

Alaska Procurement Connection

A Monthly Newsletter From Your Procurement Technical Assistance Centers

The Only Constant is Change

Contributed by Mary H. Sheehan (fnmhs@uaf.edu)

If you are a business owner and you are pursuing government work (which is likely if you are reading this article), then you can be guaranteed one thing, and that is change. One of the biggest challenges to both business owners and the government is staying on top of change. I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce you to a couple of the changes that the Alaska PTAC program has on tap for 2008.

◆ **New location for the Fairbanks PTAC office.** Yes, we are moving this month! We are happy to report that we will be housed with a bigger family that has proven to be a big asset to the interior business community and that is the Tanana Valley Campus (TVC). We will be located in the new TVC building (i.e. the old court house). We anticipate this move to happen about mid-month. So, please stop by, say “hi” and check out our new digs!

◆ **New client survey method for 2008.** Early in 2008 you will receive information and additional guidance regarding how to complete the 1st Quarter Survey for 2008. Please note, the change won’t affect your survey for the 4th Quarter of 2007. The change should make the survey reporting easier and more seamless for all.

◆ **New, updated bidmatch program.** This is the program that PTAC uses to email clients announcements of advertised government work. I like to refer to it as the “Google of government work.” It has been reprogrammed to search additional sites for potential work. This should result in more bid opportunities for you, our clients. If you are not currently using bidmatch please contact your nearest PTAC and ask about the service. Bidmatch also searches the Canadian MERX site (see Wesley’s article on page 3 for more information on that site).

◆ **New delivery method for bidmatch via webmail.** As a PTAC client some of you may already receive your bidmatch information via webmail, but many of you are still receiving it the “old way” via plain HTML. Please see Carolyn’s article on page 3 which explains webmail.

◆ **New workshop titled *How to Find the Work That is Out There.*** This workshop will include detailed instructions on how to best use FedBizOpps, the PTAC bidmatch program, and agency procurement forecasts to locate potential work. You will actually create your own search criteria and demonstrate live what potential work is located based on that.

All of these upcoming changes are positive and are made with the intent to provide you, our clients, with better services. I join you in welcoming a new year of hope, success and progress!

January 2008

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Check out the PTAC Calendar of Events for Upcoming Opportunities!

www.ptacalaska.org



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Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 274-7232 or (800) 478-7232

Fairbanks

613 Cushman Street, Suite 209
Fairbanks, AK 99701
(907) 456-7232 or (800) 478-1701

www.ptacalaska.org

A Program of:



University of Alaska
Small Business
Development Center

New Website at SBIR.gov

Contributed by Carolyn Pratt (ancap1@uaa.alaska.edu)

A new SBIR/STTR resource for small business, the research community and the public launched at www.sbir.gov last month. If you had www.sbirworld.com bookmarked as a favorite, it will now direct you to the new website. The welcome message reads, "Welcome to the new SBIR.GOV web site. The SBIR.GOV resource is designed to keep the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) community informed about the latest government events and tools. For example, our Conference & Events Center can inform you about upcoming events so that you take advantage of government programs and opportunities. We invite you to explore our site and encourage you to make suggestions that better enable the federal government to meet your SBIR needs. We also wish to invite other federal agencies to offer suggestions and participate in the development of this new national resource for SBIR development."

One feature missing from the site is a solicitation search option. This is an extremely useful function and often the window into discovering what SBIR/STTR opportunities interest your company. You are encouraged to email the site director, Patrick Ravanera at pravanera@nsf.gov with a suggestion to add it.

The new website has features that will be familiar to those who have used SBIR/STTR resource sites before. It contains news and events, information from all the participating agencies and departments, solicitation announcements, etc. Conferences on topics from commercialization and intellectual property to proposal preparation are highlighted on the new site, as are notices of new solicitations and links to a multitude of other resources. Collaboration tools from the National Institutes of Health, the Air Force Research Laboratory and the National Science Foundation as well as partnering opportunities from other agencies are offered to help non-profit research institutions and small businesses join forces.

If you're not familiar with the program, SBIR funds small businesses to develop and research scientific discoveries that can be delivered as products and services that affect quality of life. New vaccines, new nano-engineering techniques, novel laser technologies, an electronic braille tutor, night vision goggle simulators, needle-less infusion patches to deliver drugs, an alternative fuels reactor, robots that assist in surgery, a scanning

electron microscope simulator, software for spacecraft operation and control, a cleaning system to maintain steam generators at commercial nuclear power plants, and a new long-life battery are just a few of the innovations resulting from the SBIR/STTR programs.

The Technology Research & Development Center (TREND) assists Alaska companies interested in pursuing SBIR/STTR funding and is your local resource for learning more about the program. Contact TREND at 907-274-7232, email ancap1@uaa.alaska.edu or visit www.trendalaska.org.

Surety Bond Guarantee E-Application System

Contributed by B. Oliva (beckie_oliva@dot.state.ak.us)
Support Services Coordinator, DOT Civil Rights Office

You can now apply for the Small Business Administration (SBA) Surety Bond Guarantee Program electronically. The program is designed to help small construction, service, or supply companies with bonding. The program works with participating surety companies, and it may help a company obtain bonds needed to bid or perform public and private contracts.

SBA works with participating surety companies to provide bid, payment and performance bonds on contracts with a value of up to \$2 million by guaranteeing a percentage of the losses sustained in the event of a default. Corporate surety bonds protect the project owner against financial loss, thus protecting taxpayer dollars if the contractor defaults.

The new electronic application system allows small businesses to quickly submit their application for bonding assistance with surety companies that are registered to use the process. For a list of SBA surety companies, visit: <http://www.sba.gov/osg/>

The new online application, coupled with recent rule changes, combines to make bonding more available to small and emerging businesses, enabling them to access bonds more quickly. The e-application system is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

For more information about the Surety Bond Guarantee program and/or access to the e-application system, go to their website at: <http://www.sba.gov/eapplication/>.

MERX: Canadian Contracting Opportunities Online

Contributed by Wesley Roberts Dalton (fswrd1@uaf.edu)

The MERX system is the essential tool for finding contracting opportunities throughout Canada. MERX is similar to the Federal Business Opportunity (www.fbo.gov) system found in the United States because they both post government contracting opportunities. The MERX system not only posts Canadian Public Tenders (government contracting opportunities) but also Private Tenders, U.S. Tenders, and Private Construction Tenders. Tenders is another term for bid opportunities. Following are the 4 varieties of tenders posted on the MERX site.

1) The MERX Canadian Public Tenders subscription allows free access to public-sector contract information which can be found within the federal, provincial, and M.A.S.H. (Municipal, Academic, Schools and Hospitals) sectors. However, there are some fees for certain types of services within this subscription; research the site for more information.

2) The MERX Private Tenders paid-subscription allows private buyers and suppliers of small and large businesses to register and network on the MERX website. A registered private-sector buyer can post their business opportunities with MERX for open-competition while registered suppliers can browse and find buyers.

3) The MERX U.S. Tenders paid-subscription allows subscribers to access thousands of opportunity notices and documents found throughout U.S. federal, state and local agencies.

4) The MERX Private Construction Tenders paid-subscription allows one to search all private construction notices and opportunities in Canada's private construction world. This service is also open to U.S. small and large businesses.

Additionally, MERX can also provide the services of delivering blue prints, CD duplication, and other related documents by fax, pick-up, email, or courier, for a fee.

To learn more, access the Canadian MERX site at <http://www.merx.com/>. If you are interested in Canadian government opportunities, the PTAC bidmatch program can search MERX Canadian Public Tenders. Just let your nearest PTAC office know that you are interested in Canadian opportunities and your bidmatch can be programmed to receive the free MERX Canadian government opportunities.

Bidmatch Improvements in Store for 2008

Contributed by Carolyn Pratt (ancap1@uaa.alaska.edu)

Soon after the first of the year, PTAC will take advantage of a bidmatch delivery method for your notices that has received a great response from PTAC clients from centers around the nation. What will be different? You will still receive an email message, but it will provide a link to your very own personal page on the mybidmatch.com web site. From this personal page, you will be able to view the newly posted bid opportunities as well as all opportunities that were posted within the last 30 days.

Below is a sample of the message you will receive with the webmail format:

Dear Bid Match Customer,

There are 11 new articles available for you on the mybidmatch.com Web site: <http://www.mybidmatch.com/go?k=323431392c6131333636>. Click on the link to access your private page where you can view the bid opportunities and/or informational articles for January 13, 2008. You will receive an email notification each time new articles are posted to your personal Web site. You can also bookmark this page and return to it periodically to check for new articles. The notices will remain on the system for 30 days, after which time they will be purged. If you wish to save these articles please select File/Save As from your browser's menu.

PTAC staff will have a view of the bidmatch output being posted to mybidmatch.com. From this master view, we will also see your bid match postings and will be allowed to better assist you with any one of the notices. More on the mybidmatch.com as PTAC prepares for these improvements!

**Fairbanks PTAC/SBDC New
Address for 2008!**

**604 Barnette Street, Suite 220
Fairbanks, AK 99701-4526**



430 West 7th Avenue, Suite 110
Anchorage, AK 99501

New Rule for Small Business Subcontracting Goals

Contributed by A. Brunstetter (anamb1@uaa.alaska.edu)

In a September 4, 2007 article, the Federal Times published a report stating, “Companies owned by American Indians are now more attractive contractors for the government.” That’s because a new federal rule allows agencies to count American Indian-owned companies toward small business subcontracting goals no matter how big those companies may be. Small-businesses and their advocates fear that under the rule, agencies will award more contracts to large American Indian-owned companies because they can get the benefits and convenience of working with a large contractor yet still get credit toward their small-business contracting goals. The rule benefits companies owned by American Indians and Alaskan Natives. It does not, however, apply to companies owned by Hawaiian Natives.

There is even concern from the government that the rule may harm legitimate small businesses. Last year, five of the government’s top 10 small business contractors were Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs), according to

Eagle Eye Publishers. Information from the companies’ websites indicates all had exceeded Small Business Administration (SBA) size standards based on numbers of employees and revenues. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) also has cited examples of how ANCs’ privileges affect small businesses.

For example, GAO found that agencies would take advantage of the ability to make sole-source awards to ANCs by directing the ANC to subcontract with a particular large business the government wanted to work with but couldn’t make a sole-source award to. As a result, agencies can bypass competition requirements for large businesses while still earning small-business credits.

For more information about this topic, go to http://www.federaltimes.com/index.php?C=procurement_news.

Happy New Year!