



DOE Small Business Program Success Story: Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (APTAC)

The Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy's (EERE's) Small Business Program is highlighting the Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (APTAC), specifically the Colorado Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) regional office, for their service to small businesses currently working in or hoping to enter into government contracting. For more information on APTAC and to locate the regional office nearest to you, please visit <http://www.aptac-us.org/>.

1) Please describe APTAC's mission and services.

- A. Our mission is to educate and assist businesses throughout the procurement process. We want to be the go-to agency for companies throughout the nation to win federal, state, and local contracts. Our goal is to help businesses win government contracts and keep that money local, as Colorado PTAC is a perfect example of a business providing nationally coordinated, localized services. Our services are free and unlimited with all APTAC counselors having significant government procurement experience.

2) What is APTAC's relationship to the federal government?

- A. We are a partner in the procurement process, helping agencies meet some of their goals, bringing to agencies clients that are responsive and responsible, and improving the pool of competitive clients in order to spend the taxpayers' money wisely. We accomplish this through sitting with and supporting small businesses at every step of the entire procurement process, from locating a procurement opportunity through contract closeout.

3) Why do PTAC regional offices, such as the Colorado PTAC office, often know about an upcoming opportunity before resources such as GovWin or FedBizOps?

- A. Specifically, Colorado PTAC has an outstanding and free email service called Bid Match. Our search engine combs all government sites marketing contracting opportunities. In Colorado alone, there are 122 sites, while there are over 2,000 sites nationally. Bid Match runs searches all day long and sends information once a day to participating businesses. We also coach our clients to network, building relationships and discovering opportunities before they come out. Many firms often already know, then, when opportunities are coming out before they are published on designated forecast sites. For more information on Colorado PTAC's Bid Match, please register as a client on coloradoptac.org and speak with one of our procurement counselors.

4) How is APTAC funded?

- A. APTAC receives 50% of its funding from the U.S. Department of Defense, 25% from state government, and 25% from private entities.

5) What is the most common hurdle in federal contracting where you see small businesses often fail?

- A. Firms fail to realize the amount of effort, time, and diligence to do their homework that it takes to build effective relationships and be in an advantageous position in federal contracting. What we try to encourage firms to do is to provide solutions to agencies when they go to talk to agencies—not going in asking what the agency can do for them. Often the most daunting hurdle is at the outset when first entering into federal contracting. There are some minimum standards that scare businesses off. However, some firms use these standards as a goal to work toward before entering into federal contracting.

A great example is a women-owned small business (WOSB) information technology company that met with PTAC and learned to persevere and work through failures. I encountered them two years later at a WOSB conference, where they expressed their gratitude for helping them manage expectations and remain persistent. After two years, they finally received their first contract two weeks prior to the conference and then proceeded to win three more in the two following weeks. It is important to remember that it is a marathon, not a sprint.

6) Do you have any additional examples of success stories you would like to share?

- A. We see a range of different kinds of success across the clients we assist. One example is a woman working as a coach who found an opportunity through LinkedIn. She won her first proposal to both a federal and a local government agency through the contact she made through LinkedIn. It is important not to underestimate the potential of social media networking.

Another example is a client we had that makes racing bikes. They had some additional capacity within their facility, so one of our Colorado PTAC counselors sat down with them to try to determine where they could develop that additional capacity. They found an opportunity to supply the army with specific types of vehicular practice targets for military training.

A third client started out as two-person staff augmentation firm. After five years as our client and working through the U.S. Small Business Administration's 8(a) Business Development Program, the owner has been featured in *Forbes* and is now looking to franchise. When she came to us, we focused on the next steps after graduating the 8(a) program and worked on getting on U.S. General Services Administration schedules. She now has an entire division dedicated to government contracting.



We have our famous example, Mules to Missiles, where the U.S. Army was trying to find a way to provide mule-packing training, as this is a common form of transportation in the Middle East. A rancher near Colorado Springs had plenty mules and land to offer. After making a contact within the Army, he received a contract to

provide his land, mules, and expertise toward training mule-packing.

In Crested Butte, we had a small ski shop with part-time employees making custom skis transition to seven employees working full-time providing custom skis to the U.S. Army Special Forces.

I have had several clients for which we review every one of their proposals, and their success rates are rather high. Remember, our services are free and unlimited.

7) Have any businesses turned around to provide support to PTAC once they have become successful?

- A. Yes, previous clients who have been successful have turned around to provide PTAC monetary support or resources, such as subject matter experts. Many of our previous clients are our voice as well. We do not have funds to spend on advertisement—such funds go directly toward education. So, our prior clients are our best advertisement. Again, for more information and to locate your local regional PTAC office, please visit <http://www.aptac-us.org/>.

For more EERE small business success stories, visit <http://energy.gov/eere/downloads/small-business-success-stories>.