

Testimony of  
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Senator Snowe and Senator Shaheen, thank you for the opportunity to testify today before the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee field hearing. I am honored to speak before you on behalf of the many small businesses in Maine and throughout the country who are engaged in government contracting and as a representative of the Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, a small business program funded by the Defense Logistics Agency of the Department of Defense.

My name is Pat Rice and I am Director of the statewide Maine Procurement Technical Assistance Center hosted by Eastern Maine Development Corporation. The Maine PTAC program is just one of 90 PTACs across the nation, which has over 500 dedicated procurement professionals, helping small businesses compete for federal, state, and local government contracts and subcontracts

As Joe Flynn, President of the Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (APTAC), said in his testimony before your Committee in May, “the PTACs are the ‘boots on the ground’ in the government acquisition process. Counselors work with small businesses every day – offering classes and seminars, sponsoring matchmaking events with government agencies and prime contractors, and providing hundreds of thousands of hours of one-on-one counseling and support – all at little or no cost to the businesses.”<sup>1</sup> Allow me to provide some Maine examples;

In mid-June, Maine PTAC hosted twelve members of Raytheon’s Integrated Defense System (IDS) supply team who were interested in locating capable suppliers. 43 Maine companies attended that event and of those, 23 will be invited to visit the Raytheon facility to continue the dialogue. Raytheon IDS has mentioned to me that this is their new outreach model. And yesterday, we held a Matchmaker Event in Lewiston which gave over 110 small businesses the opportunity to meet with over 20 prime contractors and government agencies. The well attended Matchmaker gives evidence that small businesses are eager to do business with the government.

Maine PTAC collaborates on a number of issues with the New Hampshire PTAC as well as other New England PTACs as part of the Department of Defense Northeast Council for Small Business Education and Advocacy. This spring, in Portland, Maine PTAC hosted a training workshop for manufacturers that want to sell to the Defense Supply Centers. The Director of Small Business Programs at Defense Supply Center Columbus presented a three hour detailed seminar on how to work with the on-line acquisition

system that the Defense Supply Center uses. After the program, one small business wrote that this was “Perhaps the most valuable outreach seminar I’ve attended in 32 years”. New Hampshire PTAC hosted the same workshop in Keene, which was also well received by manufacturers in NH.

We also collaborate when possible with programs and organizations with complementary missions, such as the Maine Small Business Development Centers, Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnerships and the Maine District Office of the Small Business Administration. A good example of such collaboration is the on-line government contracting training modules that the Maine SBDC and the Maine PTAC have put together. The two on-line workshops “Introduction to Government Contracting” and “Capability Statements” help small businesses become familiar with the government market and give them a valuable tool to when the small business begins to market its product or service to the government or a prime contractor. These on-line workshops are available on the Maine PTAC website, the Maine SBDC website and the nationwide Small Business Administration website.

I believe that collaborations such as these should be encouraged because they provide small businesses with a comprehensive approach to the challenges they face and the collaboration capitalizes on the strengths inherent in the separate, but complimentary programs.

However, each small business must decide if selling to the government is right for them. Government contracting can become a part of a small business’s overall market strategy

I believe that some of the benefits to the small business when they sell to the government are:

- Government sales may be more consistent, this aids the small business in planning its cash flow for a specific time period.
- Government sales are sometimes counter cyclical to commercial sales. When the commercial market falters the government market sales may be enough to sustain the business until the commercial sales kick back into high gear.
- The government is committed to paying its suppliers on time when the supplier fulfills the contract.
- The benefits to the government and the taxpayer are enhanced competition, a stronger industrial base, and more and better jobs throughout the nation.

Each small business that we work with has an assigned PTAC counselor and the counselor always advises the small business that it is a long process and the small business must make a commitment to work through the registrations, and bid and proposal processes and to dedicate the time to market their product or service to the government. The Maine PTAC as well as PTAC programs in other states offer a variety of service and technical assistance for small businesses that want to tap into the roughly \$400 billion each year in procurement opportunities from the federal government and the additional opportunities under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding.

Just how do small businesses find these opportunities from the federal government and the ARRA funding?" There are three main ways for businesses to tap directly into these opportunities.

- The first is by responding to a solicitation that the small business obtains as a result of the PTAC's bid service available to the small business free of charge as a Maine PTAC client.
- A second way is to become a GSA Schedule holder and supply a product or service that a government agency buys off a GSA Schedule using ARRA funds.
- A third way the small business participates in ARRA funding is by becoming a subcontractor on an ARRA project.

Senator Snowe and Senator Shaheen, thank you again for your support of small businesses. Thank you too, for the committee's support of the PTAC program because we are indeed the "boots on the ground" when it comes to government contracting.

I greatly appreciate this opportunity. I am happy to answers any questions you may have.

<sup>1</sup> Joe Flynn, May 21, 2009 testimony before U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship