PTAC Clients Host Commander Brent J. Embry, U.S. Navy

On January 13, 2015, Northwest Pennsylvania received a visit from Commander Brent J. Embry, U.S. Navy, Director of the Northern Region for the Chairman’s Office of Reintegration. Commander Embry presented at the Northwest Pennsylvania Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (NW PREP) Quarterly meeting and spoke with the NW Commission’s Economic Development Committee, addressing the mission of the Chairman’s Office of Reintegration. The Office of Reintegration is part of The Joint Staff; its mission is to support the successful reintegration of veterans and their families into the civilian workforce.

As part of Commander Embry’s trip to the region, the Northwest Commission Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) arranged for the Commander to visit and tour two local Meadville area businesses: Abbatron and Acutec Precision Machining, Inc.

At Abbatron, Commander Embry was welcomed by Mr. Joseph Halloran, CEO, and Ms. Kris Gamble, Operations Manager. Mr. Halloran and Ms. Gamble discussed their company’s products, the kinds of jobs their company offers and their role in employing veterans. Abbatron is a supplier and manufacturer of electronic components, hardware, connectors and cable assemblies. Ms. Gamble led the Commander and the Northwest Commission group on a tour of the manufacturing facility, explaining some of the many processes Abbatron utilizes and the many products it manufactures.

Following Abbatron, the group visited Acutec Precision Machining, Inc., a machined metal parts supplier for the aerospace, power generation and industrial markets. Met by Ms. Elisabeth Smith, President and CEO, and Mr. Patrick Faller, Human Resources Manager, the group received a tour of the company’s Meadville facility in the Crawford County Industrial Park. Ms. Smith and Mr. Faller also spoke about the kinds of jobs offered by Acutec, their growth and expansion, and their desire to employ veterans. Commander Embry had an opportunity to see Acutec’s manufactured goods and production flow and to meet staff members with military backgrounds.
Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), is funded in part through a cooperative agreement from the Department of Defense (DOD) through a program that is administered by the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). The content of any written materials or verbal communications of the PTAC does not necessarily reflect the official views of or imply endorsement by DOD or DLA.

Your PTAC Team

(L to R) Melissa Becker, Government Contracting Specialist; Robyn Young, Government Contracting Specialist; Cris Pierce, Government Contracting Manager

Cris Pierce, Government Contracting Manager at the NW Commission PTAC, said of the Commander’s visit, “We are honored to welcome Commander Embry to our region. Veteran reintegration seems off-scope for the Procurement Technical Assistance Center, as our role is to assist businesses wanting to compete for government contracts. However, as the PTAC staff assesses businesses’ potential in government contracting, we ask what the barriers to success are; within one or two points, businesses raise the issue of finding qualified employees. Veteran reintegration is relevant to our region and the goal of the PTAC, because it offers potential for businesses to find highly qualified employees, resulting in business growth and, in turn, expanding and growing that business’ government contracting potential. Their success is the success of the Northwest Commission’s PTAC.”

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU PAY FOR: Registering to BE A GOVERNMENT CONTRACTOR IS FREE

As many of you know, the first step in pursuing government contracts is registering in the federal government’s vendor database, known as the System for Award Management (SAM). Some agencies – such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – have their own vendor databases as well. Potential small business contractors also sometimes seek special certifications, such as 8(a), Woman-owned, Veteran-owned and/or HUBZone, or they may wish to explore the possibility of a GSA Schedule contract.

There is NEVER a fee to register as a government contractor. And there is free and low-cost help available to get you through the process.

A number of commercial enterprises target small business owners unfamiliar with – or confused by – the various government registration and certification processes. They market their services energetically, sending official-sounding emails directing small business owners to sign-up for their services to be registered/certified, etc – for a hefty fee, of course. Commercial websites (.com websites, in other words) are just that — commercial. When a commercial website advertises to help you with the process of registering to do business with the government, there’s almost always going to be a fee involved. By contrast, government websites (designated as .gov) offer free advice and registration.

One commercial website recently ran an aggressive advertising campaign directed at businesses, soliciting vendors to fill out a “FEMA Contract Registration Form.” Once the form was filled out and submitted on-line, applicants received the following message: “Thank you for submitting your information. We will be in contact with you shortly. Click below to make a payment of $500.00 for this service.” By clicking on the “Buy Now” button, they were directed to a site to pay $500.00 via a PayPal account for “FEMA Registration.” Other marketing campaigns by similar outfits have targeted Veteran business owners and those seeking SAM registration using information gleaned from these government databases.

Please know that SAM and FEMA do not charge any money to register as a vendor. And neither does any other federal agency.
Visit the “Government Intelligence” blog online, at http://www.aptac-us.org/government-contracting-blog/, for regular articles exploring a variety of topics. Then contact us here at the NW Commission PTAC to determine how best to apply the information to YOUR business.

Did You Know?

When reporting State or Federal Awards please keep in mind that you can include both Prime Contracts and Subcontracts. By reporting both of these, it will be to your advantage as they are both considered State or Federal work regardless of the level or tier the contract was conducted upon.

Please contact any one of our staff members with questions you may have in determining which level of contract you have received.

Many business owners can navigate SAM, FEMA and other registrations quite successfully on their own. For those who’d like help with registrations, certification applications or any other government contracting issue, the PTAC is here to assist, offering classes, one-on-one counseling, bid-matching services, advice on proposal preparation, matchmaking/networking opportunities and much more. For those companies that need more basic business assistance, Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) provide the same kind of hands-on, personalized help for general business operation topics.

Because small companies must make every dollar count, it’s smart to leverage these services that are provided through non-profit, federal-local partnerships for the specific purpose of supporting small businesses.

Of course there are circumstances in which it makes sense for a small business to pay a consultant for specialized legal or financial help or for intensive project development, and there are many qualified professionals to choose from. As with any business decision, thorough research into qualifications, costs and realistic expectations and deliverables are key to determining the right solution for your business. Never let yourself be pressured into a hasty decision or enticed by an “easy fix”. Careful due diligence is always the best investment you can make.

Success in government contracting requires a long-term strategy and ongoing commitment. The U.S. government wants the government marketplace to be accessible to all capable small businesses and has put in place resources to help you. There is NEVER a fee to register as a government vendor.

Source: APTAC Government Intelligence Blog: http://www.aptac-us.org/government-contracting-registration-is-free/

Small Business Opportunities with NASA

NASA as an Agency has created new small business goals to further increase its small business contracting participation. One of the outlined initiatives includes reaching out to small businesses through the use of social media to increase small business awareness of NASA business opportunities.

The NASA Glenn Research Center invites small businesses to follow their social media pages in order to be more up-to-date on the current small business opportunities that are available for the center:

- On Facebook, you can find them at: NASA Glenn Research Center Small Business
- And on Twitter at: https://twitter.com/NASAGRC_SB

NASA also has a Vendor Database where you can include your company’s capability statement. Go to https://vendors.nvdb.nasa.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=Vendor.challenge_screen, and click on the “Create Account” button to register.

The NASA Glenn Research Center Small Business Programs Office will be sending the PTAC e-mail notifications of small business events and sources
sought/synopsis/solicitations that may be of interested; we look forward to sharing this information with our clients.

Small Business Contact at the NASA Glenn Research Center:

Teresa Monaco  
Small Business Specialist  
Phone: 216.433.8293  
FAX: 216.433.8560  
e-mail: grc-smallbusiness@mail.nasa.gov

PTAC Counselors are FCC Qualified

Federal Contractor Certification (FCC) is a training program for Veteran business owners intended to help these owners understand Federal contracting, respond competently to solicitations, and perform successfully once they have won the contract. This training is a joint project of the VA Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) and the Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (APTAC) with the assistance of the Defense Acquisition University (DAU).

All three Northwest Commission PTAC counselors are FCC qualified: Cris Pierce is an FCC Level 1, 2, 3 and 4 qualified counselor; Robyn Young completed Level 1 and was recently presented with her FCC Level 2 certificate at the Fall 2014 APTAC National Conference; Melissa Becker was recognized in January 2015 for having completed the requirements for Level 1.

To learn more about Federal Contractor Certification, go to http://www.vetbizresourcecenter.com/certification/Federal_Contractor_Certification.html.

Upcoming Regional Events:

How to Become a PA COSTARS Supplier

Date: February 26, 2015  
Time: 9:00a - noon  
Location: 41 Chestnut Avenue, Sharon, PA 16146

Cosponsored by Shenango Valley Chamber of Commerce. This workshop will discuss the COSTARS program. “COSTARS” is the Commonwealth of PA’s cooperative purchasing program that provides suppliers and local procurement units and state-affiliated agencies a tool to find and do business with each other.

For more information or to register, contact Robyn Young at robyny@northwestpa.org, 814-677-4800 x 130, or register online at www.northwestpa.org/government-contracting.

**COSTARS Connection**
Training & Matchmaking Event

Date: April 15, 2015
Time: 1pm-4pm
Location: Clarion University of PA, Gemmell Student Complex Building

Cosponsored by Clarion University SBDC and North Central PA PTAC. Participants will have the opportunity to hear directly from Harrisburg on how the COSTARS purchasing program works. The event also offers a chance to meet face-to-face with local government agencies participating as members and buyers on the COSTARS program.

For more information or to register, contact Robyn Young at robyny@northwestpa.org, 814-677-4800 x 130 or register online at www.northwestpa.org/government-contracting.

Success Story:

Pipeworks Plumbing & Heating

Pipeworks Plumbing & Heating of Warren sells and installs Heil air conditioning and heating products and services all major brands of equipment including Intertherm, Rheem, Empire, Dunkirk, Noritz, Moen and Gerber. We have served the Warren, Forest and McKean areas since 1993.

In 2014, Pipeworks stepped into the market of government contracting when we wished to bid on a solicitation with a federal agency. With the help of the Northwest Commission PTAC, we were able to complete Pipeworks’ registration in the System of Award Management (SAM). SAM registration is mandatory for any company wishing to compete for federal government contracts.

Since having SAM registration, Pipeworks has been able to pursue government contracting opportunities. To date we have been awarded two federal contracts. I do believe, had your organization not helped set us up in SAM and Fed Biz Opps, we would not have gotten these jobs. Thanks to the PTAC for all your help

-- Robert Slocum, Owner, Pipeworks Plumbing & Heating

Do you have a Success Story to share? A story about your success in government contracting and how the Northwest Commission PTAC was a part of that success?

These Success Stories help the PTAC greatly, as it shows our funders that the services provided by PTAC are worthwhile and of value to the businesses in our region.

Contact the PTAC for information about sharing your story!