Michigan First – The Birth of the PTACs

In June of 1981, the Northeast Michigan Consortium (NEMC), a workforce development agency, opened its Federal Procurement Office in response to demand for federal contracting help. The office served eight counties and was operated by Sally Rushton and Denise Hoffmeyer. Denise continues to serve at the NEMC, the first PTAC in Michigan and - we believe - the nation.

Sally and Denise created PTAC methods, procedures, forms and reports to document results for the host agency and Board of Directors (the first Quarterly Report!). Other Michigan agencies sent staff to the NEMC in Onaway to learn. In three short months, PTACS were established in Saginaw County, Battle Creek and Harrison. Noting their successes, the Defense Contract Administration Services Management Area (now known as DCMA) sent small and disadvantaged business utilization specialists to consult with PTAC staff. This led to an agreement to meet informally to share ideas regarding procurement assistance center operations.

Early in 1982, the name Michigan Procurement Alliance was adopted at a state-wide meeting. Participants agreed to quarterly meetings to share ideas and to help new PTACs. By December 1983, the Alliance included 13 centers. Other states had also taken notice. Robert Murphy, Procurement Specialist at the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania, requested PTAC information to share with the new Regional Federal Procurement Program.

While PTACS were initially locally funded, in January 1984, contacts with then-Governor James Blanchard and the Michigan Department of Commerce resulted in a commitment to provide financial support to help Michigan firms establish and maintain a continuous market share of federal procurement contracts. The federal Procurement Technical Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program was first authorized in 1984 as part of the FY 1985 Defense Authorization Act.

By February 1989, there were 22 procurement offices in Michigan. In January 1991, however, newly elected Governor John Engler cut PTAC funding. When funding was restored three months later, the Michigan PTAC landscape had permanently changed to the structure that exists today.

Thanks to Denise Hoffmeyer at NEMC PTAC for the information used in this article, and congratulations on 34 years of PTAC service!!!