

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

Warmest wishes for a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year!

*From the APEX team:
Robyn, Aaron & Melissa*



Federal Contracting:

DoD Releases New CMMC Proposed Rule: *Open for Public Comment thru 02/26/24*



On Dec. 26, the Department of Defense (DoD) published the much-anticipated proposed rule change for the Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) program. The CMMC aims to ensure defense contractors and subcontractors are compliant with existing information protection requirements for Federal Contract Information (FCI) and Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) and are protecting that sensitive unclassified information at a level commensurate with the risk from cybersecurity threats.

Dubbed CMMC 2.0, the proposed rule change revises certain aspects of the program to address public concerns in response to DoD's initial vision for the CMMC 1.0 program (originally published on Sept. 29, 2020). With its streamlined requirements, the CMMC program now provides for:

- Simplified compliance by allowing self-assessment for some requirements
- Priorities for protecting DoD information
- Reinforced cooperation between the DoD and industry in addressing evolving cyber threats

***** READ MORE >> [DoD News Release](#)**

➔ **ADDITIONAL information and resources:**

- CMMC 2.0 Rulemaking Docket: <https://www.regulations.gov/docket/DOD-2023-OS-0063/document>
- CMMC 2.0 Details and Links to Key Resources: <https://business.defense.gov/Programs/Cyber-Security-Resources/CMMC-20/>

Federal Contracting:

Annual Update – Minimum Wage for Federal Contractors



Beginning on January 1, 2024, the [Executive Order \(EO\)14026](#) minimum wage rate that generally must be paid to workers performing work on or in connection with covered contracts will increase to **\$17.20 per hour**.

This minimum wage rate will apply to non-tipped and tipped employees alike, as, beginning 1/1/24, EO 14026 eliminates the lower cash wage that contractors may pay tipped employees.

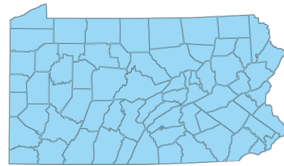
A poster reflecting the new EO 14026 minimum wage rate is publicly available on the Dept. of Labor Wage & Hour Division website, [HERE](#).

READ MORE >>

- Federal Register: [NOTICE of Rate Change in Effect as of 1/1/24](#)
- U.S. Dept. of Labor (DOL) Wage & Hour Division: [Government Contracts Compliance Assistance](#)

PA Local Contracting:

Municipal Authorities' Bidding Thresholds Increase, Effective Jan. 1, 2024



The PA Department of Labor and Industry today released the 2024 bid thresholds for public contracts and purchases.

Beginning January 1, 2024, the updated bidding thresholds for contracts and purchases are as follows:

- Contracts or purchases **under \$12,600** require no formal bidding or written/telephonic quotations.
- Contracts or purchases **between \$12,600 and \$23,200** require three written/telephonic price quotes per [the Borough Code](#) (§1402 a.1).
- Contracts or purchases **greater than \$23,200** require formal bidding and public notice as outlined in [chapter 14 of the Borough Code](#).

SOURCE >> [PA State Association of Boroughs Bulletin](#)

Notice:

Be Aware of Government Imposter Scams

The Department of Defense (DoD) heard from several small business owners about deceptive letters claiming to be from government agencies. It is crucial to stay vigilant and protect your business from

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Visit our website:

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

Make a New Year's Resolution to FOLLOW US

If you're not already following us on your social media accounts, find us on Facebook, X (Twitter) and LinkedIn. We regularly post all sorts of noteworthy gov't contracting events, resources, news and updates from federal, state and local government sources.

Follow Us:



On Twitter ("X"):

https://twitter.com/nwpa_apex



On Facebook:

www.facebook.com/NorthwestCommissionAPEX



On LinkedIn:

www.linkedin.com/company/northwest-commission-apex

potential scams. DoD has created a page with tips on how to verify government communications and avoid government imposters:

- <https://business.defense.gov/Resources/Scam-Alerts>



DoD further encourages you to report suspicious activity: If you spot anything fishy, report it ASAP to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at <https://reportfraud.ftc.gov>. Your diligence protects not just your business but others too!

In Sept. 2023, **PA Dept. of General Services (DGS)** issued a phishing scam warning regarding an email claiming to be from the DGS instructing users to "review & verify certification documents" via an embedded link. The subject line of the email was "Your Copy" and the sender's email address was NOT an official PA state email.

Remember: Never click on any links or open any attachments contained within suspicious emails.

As always, please feel free to reach the APEX Accelerator if you have a question about the validity of any letters, emails or other notices you receive.

DLA Contracting:

DIBBS Login and Password Rules



Companies doing business with the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) are familiar with the agency's "DIBBS" system -- Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Internet Bid Board System. DIBBS is a web-based application that provides the capability to search for, view, and submit secure quotes for DLA items of supply. DIBBS also allows users to search and view Request For Proposals (RFPs), Invitations For Bid (IFBs), Awards and other procurement information related to DLA.



If you are a DIBBS user, or are seeking to do business with DLA, **following are some reminders & tips on DIBBS login and password rules** (as pulled from the [July 2020 issue of DLA's The Link newsletter](#)):

- **Passwords are valid for 60 days.** You will receive emails 30 and 10 days prior to your password expiring. If you do not change your password before this, you will be required to change it the next time you login to DIBBS.
- **After 3 failed login attempts, you will be locked out** and need to wait 1 hour before you can try again.
- **If you "X" out of your browser without logging off, you will need to wait 15 minutes** before you can access DIBBS again.

Quick Updates

Federal Contracting:

SDVOSB Certification Grace Period Ends 1/1/24

On January 1, 2024 Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs) that are NOT certified by the Small Business Administration (SBA) will be ineligible for SDVOSB or VOSB set asides and sole source awards. *In 2023, the SBA certified more than 8,300 firms.*

Also worth noting, the FY24 National Defense Authorization Act increased the SDVOSB goal from 3% to 5%.

READ MORE >>

- [SBA's VetCert Program info](#)
- [2023 SDVOSB Deadline](#)
- [Congress Increases SDVOSB Goal](#)

Need help getting SDVOSB or VOSB certified? Contact the APEX Accelerator for help.

Defense Contractor Resources

The DoD Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP) has created many new, free resources to help small business owners interested in working with the Dept. of Defense. **Here are just a few to check out:**

- **WEBSITE >>** [Common Entry Point for Small Businesses](#)
- **VIDEO >>** [Introduction to the DoD Office of Small Business Programs](#)
- **PUBLICATION >>** ["10 Steps to Winning Your First DoD Contract"](#)
- **BULLETIN + DIGEST >>** <https://www.linkedin.com/newsletters/small-business-bulletin-digest-7064673821869400064/>

Additionally, did you know:

- If you do not log into your DIBBS account within 35 days, your DIBBS account will **automatically lock**.
- If you do not log into DIBBS account within 60 days, your DIBBS account **may be terminated**.
- **Log into your DIBBS account every 30 days** to avoid your DIBBS account being locked or terminated!

➔ **RESOURCES for DLA Contractors:**

- DIBBS Notices page: <https://www.dibbs.bsm.dla.mil/Notices/>
- Supplier Information Resource Center: <https://www.dla.mil/Information-Operations/EBS-Supplier-Resources/>
- **The Link newsletter:** Find past & current issues of *The Link* posted at <https://www.dla.mil/Information-Operations/EBS-Supplier-Resources/> -- scroll down the page a bit and you'll find a section for "The Link Newsletter" located on the left that you can expand to select issues by release date.



Upcoming Regional Event

PennDOT Procurement & Diversity Programs Overview

Jan. 24 | 10a-noon | Virtual | No Fee

A virtual session providing a high-level overview of Commonwealth procurement and diversity programs. The goal of this event is to enable small businesses to make informed decisions regarding Commonwealth of PA contracting.

MORE INFO & REGISTRATION: <https://nwpaptac.ecenterdirect.com/events/4485>

Watch for upcoming Northwest Commission APEX Accelerator events at:
nwpaptac.ecenterdirect.com/events

AND

northwestpa.org/news_events/calendar_of_events/



Northwest PA Regional Planning & Development Commission

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814-677-4800

www.northwestpa.org/government-contracting

External links provided within this issue of *APEX ConneX* do not constitute an endorsement by the Northwest Commission nor the Northwest Commission's APEX Accelerator of the opinions, products or services presented or any sites linked to it.

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. [CLICK HERE to see the DLA Small Business Outreach Calendar](#) for upcoming course offerings and/or to register for the next available TKO. **Next TKO dates: 1/9-1/10 and 3/12-3/13.**

"America's Seed Fund" SBIR/STTR Virtual Road Tour

1/23-1/25 | Virtual, Free

This free online event connects small businesses and entrepreneurs across the nation working on advanced technologies to America's Seed Fund, the country's largest source of early-stage funding. [CLICK HERE for more information, including event agenda & registration.](#)

"Small Business, BIG Opportunities": Pathways to Procurement at NASA

Jan. 25 | Virtual, Free

Offered by NASA Office of Small Business Programs, this event will provide opportunities to connect with NASA representatives, industry experts, fellow entrepreneurs and more. [CLICK HERE to register.](#)

SBA's "WOSB Wednesdays Renewal Webinar" Series

Ongoing | Virtual, Free

Is your small business' WOSB or EDWOSB certification due for renewal? Check out the SBA's upcoming "WOSB Wednesdays Renewal Webinar" series -- 1-hour clinics where SBA will answer questions about renewal with the WOSB Program. [Find dates and sign up HERE.](#)