



New York State Association of Municipal Purchasing Officials

Promoting Intelligent, Ethical Public Procurement for New York State for Today and Tomorrow.



Outstanding Chapter for Pro-D:

NY State Association of Municipal Purchasing Officials (SAMPO)

President: John Flynn Jr., NIGP- CPP, CPPO, CPPB

Award submission prepared by Laurie Conley, CPPB - Pro-D Chair for SAMPO

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SAMPO has always been very dedicated to professional development for our members. For years we have offered two regional conference/trade shows, held in areas of our large state that would make it feasible for our members to attend and one Annual Conference/Trade Show – held as conveniently located as possible. We always offer a March is Purchasing month training opportunity as well as multiple webinars every year. Our conferences and webinars are well attended and we bring in highly experienced presenters as well as professional keynote speakers to balance work and life.

We accomplish our Professional Development (Pro-D) events via the input and ideas of the Pro-D Committee, our SAMPO Board, SAMPO administrative management company (who handles the back end of registration and invoicing), and our Regional Representatives.

As with every chapter, we were forced to pivot our Pro-D strategy due to the closures brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board voted to approve the purchase of Zoom Professional to support the professional development needs of our large chapter. The Pro-D Committee met regularly to reschedule and redesign our formats for our existing conferences and webinars. Challenges we tackled included:

- Date(s) – Reviewed the calendar for holidays and any other offerings to make sure our date(s) were convenient to our members;
- Zoom – Evaluated the level that best suited our needs and operating budget;
- Cost – Revised our cost proposition by charging SAMPO members a very nominal fee of (\$50) for attendance to our Annual rescheduled Conference due to the instability of municipal budgets affected by the pandemic. Furthermore, we implemented a free attendance policy for participation in SAMPO hosted;
- Classes – The committee re-strategized our Pro-D offerings to reflect the current needs of the membership by considering what they needed to help them navigate through the many challenges of the pandemic from legal to purchasing to elections. We took the



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KISS approach to event design by not offering concurrent classes since the virtual environment was so new to all of us.

- Presenters – The best presenters were selected to offer the class topics we had discussed. The dates/times were established by the availability and acceptance of the presenters the committee selected.
- Vendor Spotlight – This was very challenging and we learned some valuable lessons that we have since implemented. Originally, we had allowed our vendors 1, 2 and 3 minute LIVE spots for our first virtual conference. We had 11 vendors buy spots, offered at \$250 for 1 minute, \$400 for 2 minutes and \$500 for 3 minutes. SAMPO sold 22 minutes and allotted half of an hour. We were thrilled with our financial success however, our vendors ran over their allotted times, which set us back a few minutes in our conference that day. To correct this issue at our next virtual conference, we had the vendors submit videos which were then vetted by and the Pro-D Committee members to assure that the vendors were within their chosen time frame. Fortunately, all of our videos were within the purchased timeframe. We also requested that the videos be sent in an MP-4 format. The videos were sent to our Management Company, WAM, and they were able to thread the videos together for the day of the conference. It was amazingly smooth and professional! In addition to the Zoom Face-Time the vendors received for sending in a video, Bronze Vendors received an email list of attendees and the Gold and Platinum Vendors received an email list of our membership.
- Registration – In the planning phase, we discussed capping the number of attendees to each class. We decided not to cap any of our classes. Instead, we sent out an email gently reminding the members of the Zoom protocols; we muted them upon entry though when they unmuted to speak, we asked that they mute themselves again due to background noise, we requested that the attendees use their video, if possible, and explained how the presenter(s) likes to see faces vs. names in black boxes, etc.;
- Moderators/Facilitators – We determined that we would continue our practice of introducing our presenters. One of the Pro-D Committee members was assigned to contact members who were willing to moderate the classes, keynote address, and General Sessions;
- Sponsorship - We reached out to our vendors for sponsorship of the Zoom purchase and the keynote address for the virtual conference. Their sponsorship was noted on our published schedule and announced at the conference welcome speech;
- Kick-Off – We determined that the President of the Chapter would start with a Welcome speech and introduce our Keynote speaker;



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- Blasts to Attendees and Vendors – We established who would draft the email blasts as well as when and how often reminders would be sent to the membership and/or vendors during the open registration period.

SAMPO is proud to say that since May of 2020, we have hosted over a dozen webinars, two virtual conferences, one FOIL class and five Regional Round Table discussions. We determine the success of our conferences by attendance and survey results.

Our first offering of *Pause the Pause*, was offered by our own Paul Brennan. Paul offered four monthly webinars that were attended by 75-89 attendees during a time when the school districts in New York State were closed. Our purchasing brothers and sisters were appreciative that they were not forgotten during such a trying time. Paul presented topics such as Best Value and Competitive Bidding, Exceptions to GML, Time Management for the Procurement Professional and Specification Writing.

In October of 2020 SAMPO purchased Zoom and forged our way into the unknown arena of Virtual Conferencing. We held a three day conference and had over 110 attendees and 11 vendors attend. Our classes were open Zoom meeting classes and encouraged participation, which worked for our members. Our trade show offered 1, 2 and 3 minute live presentation spots for our vendors, which, we found, was difficult to manage. We had a Round Table session that was so engaging that our members did not want it to end. We routinely invite the Senior Attorney from our NYS Comptroller's Office to provide an update on case-law, review of GML, audit findings in our state and allow for open discussion from our members. Our Keynote Speaker was Marcheta Gillespie, who is always engaging and leaves the membership with valuable insight.

We offered our FOIL class in December of 2020, which was nominally attended, just under 20 members.

In January of 2021 we hosted two webinars that were offered by NIGP; The Certified Procurement Professional and the NIGP Business Council's event, How Unlikely Partners can Make You Successful. We had just under 45 and 42 attendees, respectively.

Our Pro-D Committee meets regularly and discusses the topics that are important to our members and the format in which we should offer them. We determined in January of 2021 that it would be advantageous for our members to provide an opportunity to participate in a webinar every month. We decided to call it "Webinar of the Month".



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In February, Paul Brennan presented a webinar on Purchasing During the Pandemic and we had a record 122 attendees. You know the members are hungry for information when the webinar runs over its allotted schedule!

As good fortune comes to those who plan and know what they want, Lourdes Coss was offering a monthly webinar on such topics as “Delegating with Ease,” “Identifying Your Vendor Language,” “Another Seat at the Table,” and many great options and opportunity for the SAMPO members AND at a reduced cost that wouldn’t hurt SAMPO after losing the revenue typically generated by our in-person conferences. Lourdes’ webinars fit right into our idea of “Webinar of the Month.”

In the midst of planning our upcoming events for the year, we began having difficulties with the performance and functionality of our website, hosted by Chapter Manager. SAMPO lost our Member Connect feature, which is/was widely used by our members and a major incentive to membership in our professional organization. In discussion with the Pro-D Committee, we came up with offering monthly Round Tables for our members. The planning of the Round Tables was given to our Regional Representatives for our three regions in the state. The Regional Representatives got to work and have been each planning a one-hour Round Table, during a practical lunchtime, every month for their region. Other regional members can also register, although our vision was to keep the meeting under 25 members for fluid discussion. These Round Tables were, and continue to be very successful; leading to networking opportunities and sharing of documents – almost as effective as being in person.

SAMPO held a one day conference in March of 2021, packed with strong and knowledgeable presenters. We had 104 attendees and 12 Vendors. We corrected all of our glitches on the vendor spotlight and were able to offer a seamless conference.

Currently, SAMPO is surveying our members to evaluate the practicality of offering an in-person event in October of 2021. We will host an event either way. Whether it will be in-person or virtual is yet to be determined. We continue to be dedicated to offering ongoing educational opportunities throughout these challenging times.