

APEX CONNEX

A newsletter of the Northwest Commission's APEX Accelerator (formerly PTAC)



Proudly serving the Northwestern Pennsylvania counties of Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango and Warren

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This APEX Accelerator is funded in-part through a cooperative agreement with the Department of Defense.

<https://www.apexaccelerators.us/>

Virtual Conference:

Tri-State Mega-Matchmaker 2023

December 5 & 6

The **Tri-State APEX Accelerator Mega-Matchmaker (TSAAMMM)** returns again this year as a virtual gov't contracting conference taking place on December 5 & 6. As before, this event offers general sessions on various gov contracting topics as well as the opportunity for online, one-on-one networking with attending federal, state & local government agencies, prime contractors, and business resource partners. We are again joining with our neighboring APEX Accelerators in Ohio & New York to offer this virtual event.



VISIT THE EVENT WEBSITE TO REGISTER:

<https://www.tri-state-ptac-mega-matchmaker.com/>

Find details on the event agenda, general sessions, and which gov't agencies & primes are participating. Request & schedule virtual 10-minute meetings &/or attend general 'break-out' sessions as your calendar allows.

Timeslots for one-on-one meetings are limited, so watch for event updates as to when the Request Meeting feature is open.

EVENT PREPARATION:

Join one of our free prep webinars to learn about navigating & using the TSAAMMM platform. Held weekly prior to TSAAMMM - register for a session & select an available date via <https://forms.office.com/r/1MZEuqrE8Y>.

Need help with developing your Capabilities Statement? Be sure to connect with your APEX Counselor for info, assistance & resources.

Federal Contracting:

Cybersecurity Resource: 'BLUE CYBER' SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAM



The Dept. of Air Force (DAF) & Dept. of Navy's (DON) "Blue Cyber" education series is an initiative to better position Defense Industrial Base (DIB) small businesses to protect sensitive information and networks even before they have a contract.

The program was founded by Kelley Kiernan, DON Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) and is ALWAYS FREE AND PUBLIC. Join Ms. Kiernan & Blue Cyber for education modules and daily-, weekly- and monthly-events by visiting the Blue Cyber webpage:

<https://www.safcn.af.mil/CISO/Small-Business-Cybersecurity-Information/>

Ms. Kiernan also offers one-on-one 'Open Office Hours' -- these sessions are to answer cybersecurity & information protection questions. If you have these types of questions, register for an available time slot:

https://www.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJlscuorj4uGVsjWJrAcjIFb1Yh_moLpdl

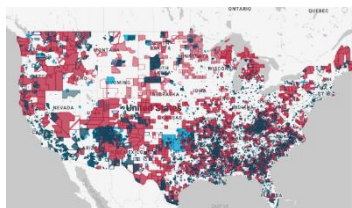
[CLICK HERE](#) to check out the Blue Cyber informational flyer.

And, as always, be sure to connect with the APEX Accelerator for free assistance with understanding cybersecurity regulations & requirements for Federal contracting & subcontracting.

Federal Contracting:

The HUBZone Program Map Update & Northwest PA

As previously reported in past issues of our newsletter, the Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) Program map was updated earlier this year on July 1, 2023.



What is the HUBZone Program? In a nutshell, the HUBZone program helps small businesses in urban and rural communities gain preferential access to Federal procurement opportunities. To qualify for the program, a small business must be certified by the Small Business Administration (SBA).

Is my small business eligible? To qualify for certification, a small business' principal office must be located within a designated HUBZone and at least 35% of employees must reside within a HUBZone.

Check the HUBZone Map. The quickest way to check your location is to use the official [SBA HUBZone map](#).

Your Northwest Commission APEX Team:

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Visit our website:

<http://northwestpa.org/government-contracting/>

Follow Us

on social media for more gov't
contracting news, resources, events &
more:



Veterans Day is November 11.



With respect, honor and
gratitude, THANK YOU, Veterans!

**2023 National Veterans Small
Business Week is Oct. 30-Nov. 3**

Check out resources, news, events &
more at the SBA's site:

www.sba.gov/vetbiz.

*If seeking SD/VOSB VetCert for your small
business, remember, you can contact the
APEX for free assistance if needed.*

DID YOU KNOW? Designated HUBZone areas within the Northwest Pennsylvania region include the counties of Forest, Clarion, Lawrence and Venango as well as various census tracts within other NW PA counties.

WANT TO LEARN MORE? Join our free webinar on Nov. 29 to hear from our guest presenter, David Pinkosky of the SBA's Western PA District, and learn more about what the HUBZone program is, how it's utilized in the Federal contracting arena, eligibility requirements for small businesses, and the certification process. See the [Upcoming Regional Events](#) section below for details.

And as always, [contact an APEX Accelerator Counselor](#) to talk more about HUBZone certification for your small business.

PA State Contracting:

Governor Signs E.O. to Open Up New Opportunities for SBs & SDBs and Improve State Procurement Practices

On September 5, 2023, Governor Josh Shapiro signed Executive Order (E.O.) 2023-18 to increase opportunities for Small Businesses (SBs) and Small Diverse Businesses (SDBs) to compete for state contracts, make the Commonwealth procurement process more accessible, and take actionable steps to help SBs and SDBs grow, succeed, and create good-paying jobs.

The E.O. directs PA Dept. of General Services (DGS) to lead and coordinate efforts with agencies to increase their total operational spend and participation in the Commonwealth's Small Business Reserve (SBR) program, foster more competitive procurement, and increase the amount of money that goes into the hands of small and small diverse businesses.

DGS will post semiannual data for each agency's total operational spend for SBR procurements.

Effective upon the Governor's signing, DGS will develop a new methodology for determining the revenue limit for small businesses that will result in an increase in the number of businesses that qualify as small businesses. As a first step, the Commonwealth's definition of a "Small Business" will be updated by raising the revenue limit from \$38.5 million to \$47 million, ensuring more small businesses can qualify.

READ MORE >>

- [Commonwealth Press Release](#)
- [E.O. 2023-18](#)



Quick Updates

PA State Contracting:

Prompt Pay Policy for SDB & VBE Subcontractors

PA Department of General Services (DGS) has implemented a prompt pay policy that requires prime contractors to pay Small Diverse Business (SDB) and Veteran-Owned Business (VBE) subcontractors faster for goods and services provided to the Commonwealth under state contracts.

The policy, which was initiated by the DGS Bureau of Diversity, Inclusion and Small Business Opportunities (BDISBO), requires prime contractors providing the Commonwealth with non-construction goods and services to pay their SDB/VBE subcontractors for their completed and accepted deliverables within 10 days of receipt of their payment from the Commonwealth. The policy will not affect the payment rate for construction programs which is statutorily mandated at 14 days.

READ MORE >>

https://www.media.pa.gov/pages/dgs_details.aspx?newsid=176



MORE NEWS on PA's SB/SDB/VBE Program Improvements

PA's first SB/SDB/VBE Summit Held:
https://www.media.pa.gov/pages/dgs_details.aspx?newsid=177

PA DGS has Reduced Business Certification Time:
https://www.media.pa.gov/pages/dgs_details.aspx?newsid=175

FIND MORE ON THE STATE'S SB & SDB PROGRAMS >>

- [PA's Small Business Contracting Program](#)
- [PA's Small Diverse Business Program](#)

As always, please feel free to reach the APEX Accelerator to find out more on SB/SDB/VBE certification for PA State contracting &/or bidding on PA state gov't opportunities.

Federal Contracting:

SBA Releases New Small Business Award Data Hub

The Small Business Administration (SBA) recently released a new web application that allows visitors to discover a great deal about federal small business awards and socio-economic set aside awards. Called the "Small Business Data HUB," this free program provides some interesting insights on how the government awards contracts.

FIND THE DATA HUB HERE >> <https://datahub.certify.sba.gov/>

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE DATA HUB CONTENTS HERE >>

<https://smallgovcon.com/federal-government-contracting/sba-releases-new-small-business-award-data-hub/>

Attention Manufacturers:

DoD's Manufacturing Innovation Institutes Program



Over the past century, U.S. national and economic security have relied on a robust American industrial base armed with the advanced manufacturing technologies needed to rapidly and affordably deliver critical products and systems.

An innovative industrial base can only be accomplished through nationwide collaboration that fosters healthy, competitive technology ecosystems. That's where the Department of Defense Manufacturing Innovation Institutes (DoD MIIs) come in...

The DoD MIIs seek to revitalize the U.S.'s domestic manufacturing capability through domestic public-private partnerships that enhance America's strategic competitiveness while enabling the military of tomorrow. This is achieved through three primary activities hosted by the institutes:

1. Advancing **research and development** (R&D) to promote American innovation while modernizing our military capabilities
2. Growing **manufacturing ecosystems** to enhance the Nation's competitiveness
3. Furthering **education and workforce development** to train Americans of all ages and backgrounds for jobs of the future

Quick Updates

Federal Contracting:

Credit for Lower Tier Subs

Small Business Administration (SBA)
Final Rule: Credit for Lower Tier
Subcontracting and Other Amendments

SBA is amending its regulations to implement provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020. The final rule will permit a prime contractor with an individual subcontracting plan to apply credit for subcontracts to small businesses at lower tiers toward its subcontracting goals. To do so, the prime contractor would incorporate the lower-tier subcontracting performance into its subcontracting-plan goals.

The Final Rule is available [here](#) and is effective as of October 11, 2023.



Fed Contractor Minimum Wage Increase Jan 2024

The hourly minimum wage for certain federal contractor employees will increase to \$17.20 effective 1/1/24, according to a notice issued by the Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Department of Labor on Sept. 28. [READ MORE >>](#)

<https://www.bakerlaw.com/insights/another-minimum-wage-increase-on-the-horizon-for-federal-contractors/>

READ THE FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICE >>

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/09/28/2023-21115/minimum-wage-for-federal-contracts-covered-by-executive-order-14026-notice-of-rate-change-in-effect>

The DoD MILs connect organizations and activities to better enable the affordable, rapid transition and delivery of defense-essential technologies.

Check out this [Manufacturers Engagement Guide](#) for more information on how to get involved with the DoD MILs.

Learn more by exploring the following websites:

- <https://www.dodmantech.mil/About-Us/Manufacturing-Innovation-Institutes-MILs/>
- <https://www.manufacturingusa.com/>

NW PA Defense Advisory Council Kick-Off Meeting Held

On September 19, the Northwest Commission APEX Accelerator held the kick-off meeting for the first Northwest Pennsylvania (NW PA) Defense Advisory Council. The event was held at the Marquette Innovation Center in Erie.

In attendance were 40 individuals representing multiple defense contractors & potential defense industrial base companies as well as business resource partners all located in NW PA.



The session included welcome remarks by Robyn Rowan, the NW Commission APEX Accelerator Program Manager. Robyn touched on the the vision for the new Council & the importance of such a group for the region.

Guest Aaron Lewis of Sphere Brakes Defense provided a defense contractor's perspective & vision for the group as well.

The floor was opened for discussion among all in attendance with a focus on next steps for the Council, who should be involved/invited to participate, how often should meetings be held, and how to best keep members engaged moving forward.

If your company would like to be involved, be sure to contact Robyn Rowan, robynr@northwestpa.org, to receive information on our next meeting.



Northwest PA Defense Council
Building the region's Defense Industrial Base!

Other EVENTS

that may be of interest:

Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Webinar Trainings & Virtual "TKO" Seminar

Ongoing | Virtual, Free

DLA holds regular webinar trainings on various topics -- as well as their quarterly "Training, Knowledge and Opportunities" (TKO) Seminar -- to teach vendors how to do business with the agency. [See the DLA Small Business Outreach Calendar](#) for upcoming course offerings &/or to register for the next available TKO.

Navigating Adversarial Foreign Capital for National & Economic Security

Nov. 14 | Virtual

This session will introduce the concept of adversarial foreign capital and the risks it poses to national security and economic security. The focus will be on how adversarial foreign investments can impact small businesses and how to minimize or mitigate risks.

[CLICK HERE to register.](#)

SBIR/STTR Fall Innovation Conference

Nov. 28-29 | Washington, DC

Attendees will have the opportunity to meet with and hear from SBIR/STTR leaders and experts, as they learn how to submit more competitive proposals and leverage available resources.

[CLICK HERE to learn more.](#)

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Small Business Outreach Event

Nov. 29 | Reston, VA

USGS-specific presentations and contract updates on open and future procurement opportunities will be provided. There will be networking throughout the day for Small Businesses to meet and discuss capabilities. The day will conclude with a government panel discussion, networking & Q&A session.

[CLICK HERE for more information.](#)



Upcoming Regional Events

Doing Business with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

Nov. 14 | 10-11:30a | Virtual | No Fee

Learn about doing business with USACE from the SEPA APEX Accelerator and a representative from USACE's Philadelphia District.

TO REGISTER: <https://pasbdc.ecenterdirect.com/events/30785>

Introduction to the HUBZone Program & Certification Process

Nov. 29 | 10-11:30a | Virtual | No Fee

Hosted by the NW Commission APEX with guest presenter David Pinkosky of the SBA Pittsburgh District. Join us to learn about what the Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) Program is, how it's utilized in Federal contracting, what the eligibility requirements are for small businesses & the certification process.

TO REGISTER: <https://nwpaptac.ecenterdirect.com/events/4481>

OH, NY & PA APEX Accelerators' Tri-State Mega Matchmaker

Dec. 5 & 6 | Virtual | Free

Our online training & matchmaking event returns for 2023. An opportunity to join training webinars and schedule one-on-one meetings with government agencies, prime contractors, and business resources.

LEARN MORE & REGISTER AT: <https://www.tri-state-ptac-mega-matchmaker.com/>

Watch for Northwest Commission APEX Accelerator events at:
nwpaptac.ecenterdirect.com/events
AND
northwestpa.org/news__events/calendar_of_events/

Follow Us

on social media where we post all sorts of gov contracting events, news, resources & more from federal, state & local government offices and agencies:



Northwest PA Regional Planning & Development Commission

395 Seneca Street
Oil City, PA 16201

814-677-4800

www.northwestpa.org/government-contracting

Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) Contracts Industry Day

Dec. 7 | Hybrid

MCSC Contracts office hosts this event quarterly to further communication with industry on current and future requirements. The MCSC Small Business Office will attend and brief at the event. Deadline to register is 12/1. [CLICK HERE for more info & registration details.](#)

NDIA-DVC Naval Submarine & Air Craft Carrier Supplier Conference

Dec. 13-14 | Philadelphia

NDIA's Delaware Valley Chapter (NDIA-DVC) will hold its 3rd annual Naval Nuclear Submarine and Aircraft Carrier Suppliers Conference, 12/13-14 in Philadelphia. A premier event focused on challenges & opportunities in the U.S. Navy's Virginia and Columbia class submarines, and Ford class aircraft carrier shipbuilding programs. The program will also provide information on related international initiatives. This event is open to all companies. [CLICK HERE for info & registration.](#)



Have questions on anything in this issue of our newsletter?

Be sure to contact an APEX Accelerator Counselor:

[Robyn Rowan](#)
[Melissa Becker](#)
[Aaron Ritsig](#)

If your company is located outside the NW Commission's 8-county service region, find your local APEX using the map at <https://www.aptaac-us.org/>.

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