

APEX CONNEX

A newsletter of the Northwest Commission's APEX Accelerator



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

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

Federal Contracting:

FY2024 NDAA: Key Provisions for Federal Contractors

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is annual legislation that authorizes appropriations and sets policy for the Department of Defense (DoD) and generally reflects the priorities of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees.



The [NDAA for Fiscal Year \(FY\) 2024](#) was signed into law on December 22, 2023 and makes numerous changes to acquisition policy. These include changes that impose a new conflict of interest regime for government contractors with a connection to China, impose new restrictions and requirements, require government reporting to Congress on acquisition authorities and programs, and alter other processes and procedures to which government contractors are subject. [>>CLICK HERE to continue reading](#), and find additional articles listed below.

SOURCES and ADDITIONAL READING >>

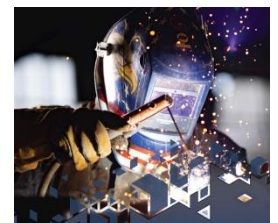
- [FY 2024 NDAA Key Provisions Government Contractors Should Know](#)
- [Biden Signs National Defense Authorization Act into Law](#)
- [NDAA FY 2024: Important Changes to Procurement Laws and Policy](#)
- [FY24 NDAA: Notable provisions of interest to government contractors](#)

Federal Contracting:

National Defense Industrial Strategy Released

The Department of Defense released its inaugural National Defense Industrial Strategy (NDIS) on Jan. 11, 2024.

The NDIS will guide the Department's engagement, policy development, and investment in the industrial base over the next three to five years. Taking its lead from the National Defense Strategy (NDS), this strategy will catalyze generational change from the existing defense industrial base to a more robust, resilient, and dynamic modernized defense industrial ecosystem.



NDIS Strategic Priorities:

- **Resilient supply chains** that can securely produce the products, services, and technologies needed now and in the future at speed, scale, and cost.
- **Workforce readiness** will provide for a sufficiently skilled, and staffed workforce that is diverse and representative of America.
- **Flexible acquisition** will lead to the development of strategies that strive for dynamic capabilities while balancing efficiency, maintainability, customization and standardization in defense platforms and support systems.
- **Economic deterrence** will promote fair and effective market mechanisms that support a resilient defense industrial ecosystem among the U.S. and close international allies and partners and economic security and integrated deterrence. As a result of effective economic deterrence, fear of materially reduced access to U.S. markets, technologies, and innovations will sow doubt in the mind of potential aggressors.

READ THE FULL NATIONAL DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY HERE:

>> <https://www.businessdefense.gov/docs/ndis/2023-NDIS.pdf>

ADDITIONAL READING >>

- [NDIS Fact Sheet](#)
- [Jan. 11 NDIS News Release](#)
- [About the Office of the Assistance Secretary of Defense for Industrial Base Policy](#)

ALERT:

Be Aware of Fraudulent Email Scams



We've been notified by fellow APEX Accelerators that fraudulent emails are circulating across the country claiming to be from federal agencies wanting to place orders for computers and equipment. Some APEX clients got unsolicited purchase orders for laptops appearing to be from US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION. The

APEX was able to confirm with the true agency's Small Business Office that this is a scam. And it seems the scammers are using various other federal agency names as well.

The sender's email address on such fraudulent messages is likely to end in ".org" or another extension other than ".gov", the body of the message may have some small grammatical errors or typos, and the sender might note that they intend to use a personal email address as a "backup to the conversation and to avoid any delay".

THESE EMAILS ARE NOT FROM A FEDERAL AGENCY. We advise you to ignore the message, do not click on any links within the email, and delete it from your inbox. **However, as always, if you receive any questionable emails and are not certain of their legitimacy, please feel free to contact your APEX Counselor.**

Your Northwest Commission APEX Team:

Robyn Rowan

Government Contracting Manager
robynr@northwestpa.org

Melissa Becker

Government Contracting Specialist
melissab@northwestpa.org

Aaron Ritsig

Government Contracting Specialist
aaronr@northwestpa.org

Visit our website:

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

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TSAAMMM Recorded Presentations Now Available

If you were able to participate in the 2023 Tri-State APEX Accelerator Mega-Matchmaker (TSAAMMM), or if you missed the event, the TSAAMMM website has been updated to include links for all the videos and presentations that were offered on 12/5 & 12/6.



Visit the site to view or re-watch any sessions &/or download slides that you may be interested

in: <https://www.tri-state-ptac-mega-matchmaker.com/2023agenda>

And, as always, if you have questions or would like further info/assistance with anything covered at TSAAMMM, please feel free to *reach the APEX office.*

Federal Contracting – Defense Logistics Agency (DLA):

Important Notice on the DIBBS User Agreement -- No User Account Can Mask Their Internet Usage/Access

In our [last issue of APEX ConneX](#), we included some rules and tips on DIBBS* login and password usage. Here's another important notice regarding the DIBBS User Agreement Terms and Conditions:

The July 6, 2023 DIBBS User Agreement Terms and Conditions states, "I agree that no user account will use any means to mask their internet usage/access to DIBBS (for example, a Virtual Private Network (VPN))."

What constitutes IP masking? Check out the January 2024 issue of DLA's *The Link* newsletter for a table of IP masking definitions – see "KEY INFORMATION REGARDING YOUR DIBBS ACCOUNT (pages 5-6) at www.dla.mil/Portals/104/Documents/InformationOperations/EBS%20Supplier%20Information/TheLink_Issue31_Jan2024.pdf



**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 RFPs, IFBs, Awards, and other procurement information related to DLA.*

Want to learn more about doing business with DLA? [Contact the APEX Accelerator](#) for no fee assistance, resources & guidance on how to do business with DLA and other federal, state &/or local government entities.

PA State Contracting:

State Purchasing Thresholds and Delegations



In last month's New Years issue of APEX ConneX, we included procurement thresholds for Pennsylvania local municipal government contracting. The following table* is a reminder of the thresholds that apply for state-level procurement by all PA Commonwealth Agencies:

Quick Updates

Federal Contracting:

CMMC Proposed Rule Would Allow Request for Waivers

As we reported last month in *APEX ConneX*, the DoD released a new Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) proposed rule on December 26, 2023. [Read that article and find accompanying additional resources HERE](#).

Under this proposed rule, DoD contractors must achieve a specified cybersecurity level by the time of contract award. However, assessment requirements might not be applicable in certain cases.

It would permit program managers "to seek approval to waive inclusion of CMMC requirements in solicitations that involve disclosure or creation of [federal contract information] or CUI as part of the contract effort. Such waivers will be requested and approved by DoD in accordance with internal policies, procedures, and approval requirements." The document does not spell out the internal processes or requirements for granting waivers.

READ MORE >>

<https://defensescoop.com/2023/12/26/proposed-rule-would-allow-dod-program-managers-to-request-waivers-for-cmmc-requirements>

The Proposed Rule is available [HERE](#).

The Pentagon is currently seeking public feedback; comments are due by 2/26/24.



[*Pulled directly from the PA Dept. of General Service's (DGS) DOING BUSINESS WITH THE COMMONWEALTH guide, Rev Nov. 2022:]

Dollar Threshold	Materials	Services	Construction	Mfg. Equip Repair, Calib. Maint. & Mod. Svcs	Mfg. Repair Parts / Software License Agmts. & Renewals
Up to \$10K	No Bid / No Documents Agency	No Bid/No Documents Agency	No Bid / No Documents Agency	No Bid / No Documents Agency	No Bid / No Documents Agency
\$10,001-\$100K	Formal Method Agency	Formal Method Agency	Formal Method Agency	Formal Method Agency	Formal Method Agency
\$100,001-\$250K	Formal Method DGS		Formal Method DGS / Agency Delegated		Formal Method DGS
\$250,001 and above		Formal Method DGS	Formal Method DGS	Formal Method DGS	Formal Method DGS

RESOURCES >>

- Guide: [Doing Business with the Commonwealth](#)
- Website: [PA Supplier Service Center](#)

And, as always, be sure to connect with the APEX Accelerator for free assistance with understanding and pursuing opportunities in state-level contracting.

PA State Contracting:

Commonwealth Sets Record: Spends More Than \$1Billion With Small and Small Diverse Businesses

In December, the Pennsylvania Department of General Services (DGS) released its [2022-23 Small Business Opportunities Program Annual Report](#), announcing that for the first time in Pennsylvania's history, the Commonwealth spent more than \$1 billion with small businesses (SBs), small diverse businesses (SDBs), and veteran business enterprises (VBEs) during the 2022-23 fiscal year.



The report was prepared by DGS's Bureau of Diversity, Inclusion and Small Business Opportunities (BDISBO) and highlights record spending, including:

- Spending with SDBs and VBEs reached **\$690 million** - an increase from last fiscal year's reporting of \$536.6 million.
- SDBs received a record high **\$678 million**, or 12.2 percent, of Commonwealth spending for goods and services during the 2022-23 fiscal year.

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 AND 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: 3/12-3/13 and 5/7-5/8.**

Blue Cyber

Small Business Cybersecurity 'Ask-Me-Anything' Series

Every Tuesday | Virtual, Free

The "Blue Cyber" series offers a different topic each week that highlights common questions, concerns & issues regarding cybersecurity regulation compliance &/or SBIR/STTR programs for small businesses.

Find topics & register for select dates: https://www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_6Gz84TQGRvm6YHMSVYE0Qg

All of the Blue Cyber educational materials presented during these sessions can be found here: <https://www.safcn.af.mil/CISO/Small-Business-Cybersecurity-Information/>

The GSA Schedules Program: What You Need to Know

February 8 | Virtual, Free

Join the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) Small Business Office for this free session.

Find this webinar, plus more GSA events, posted here: <https://www.gsa.gov/small-business/small-business-resources/osdbu-events-and-contacts>

- SBs received **\$447 million**, or 8 percent, of Commonwealth spending for goods and services during the 2022-23 fiscal year.

"Securing state contracts has historically been a challenge for small businesses in Pennsylvania. Obstacles - including a lack of awareness and technical resources - have made it difficult for small businesses to compete for contracts. I can confidently say that this is changing - and the annual report reflects this," said DGS Secretary Reggie McNeil.

>> [CONTINUE READING HERE.](#)

Interested in learning more about PA's Small Business, Small Diverse or Veteran Business designations for your company? [Reach the APEX Accelerator today!](#)



Upcoming Regional Events

Wide Area Workflow (WAWF) Training for Federal Contractors

Feb. 6 | 10a-12p | Virtual | No Fee

During this free webinar, attendees will learn about: Updates to the WAWF and PIEE systems; Registration in WAWF; Submission and tracking invoices on WAWF. Presented by Mr. David Kern, U.S. Army Small Business Specialist, Tobyhanna Army Depot. Co-sponsored by APEX Accelerators of Pennsylvania.

TO REGISTER: register.gotowebinar.com/register/8901908258099904090

Cybersecurity Essentials: Toolkit for Small Businesses [Cybersecurity Series SESSION 1]

Feb. 15 | 2-3p | Virtual | No Fee

This webinar is part of a 10-webinar series presented by Core Business Solutions, Inc., a cybersecurity & ISO consulting firm located in Lewisburg, PA, and co-sponsored by various APEX Accelerators and Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) programs.

The first session in the series is "Cybersecurity Essentials - Toolkit for Small Businesses" on Feb. 15. During this presentation, dive into the critical digital tools that form the cybersecurity backbone for small enterprises. This session demystifies the technical jargon and focuses on practical, accessible solutions that provide robust protection without complexity.

MORE INFO & REGISTRATION: <https://nwptac.ecenterdirect.com/events/4487>

The Human Factor: Cultivating a Culture of Cybersecurity Awareness [Cybersecurity Series SESSION 2]

Mar. 21 | 2-3p | Virtual | No Fee

This is the second session in the 10-part series with Core Business Solutions. This webinar empowers your workforce with essential cybersecurity knowledge, from recognizing phishing attempts to safeguarding sensitive data. Create a human firewall with informed, vigilant employees.

Watch for more details & registration to be posted soon:
<https://nwptac.ecenterdirect.com/events>

Small Business "Fireside Chat" with DoD Office of Small Business Programs

February 14 | Hybrid, Free

A discussion on the importance of small businesses in the Defense Industrial Base with DoD Office of Small Business Programs Director Farooq Mitha and U.S. House Small Business Committee Members Marc Molinaro and Chris Pappas. **RSVP to attend in-person or online by emailing osd.pentagon.ousd-a-s.mbx.osbp-policy-legislative-affairs@mail.mil**

DIBBS c-Folders Training Webinar

May 14 | Virtual, Free

Offered by DLA Office of Small Business Programs, this webinar centers on how to gain access to DLA's c-Folders and located technical data packages. **Register via www.dla.mil/Small-Business/Resources/Outreach-Calendar/ModuleID/89896/ItemID/5779/mctl/EventDetails/**

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.](#)

33rd Annual Government Procurement Conference

June 12 | Washington, DC

The Government Procurement Conference is a national conference fostering business partnerships between the Federal Government, its prime contractors, and small, minority, service-disabled veteran-owned, veteran-owned, HUBZone, and women-owned businesses.

Participating firms will have the benefit of marketing their products/services to

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

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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

procurement representatives and small business specialists from government agencies.

The conference also includes educational conference sessions, procurement matchmaking and a dynamic Government and Prime Contractor exhibitor showcase.

Event website:

www.fbcinc.com/e/Procurement/

SAVE THE DATE: 2024 Showcase for Commerce

May 29 - 31 | Johnstown, PA

Business and industry trade show and defense contracting exhibition in Johnstown, PA. This event offers opportunities to connect with government acquisition leaders, federal elected officials, major defense primes and subcontractors, strategic business partners both regional & national.

Exhibitor and Attendee registration now open at
www.showcaseforcommerce.com/.



A FRIENDLY REMINDER TO OUR APEX ACCELERATOR CLIENTS:

If you haven't yet responded to our 2023 Satisfaction Survey or our quarterly requests for gov't contract/subcontract sales reporting, please remember that this reporting is vital to the continuation of APEX Accelerator programming and funding. APEX's mission is to enhance the economic development of our area. Your time, responses and feedback to our reports & surveys is greatly appreciated.

Did you know? When reporting government contract sales, please include any contracting &/or subcontracting on federal, state and/or local gov't projects. Work on gov-funded projects for local agencies & non-profit organizations is considered part of local government contracting.

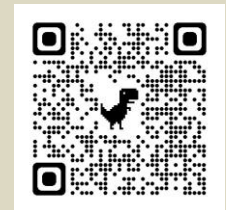
Thank you! Questions? Contact [APEX Program Manager, Robyn Rowan](#).



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.aptac-us.org/>.

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.