarming. And yet we as a human race are resilient creatures.

We have learned to adapt the best way we know how both in our personal lives and our professional careers. Our vendor community is submitting electronic bids more frequently. Many of our state partners have transitioned seamlessly to a work-from-home or rotating schedule. And agencies continue to buy needed goods and services to meet the needs of our state, despite the many interruptions we continue to face in our "normal" workdays.

Purchasing Division staff members have also worked hard over the last month. We assisted many of our state agency partners in setting up their new Amazon Business Prime accounts, created usable flow charts to answer the question of whether an agency can buy from Amazon, and provided training to our Amazon account administrators and end users. We have also answered questions about the setup of the account, worked through technical issues, and helped agencies convert existing accounts.

Meanwhile, we extended the deadline for our *Procurement*

Officer of the Year and *Excellence in Specification Writing* awards to the end of August and will be meeting soon to discuss the nomination submissions. Watch for an article in an upcoming issue of *The Buyers Network* announcing this year's recipients! We're working to finalize our Fiscal Year 2020 Annual Report, which we hope to also share in the coming months. We have hired new staff (see the article on page 4) and said goodbye to others.



But this time hasn't been without its challenges. At the end of August, we experienced a shutdown of wvOASIS and had to modify our processes as a result, both internal and external, while the system underwent an upgrade.

All of this to say... life goes on. We have finally found our footing with this new normal. We will continue to uphold the integrity of the state purchasing process, and we will continue to expect the same of our agency partners. Like all of us, Purchasing Division management continuously monitors the COVID-19 situation locally and will continue to adapt as necessary to ensure procurements continue to be processed in a timely and effective manner. Please help us by submitting complete and sound specifications and giving due diligence to your agency requisitions prior to submitting them.

We're all in this together, and together, we'll all get through this.

Tell Me More: Purchasing's Inspections Unit Provides Oversight, Accountability to Agencies for Purchases

The Inspection Services Unit plays a vital role in the Purchasing Division's efforts to ensure that state agencies are following all state laws, rules, and procedures. As part of their responsibilities, Purchasing Division inspectors focus on purchases under the agency delegated purchasing authority (i.e. purchases of \$25,000 or less) but inspectors may request documentation for formal purchases, if needed.

"Our goal when we visit an agency is to review purchasing documents that were issued the previous year by that agency to ensure those delegated purchases were completed accurately," said Contracts Manager Greg Clay. "This process is necessary to make sure taxpayer dollars are being spent effectively and efficiently. If they are not, that affects all of us because we are all

taxpayers. We don't want to make anyone look bad, but we sincerely want to help procurement officers do their jobs better and according to the law."

Prior to any inspection, the inspectors utilize Business Intelligence reporting within wvOASIS to narrow down the agency's total list of transactions to approximately four percent for review. As part of the inspection process, the inspectors are permitted access to personnel, records, reports, and other documents as needed. They look for documentation related to the use of internal sources, if applicable; use of statewide contracts, when

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New Report Results in More Responses, Lower Bids

A new report in Business Intelligence is resulting in more responses to solicitations from the vendor community, according to the Purchasing Division. The report, developed to increase reach to vendors for competitive solicitations posted by West Virginia state agencies, harvests and exports vendor data from *wvOASIS* that has been collected through the Purchasing Division's Vendor Registration Program. Access to this data allows procurement employees statewide to immediately research and contact potential vendors for their agencies' purchasing needs based on the commodity they need to procure.

The goal of having this data accessible in fewer steps, without adding to the procurement officers' workload, is to accelerate the competitive bid process and the number of potential vendors who are aware of the state's advertised solicitations. With more prospective vendors aware of specific state bidding opportunities, the number of vendors who actually prepare a response to any of the state's many advertised needs could increase sharply if this report's data is used by all purchasers to make vendors aware when there is a relevant opportunity. The result for all

state agencies is increased vendor competition and lower bid amounts when an outside vendor is necessary.

In current times where state agencies must stretch their budgets, accelerating the level of competition within the state bid process may literally translate into savings in the millions of dollars each calendar year. This report was designed to empower procurement officers to encourage competition for all their purchases.

The report came about after Purchasing Division staff members noticed there were fewer vendor responses to solicitations, even for high-dollar projects, following the launch of *wvOASIS*. To analyze the actual numbers, Technical Services Unit employees Mark Totten and Lu Anne Cottrill tabulated ten years' worth of bid frequency and graphed the average amount of bids received per solicitation per year. This study found that following the 2014 launch of the ERP system when the West Virginia Pur-

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TELL ME MORE: INSPECTIONS

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applicable; proper bid documentation; vendor registration; verification searches; purchase orders issued; asset tags on property; certification of non-conflict of interest; and possible stringing activity, or actions circumventing the \$25,000 threshold by making smaller purchases to otherwise avoid the use of competitive bidding.

While all inspections are currently being completed virtually, the inspectors can provide additional assistance to agencies by offering one-on-one training

to ensure the individuals processing purchasing transactions are knowledgeable of the state purchasing procedures in place.

Once review of the documentation and transactions is complete, work on the inspection report begins. The report organizes the information by finding rather than transaction. Within each grouped finding, agencies will see the transactions found to be in non-compliance with that finding. At the bottom of each section, the requirements and recommendations are

noted.

A grading system, which assigns agencies with an A to F grade based on their inspection's findings, allows the Purchasing Division to more efficiently evaluate an agency's conformance to state law, rules, and procedures.

The report is prepared and sent to the agency for its review and comments. The agency is given two weeks to agree or disagree with the findings. The response is included in the final report.

For more information on inspections, visit the Inspection Services webpage at www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/inspection. Among the information posted on this page is a link to all completed inspection reports, as well as more detailed guidance on the inspection process, an inspection checklist, resources, and frequently asked questions.



Contracts Manager Greg Clay presents to procurement officers at the 2019 Agency Purchasing Conference. Clay will also present a webinar on "Inspection Services" on October 7, 2020. To register, visit www.onlinelearning.wv.gov and search the course catalog for PUR309W.

Purchasing Welcomes Two New Employees to Staff

The Purchasing Division is pleased to welcome two new employees to its staff: Amy Kelly and Jason Thompson. Kelly joins the Communication and Technical Services section's Communication and Professional Development Unit as an Office Assistant III, while Thompson will serve as a state purchasing inspector for the Contract Management Unit within the Acquisition and Contract Administration section.



Amy Kelly

A resident of Huntington, West Virginia, Kelly previously worked as an Office Assistant III for the Office of Administrative Hearings for two years. She enjoys spending her free time with her family.

"I am looking forward to learning new things in my new job," said Kelly.

A resident of Chesapeake, Ohio, Thompson joins state government following a 21-year career in the funeral industry. He worked for Car-

riage Services, which is a funeral service corporation based in Houston, Texas. He started with the company as a licensed funeral director and embalmer and was eventually promoted to managing partner of his own firm.

In his free time, Thompson enjoys attending concerts, fishing, and going on weekend trips to the mountains with his wife. He has two sons who play high school sports, so he also likes attending their games as well as Marshall football games.

"I am excited to meet new people and learn how to perform the tasks of my new job as efficiently and effectively as possible," Thompson said.

Welcome Kelly and Thompson to the Purchasing Division!



Jason Thompson

Procurement Officer Profile: Brewer Stays Busy with Assortment of Important Responsibilities

Tamela Brewer, the primary designated procurement officer for the School Building Authority, began her career with the state of West Virginia in March of 2006 with the Supreme Court's Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Court's Juvenile Probation Division. In November of 2014, she transferred to the School Building Authority as the executive assistant to the executive director. By May of 2019, she took on the role of coordinator of administrative services, in which she serves as the procurement designee, asset management coordinator, and accounts payable for the organization.

In this role, Brewer is responsible for purchasing all services and commodities for the agency, processing state agreements and contracts in *wvOASIS*, receiving invoices, and administering payments. Additionally, she monitors the agency's fixed assets, processes retired assets through the West Virginia State Agency for Surplus Property, and reviews and approves invoices processed through *wvOASIS* for the payment of grant awards.

Brewer says she enjoys her job. "I love the variety of responsibilities and challenges that it offers me daily," she explained.

The School Building Authority was created to address the educational planning and school construction needs of the state in an efficient and economical manner.

Brewer holds a bachelor's degree in business administration with an emphasis in accounting from West Virginia State University. Born in Charleston, she currently resides in Nitro. She has a daughter, three sons, and two grandchildren.

Buyers Network



Tamela Brewer
School Building Authority

REPORT

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chasing Bulletin was moved into *wvOA-SIS*, competitive vendor responses to centralized solicitations dropped significantly. As a result, it was fair to conclude that the state of West Virginia was paying a higher price for commodities and services than was necessary in a competitive bid environment, and the report was identified by Purchasing Division staff as a possible solution to this problem.

Purchasing Division buyers are already using the data in the new report extensively to research and contact vendors, so they are aware of all advertised solicitations in the West Virginia Purchasing Bulletin. In one case, the number of responses nearly tripled from the previous solicitation for that same contract.

Through the Purchasing Division's use of this report, buyers are seeing an astounding number of new vendors participating in the state's competitive bid process. This increase in competition has resulted in lower bid amounts as well as increased the state's vendor base participating in the competitive bid process. If you have a success story using this new vendor commodity report, please share it by emailing us at Purchasing.Division@wv.gov for a chance to be featured in a future newsletter.

Purchasing's Vendor Performance Form Vital for Managing Agency and Vendor Relations

While the Purchasing Division offers many trainings and guidelines on vendor management, an important and often overlooked resource is the *Vendor Performance Form*. This form allows agencies to properly document any problems that may be occurring or have been resolved with a vendor. By completing the *Vendor Performance Form*, agencies ensure that the Purchasing Division has a documented and complete understanding of how this vendor has or is performing.

Many of the *Vendor Performance Forms* received by the Purchasing Division are in response to ongoing issues where an agency is requesting help from the Purchasing Division. This should only be done after an agency has worked to rectify the issue unsuccessful-

fully. Though it is important to submit the *Vendor Performance Form* in this instance, the Purchasing Division also encourages agencies to submit these reports for resolved issues.

"While we wish all contracts would proceed perfectly after being awarded, we are aware that is not always the case," said Purchasing Director Mike Sheets. "The *Vendor Performance Form* was developed as a way for the Purchasing Division to improve agency and vendor relations. Maintaining a paper trail of issues, ongoing or resolved, with vendors helps the Purchasing Division identify recurring problems that could be avoided in future contracts, and to identify problem vendors that may need to be suspended or debarred from doing business with the state of

West Virginia."

When submitting a *Vendor Performance Form*, agencies should include all details of the issue; a description or supporting documentation of any attempts made to resolve the issue; the vendor's response; and the resolution sought or made, if any.

While the *Vendor Performance Form* may be sent to your agency's designated Purchasing Division buyer, a copy must be submitted directly to Purchasing.VendorRegistration@wv.gov. All Vendor Performance Reports are maintained by the Vendor Registration unit. A copy of the form can be found at WVPurchasing.gov under "Forms."

CARES Grant

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vendor registration process for the state of West Virginia, many stumbled upon the Purchasing Division and reached out to the vendor registration staff. Totten estimates his staff assisted between 100-150 vendors specifically applying for their CARES Act grant.

In addition to helping small businesses affected by COVID-19, Purchasing Division staff also increased the number of registered vendors that can competitively bid on contracts. As a result of the CARES Act Grant Program applications, an average of six to eight vendors continue to fully register each day with the Purchasing Division.

"In the course of providing information to vendors, the Purchasing Division's vendor registration program was a frequent topic of discussion, and many vendors opted to fully register with the state after hearing about opportunities to compete for state contracts and potentially generate additional business by diversifying their customer base to include state government agencies," added Totten. "Many vendors were hearing about the state procurement process and the *West Virginia Purchasing Bulletin* for the first time."

The Purchasing Division would like to thank and recognize the hard work of the Technical Services Unit on this issue. While this is outside the normal scope of the Vendor Registration Program's typical responsibilities, the staff's hard work and willingness to assist has been an immense help to small businesses seeking assistance during this difficult time.

For more information on the CARES Act Small Business Grant Program, visit grants.wv.gov. Additional information on registering as a vendor with the Purchasing Division can be found at www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/VendorReg.html.

THE BUYERS NETWORK

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WEST VIRGINIA STRONG
CARES Act Small Business Funding *The Comeback*

Current Statewide Contract Update

(As of August 18, 2020)

This page includes a listing of current changes made to statewide contracts issued by the Purchasing Division. Information and dates listed in this **Current Statewide Contract Update** are subject to change. All statewide contracts are available online at www.state.wv.us/admin/purchase/swc. For more information, please contact the buyer assigned to statewide contracts.

Contract Renewals

Contract	Vendor	Commodity	Effective Date
ESRI21	Environmental Syt Research Institute	Geographic info system	08/20/20 -08/19/22
TEMP21A	WV Assoc. of Rehab Facilities	Temporary Personnel Svcs	07/15/20 -07/14/21
TEMP21B	Athena Consulting	Temporary Personnel Svcs	07/15/20 -07/14/21
TEMP21C	Saunders Staffing	Temporary Personnel Svcs	07/15/20 -07/14/21
TEMP21D	22 nd Century Technologies Inc	Temporary Personnel Svcs	07/15/20 -07/14/21
TEMP21E	Moten Tate Incorporated	Temporary Personnel Svcs	07/15/20 -07/14/21

TEMP21F	Express Services	Temporary Personnel Svcs	07/15/20 -07/14/21
TEMP21G	Excelsior Consulting	Temporary Personnel Svcs	07/15/20 -07/14/21
TEMP21H	Jaykay Inc	Temporary Personnel Svcs	07/15/20 -07/14/21
TEMP21I	Manpower	Temporary Personnel Svcs	07/15/20 -07/14/21

Contract Renewals

Contract	Vendor	Commodity	Effective Date
SWC*19	KOMAX LLC	Photocopiers	08/24/20 -08/23/21

Dates to Remember

For more information on these events, contact us at Purchasing.Training@wv.gov or visit WV-Purchasing.gov and click on the Training link.

To register, visit onlinelearning.wv.gov.

Payment Process (PUR307W)
September 23, 2020 | 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Contracting and Fraud in Public Procurement (PUR308W)
September 30, 2020 | 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Forms and Documentation & Inspection Services (PUR309W)
October 7, 2020 | 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Solicitation Process: From Pre-Planning to Post Award (PUR202W)
October 21, 2020 | 9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Below is a list of Purchasing Division buyers assigned to specific state agencies.

BUYER	E-MAIL	PHONE
<u>Supervisors</u>		
Tara Lyle	Tara.L.Lyle@wv.gov	558-2544
Guy Nisbet	Guy.L.Nisbet@wv.gov	558-2596
Linda Harper	Linda.B.Harper@wv.gov	558-0468
<u>Senior Buyers</u>		
Mark Atkins	Mark.A.Atkins@wv.gov	558-2307
Jessica Chambers	Jessica.S.Chambers@wv.gov	558-0246
Josh Hager	Joseph.E.Hageriii@wv.gov	558-8801
Crystal Hustead	Crystal.G.Hustead@wv.gov	558-2402
Melissa Pettrey	Melissa.K.Pettrey@wv.gov	558-0094
<u>Buyers</u>		
Dusty Smith	Dusty.J.Smith@wv.gov	558-2063
John Estep	John.W.Estep@wv.gov	558-2566