

NIGP

The Institute for
Public Procurement

Please use this form as the cover page for each submission (chapters can submit in two categories).

Outstanding Award Application

Chapter Name:	Oklahoma Association of Public Procurement
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List Program(s) that will be highlighted in application	Strategic Partnership Renewal with OMES

YES Has your chapter submitted your Performance Standard SEAL?

Check the box for the Outstanding Chapter Award you are submitting:

Outstanding Chapter Operations Award

Does your chapter excel in its operating processes, including policies and procedures, budgeting, recognition of agencies and individuals and involvement with NIGP?

Outstanding Chapter Membership Award

Does your Chapter excel in membership benefits and resources and what are your methods for membership retention and growth?

Outstanding Chapter Advocacy and Outreach Award

Does your Chapter utilize best practices and operations that have been demonstrated to be an effective advocate for members and our profession?

Outstanding Chapter Professional Development Award

Does your chapter excel in providing educational resources and other opportunities to your membership?

Oklahoma Association of Public Procurement
Outstanding Chapter Advocacy and Outreach Award Application

PROGRAM (10 Points)

In 2024, OkAPP made strategic advocacy and outreach a top priority by intentionally repairing and renewing its relationship with the Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services (OMES), a state agency responsible for overseeing procurement operations across Oklahoma. In prior years, the chapter struggled to gain traction with OMES, facing delays and denials in having chapter-led training approved for Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Additionally, there had been no history of OkAPP being invited to participate in OMES-sponsored training programs or events.

Recognizing this disconnect as a significant barrier to member value and statewide visibility, OkAPP's President initiated contact with OMES through a personal phone call to reintroduce the chapter's mission and purpose. That initial call led to an in-person meeting with OMES leadership, where the foundation for a renewed partnership was laid. During this meeting, the President emphasized OkAPP's statewide reach, commitment to professional development, and alignment with OMES's objectives in cultivating a skilled public procurement workforce. This personal, direct approach proved instrumental in reestablishing trust.

These efforts led to two breakthrough opportunities:

1. Speaking Engagements at OMES Training Events – The chapter president was invited to speak at two separate OMES-sponsored trainings. The first presentation introduced OkAPP to a new audience of public procurement professionals, highlighted the value of chapter membership, and extended an open invitation to engage. The second session expanded on this foundation, combining an organizational update with career development strategies tailored for public sector professionals — directly reinforcing OkAPP's role as both a networking platform and a training ally.
2. Planning Partnership for OkAPP Forum 2024 – For the first time, OMES was invited to participate in the planning of the OkAPP Forum, contributing insight into the session lineup and ultimately conducting four training sessions. These sessions were not only well-attended, but also directly aligned with CEU standards — an important win for both organizations.

A particularly sensitive advocacy issue emerged when OMES announced a policy change that would prohibit certification and recertification for procurement professionals not employed by a state agency — affecting many OkAPP members from municipalities, counties, higher education institutions, and other public entities. OkAPP used Office Hours to gather feedback, address concerns, and elevate these issues directly with OMES leadership. Through these efforts, OkAPP gained clarity on the rationale behind the decision and communicated that information back to members — helping to restore transparency and trust. This moment also gave OkAPP the opportunity to promote the NIGP Pathways certification program as an alternative credential accessible to all members, regardless of employer type.

In addition to OMES engagement, OkAPP conducted executive-level outreach to the Governor's and Lieutenant Governor's offices, requesting a proclamation in support of Procurement Month and inviting participation in Forum 2024. While scheduling prevented fulfillment of these requests, the initiative demonstrated a clear step forward in elevating the visibility of the procurement profession at the highest levels of state government.

Finally, advocacy efforts were also turned inward. Recognizing the need to strengthen leadership from within, OkAPP launched a chapter-wide survey to identify interest in officer and committee positions. This outreach — paired with follow-up calls — enabled the chapter to fill key roles with new, energized members, many of whom had not previously served in leadership.

RESULTS (10 Points)

OkAPP's 2024 advocacy and outreach efforts produced meaningful outcomes across partnerships, policy influence, and member leadership:

- **Reestablished Partnership with OMES:** The chapter became a recognized and trusted training partner, restoring CEU approval for its events and increasing value for members employed in state government.
- **Two President-Led Presentations at OMES Events:** These presentations validated OkAPP's relevance and influence, and symbolized OMES's recognition of the chapter as a strategic partner in workforce development.
- **Forum 2024 Collaboration:** OMES conducted four breakout sessions at Forum 2024 and contributed to the session planning process. Their involvement raised the Forum's credibility and attracted broader attendance.
- **Response to OMES Certification Policy Change:** When OMES announced it would no longer certify non-state agency professionals, OkAPP facilitated member discussion through Office Hours, communicated directly with OMES, and provided clarifying updates to the membership. The chapter also used this moment to elevate the NIGP Pathways program, offering members a clear professional alternative and demonstrating that OkAPP is a proactive, informed advocate for their advancement.
- **Outreach to State Leadership:** While the Governor and Lt. Governor did not participate in 2024, the chapter successfully established communication channels and shared formal materials, elevating its presence and professionalism.
- **Internal Advocacy:** The officer interest survey and follow-up effort resulted in numerous committee appointments and board support placements, confirming OkAPP's commitment to developing leaders from within.

DIFFERENTIALS (10 Points)

What makes OkAPP's 2024 advocacy and outreach efforts stand out is the depth, intentionality, and responsiveness of its approach — connecting member-level needs with institutional engagement across multiple fronts.

- **Multi-Level Advocacy:** OkAPP's strategy addressed three levels — internal membership, agency engagement, and executive visibility. This comprehensive approach shows advocacy is not a one-time action but a cultural practice embedded throughout the chapter.
- **Institutional Partnership with OMES:** Unlike many chapters, OkAPP achieved direct agency collaboration, with OMES participating in Forum planning, delivering training, and endorsing the chapter's professional development efforts. Few chapters have reached this level of trust with their state's procurement authority.
- **Timely Response to Policy Change:** The OMES certification decision affected a large segment of OkAPP's members. Rather than issuing a reactive statement, the chapter opened dialogue, elevated concerns, and translated confusion into clarity. Promoting NIGP Pathways in response demonstrated both leadership and professional adaptability.
- **Human-Centered Leadership Development:** The officer interest survey — followed by personal phone calls — exemplified OkAPP's belief that every member has leadership potential. This intentional outreach yielded not just participation, but long-term commitment from new faces.
- **Executive Outreach Despite No Immediate Result:** OkAPP's proactive contact with the Governor and Lt. Governor's offices, though not fulfilled, laid a foundation for future recognition. It demonstrated the chapter's confidence and long-range planning.

LESSONS (10 Points)

The chapter's experiences in 2024 provided valuable insights about advocacy as both a strategic and member-centered endeavor:

- **Relationships Take Time and Consistency:** The partnership with OMES was not revived overnight — it was built through a sequence of respectful, persistent efforts, starting with a phone call and office visit.
- **Member Advocacy Requires Listening and Translation:** The OMES certification policy was complex and disruptive. By holding Office Hours and reporting back with clarity, OkAPP transformed frustration into understanding and elevated its credibility with members.



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- **Visibility Is a Form of Advocacy:** Being seen — whether presenting at OMES, hosting Office Hours, or reaching out to state leaders — increased OkAPP’s influence and legitimacy across sectors.
- **Recognition and Invitation Fuel Leadership:** The officer interest campaign succeeded because it paired survey data with human outreach. Going forward, OkAPP will continue personal engagement and broaden recognition opportunities beyond formal roles.
- **Advocacy Is Ongoing:** OkAPP will maintain quarterly conversations with OMES, continue its executive outreach efforts, and explore additional certification partnerships to ensure diverse pathways for professional growth.