

NIGP Procurement Excellence Showcase

Monday, July 28, 2025, 1:30 - 5:00 PM

Tuesday, July 29, 2025, 9:30 - 1:00 PM

Arkansas State Crime Laboratory Operations: When a Laboratory Outgrows Capacity

The Arkansas State Crime Laboratory has continued to grow since its establishment in 1977. In the early years the agency shared space with other state agencies only occupying approximately 26,000 square feet, but by 1997 the laboratory expanded their operations to 80,000 square feet. As advancements in technology and legislation affected case submissions the laboratory took on renovations in efforts to adapt, however, it was only a matter of time before a new facility would be needed. Through a series of projects, the laboratory was able to secure funding, land, and contracts for the design and construction of a new 187,000 square foot facility set to open in spring of 2027.

Many changes in technology have occurred over the last 48 years since the laboratory came to fruition. DNA technology has become the gold standard in criminal justice and prosecution, with advancement in familial DNA analysis leading to cold case reanalysis it is an exciting time for our constituents. Advancement in equipment has revolutionized many laboratory specialties allowing for more precise analysis, while facility infrastructure has required the laboratory to be creative.

As technology advanced, the criminal justice system and Arkansas Criminal Code underwent transitions as well. With the enactment of legislation to collect and/or store DNA samples for convicted sex offenders, agency casework increased. Again, when legislation required DNA samples to be collected on suspects of violent crimes, casework increased. The opioid epidemic brought increased challenges and more legislative updates to the state, with more cases being submitted than ever for pathology, toxicology, and drug chemistry.

The current facility began as office space with a small area for pathology and analysis. Over time, equipment and technology advanced and this office space was adapted and changed, however, the facility was never designed for its eventual purpose. After multiple renovation projects, and two satellite laboratories' creation, the need for a larger state of the art facility could not be put off any longer. Through the Request for Qualification process beginning in 2020 a Needs Assessment was carried out. The creation of a comprehensive document gave way to valuable discussions with legislators, and the Governor's Office, resulting in legislation being passed appropriating and funding a new Arkansas State Crime Laboratory in 2023.

Work began to secure a Design Professional capable of such a complex project through another Request for Qualification process. Rigorous negotiations saved the laboratory 1.6+ million on design contracting alone. The need for land purchase created another lengthy approval process culminating in procurement of 19 acres adjacent to another state facility. Approval for Alternate Delivery Method was obtained to allow Request for Proposals instead of Competitive Sealed Bidding for construction,



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making way for selection of the most Qualified Contractor for pre-construction and construction services utilizing Guaranteed Maximum Pricing. With a balance of economic design and innovation, the construction is anticipated to come in under initial estimates from the needs assessment, even though the market changed substantially in the last five years.

Presenters:

- Carol Hartmon, ARForward Program Manager, Arkansas Shared Administrative Services

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Volunteer Scholarships: A Pathway to Membership Success

Professional development is a driving force within procurement organizations, fueling innovation, expertise, compliance, and growth. The Central Florida Chapter of NIGP (CFC) advances this mission through its robust Scholarship Program, a member-focused initiative that promotes individual contributions, active peer collaboration, continuous learning, and professional advancement.

Originally launched in 2011 in collaboration with the Mid-Florida Chapter of NIGP, the program incentivizes volunteerism and engagement by awarding scholarship points for a wide range of eligible activities. These include attending chapter meetings and procurement-related events, serving in leadership roles, participating in committees, and earning or renewing certifications. The program's budget is made possible through innovative funding, particularly revenue from reverse trade shows, and other fundraising efforts. Points are earned annually and converted into scholarship dollars based on a formula that divides the allocated scholarship budget by the total number of points earned by all members. Each event or contribution is assigned a point value. These points are tracked and added throughout the year using a formula-driven Excel application sheet, which automatically calculates the total points earned. To verify participation, attendance certificates and other approved documentation must be attached to the Scholarship Application. At the end of the year, the total points are multiplied by the designated point value and combined with any deferred points carried over from the previous year. All data is recorded in a log that is regularly updated and posted on the chapter website for easy access. Individual balances are continuously monitored and deducted if they are used throughout the year.

Members can use scholarship dollars for various professional development expenses, including tuition for procurement-related courses, certification and recertification costs, travel and attendance at industry conferences such as NIGP's Forum or the Florida Association of Public Procurement Officials (FAPPO), and other eligible educational materials. Unused scholarship dollars may be deferred and accumulated for future use upon request. If a member chooses not to forward their points, they go back to the chapter. The remaining dollars have been used to fund other allowable expenses, donated to current community services initiatives, or to fund specific pro-d scholarships offered to active members through raffles that they may sign up for if interested.

Since 2021, CFC has awarded approximately \$150,000 in scholarship funds to its members. These funds have directly supported member attendance at national and local conferences, certification efforts, and training courses, empowering professionals to grow their knowledge, expand their networks, and increase their impact in the field. This scholarship program is especially impactful for members whose agencies have little or no professional development budget.



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This program highlights how a strategic, sustainable approach to professional development can drive organizational success, increase member satisfaction, and build a culture of excellence. It underscores the importance of collaborative initiatives, innovative funding mechanisms, and strategic investments in professional development for driving organizational success and member satisfaction. It provides a valuable model for procurement organizations seeking to enhance member engagement and long-term impact through targeted scholarship initiatives.

Presenters:

- Tabatha Freedman, President, Central Florida Chapter of NIGP, Inc.
- Luis Aviles, Vice President, Central Florida Chapter of NIGP, Inc.
- Nick Canjar, Secretary, Central Florida Chapter of NIGP, Inc.

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Supplier Synergy - Engagement + Education + Excitement

What happens when a procurement team is intentional about engaging its suppliers? How do suppliers feel when they are offered education about an entity's processes, procedures, and plans? When suppliers are excited about doing business with your organization does competition increase? Our procurement team was tasked with increasing competition after a decade of canceled projects, time wasted on proposals, ineffective solicitations, and a general lack of interest from the supplier community. The team brainstormed and came up with a plan to create a world in which suppliers were informed about future procurements, they could easily meet with the team to ask questions and gain clarity on processes, and suppliers were encouraged to submit bids and proposals. It took time to convince suppliers that they were the most important aspect of the procurement plan - but we did it! We went to area chambers of commerce and explained our processes, pulled the curtain back on past unsuccessful solicitations, made sure that suppliers understood how to update their profiles so that they would not miss our emails and announcements, and we specifically targeted the right suppliers, using their NIGP codes, when advertising formal and informal solicitations. This extensive outreach created synergy with our suppliers and we have increased competition, lowered prices, and made room for innovation in our scopes of work. We are no longer at odds with the supplier community, rather, the procurement team is a conduit between suppliers and users. The atmosphere of fear of being banned or blacklisted has been cleared and the sunshine of partnership, clarity, and fairness has taken its place.

Presenters:

- Yolanda Broome, Deputy Commissioner, City of Atlanta Department of Watershed Management



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From Scholarships to Success: RMGPA's Virtual Conference Breaks Records!

The Rocky Mountain Governmental Procurement Association (RMGPA) successfully produced a virtual Fall Conference in September 2024 that significantly expanded access to quality procurement training for its members and the broader NIGP community. RMGPA offered six hours of expert-led RFP training at a highly affordable registration rate of only \$49 per attendee. Total revenue from the conference was well below the session cost charged by the RFP Dream Team, who delivered the content - but RMGPA chose to maintain the low price point in order to maximize accessibility, absorbing the difference through scholarship funding.

In previous years, scholarship utilization had been limited, but by creatively lowering the registration fee, RMGPA enabled a greater number of participants to benefit from these funds. The innovative pricing strategy resulted in an impressive 102 registrants—more than four times the attendance of the 2023 Fall Conference. Notably, more than 50 attendees were non-RMGPA members, demonstrating successful outreach beyond the local chapter.

RMGPA's marketing efforts for this conference were robust and far-reaching. The virtual format allowed for promotion to the entire NIGP membership, extending beyond local boundaries. Marketing channels included NSITE, other chapters, Chapter Ambassadors, and heavy marketing at the 2024 Forum in Charlotte. This strategic outreach attracted procurement professionals from across regions, increasing awareness and participation in a cost-effective educational opportunity.

The decision to host a virtual conference was driven by its timing immediately following Forum, anticipating limited travel budgets among agencies. By providing accessible, affordable training shortly after Forum, RMGPA ensured continued professional development without the barriers of travel expenses.

Overall, the RMGPA Fall Conference exemplified innovation and commitment to member service by combining scholarship support, strategic pricing, and targeted marketing to broaden educational access. This approach not only boosted attendance and engagement but also strengthened connections across the NIGP community, setting a new standard for cost-effective, inclusive professional development.

Presenters:

- Rosalyn Potter, Vice President, Rocky Mountain Governmental Purchasing Association (RMGPA)



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- Stephanie Glockzin, Secretary, Rocky Mountain Governmental Purchasing Association (RMGPA)
- Aran Raz, Webmaster, Rocky Mountain Governmental Purchasing Association

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Ctrl+Alt+Procure: Rebooting Public Health Purchasing with Purpose

The Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) Purchase Portal Project was developed to modernize and streamline the department's fragmented procurement process. With over 800 employees and a \$225 million annual budget supported by more than 70 grants, the department processes approximately 3,000 purchase requests each year. Prior to the portal, procurement relied on manual forms, email approvals, and Excel tracking logs, resulting in inefficiencies, limited transparency, and high administrative burden. The goal of the project was to create a centralized, digital workflow to increase efficiency, accuracy, and accountability while improving the user experience.

Following a delayed start due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project was revived in late 2021. A user-centered design approach was taken to redesign workflows, gather stakeholder input, and ensure compliance with procurement policies. The new system, developed on the OnBase platform with an external contractor (Databank) and supported by the Office of Enterprise Technology, launched in July 2023. Initial implementation included 104 users and was accompanied by tailored training materials and phased rollout to ensure adoption.

Phase 2, launched in October 2024, introduced enhanced workflow logic, new notification features, and a robust reporting module allowing users to generate both standard and ad hoc reports. Key outcomes include reduced processing time, fewer P-Card errors, elimination of paper-based forms, improved audit readiness, and significantly better visibility into procurement status. In its first full fiscal year, the portal processed 3,376 Purchase Request Forms (PRFs), with an additional 2,862 already processed in the current fiscal year as of May 2025—demonstrating strong adoption and sustained utility.

The portal's implementation directly aligned with public procurement values, including transparency, accountability, and service. Standardized digital workflows improved impartiality and consistency, while user dashboards and real-time tracking enhanced visibility and trust. Staff satisfaction improved, and interdepartmental communication became more streamlined. Notably, the portal also proved valuable in hybrid work settings by ensuring continuity of operations through remote accessibility.

This initiative offers a replicable model for public sector agencies facing similar procurement challenges. Lessons learned include the importance of early and continued end-user involvement, phased implementation to support adoption, and responsive design that evolves with user needs. The



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team continues to gather feedback and has already outlined a Phase 3 to further integrate with financial systems and expand functionality to additional procurement workflows.

In conclusion, the MCDPH Purchase Portal Project has transformed an outdated and labor-intensive process into a modern, digital solution. Its success demonstrates the power of strategic investment, collaborative implementation, and a user-centered approach to public procurement improvement. The outcomes not only support operational excellence but also position the system as a transferable model for government agencies seeking to enhance procurement efficiency and service delivery.

Presenters:

- Cheryl Bucalo, Purchasing & Contracts Manager and Delegated Procurement Officer, Maricopa County Public Health
- Audrey Morin, Procurement Specialist, Maricopa County Public Health

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Procurement at Pace: Maryland's Rapid Modernization Overhaul

In less than 12 months, Maryland executed the most sweeping procurement reform in its history, transforming a system once defined by inefficiency, rigidity, and inequity into a platform for economic inclusion and strategic governance. Procurement at Pace tells the story of how the Office of State Procurement (OSP), in partnership with the Moore-Miller Administration, led this bold overhaul from concept to codification, culminating in the Governor's Executive Order (Dec. 2024) and the passage of the Procurement Reform Act of 2025 (May 2025).

Faced with mounting challenges, frequent vendor disqualifications, delayed payments, procedural complexity, and barriers to entry for small, minority, and veteran-owned businesses, Maryland chose urgency over inertia. OSP spearheaded the reform, not merely implementing change but designing it. The initiative redefined the role of procurement from a compliance checkpoint to a catalyst for equity, transparency, and good governance.

Methodologically, the effort centered on deep stakeholder engagement and rapid policy design. Between March and December 2024, OSP engaged over 230 stakeholders, including 86 agency teams, 136 advocacy organizations, and national thought partners, to inform a policy roadmap grounded in lived experience and operational realities. Internal data analysis identified systemic bottlenecks, guiding reforms that would both simplify procurement and expand opportunity.

Key results include:

- A 15-day payment mandate for Small Business Reserve (SBR) contracts (cut from 30 days).
- The introduction of the "Rule of Two" to prioritize small business participation.
- Allowing corrections for minor Minority Business Enterprise form errors.
- Creation of the Veteran-Owned Small Business Reserve program.
- Expanding Maryland's Small Business Reserve (SBR) program, raising the cap from \$500,000 to \$1 million, and eliminating the \$50,000 floor.
- Streamlined Minority Business Enterprise certification renewals and increased flexibility in goal-setting.

Early implementation under the Executive Order has already improved bid responsiveness, vendor engagement, and payment timelines. Long-term changes will be institutionalized starting October 1, 2025, with the enactment of the Procurement Reform Act.



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Beyond policy, the most lasting impact may be cultural. Procurement professionals are now viewed as strategic leaders and architects of public value. The reform has improved staff morale, reduced administrative burden, and positioned procurement as a trusted partner in agency decision-making.

This initiative shows that major reform doesn't require decades or massive budgets. With strong executive support, stakeholder trust, and a data-driven approach, Maryland achieved what many states only plan for, real, rapid, and replicable change.

Maryland's story offers a blueprint for others: empower procurement leaders, include them early in policymaking, and use procurement not just to buy, but to build. Procurement at Pace is not just about what was changed, but how it was changed, and why it matters for the future of public service.

Presenters:

- Linda Dangerfield, Deputy Chief Procurement Officer - Operations - Maryland, DGS/Office of State Procurement/MPPA
- Kareen Davis, Senior Director, DGS/Office of State Procurement/MPPA
- Wallace Sermons, Chief Procurement Officer – Maryland, DGS/Office of State Procurement/MPPA

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Real Feedback, Real Results: Orange County's Evaluation Overhaul

The County of Orange, California, set out to solve a common procurement challenge: how to reliably evaluate supplier performance in a timely, efficient way that reflects real stakeholder experiences. Historically, the County relied on a manual, paper-based evaluation process that was cumbersome, siloed, and often too late to inform meaningful contract decisions. To modernize this approach, the County implemented an automated review workflow integrated directly with its eProcurement system, streamlining supplier assessments and enhancing accountability.

Rather than relying on sporadic evaluations at contract renewal, stakeholders across departments now receive automated prompts to provide performance feedback six months before a contract expires. This proactive approach ensures timely, actionable evaluations, and firsthand experience. Once submitted, feedback is stored, accumulated, and readily accessible within the system, giving department staff, public agencies, and the Board of Supervisors a clear view of supplier performance trends. This transparency allows for informed decision-making, early intervention when issues arise, and stronger supplier relationships.

What makes the County's approach particularly impactful is the scale and inclusiveness of participation. Since launching this initiative, the County has collected over 1,500 reviews from nearly 300 individual employees—an unprecedented volume of feedback that was previously scattered across disparate systems or buried in files. By leveraging Procurated's Canary platform, the County now synthesizes and shares contractor insights across departments, ensuring performance evaluations are accessible locally and nationwide.

This transformation has had measurable benefits. Deputy Purchasing Agents no longer waste time chasing down evaluations or consolidating fragmented feedback. Instead, they have real-time access to supplier performance data that empowers them to make informed renewal decisions, identify emerging concerns, and elevate procurement strategy. The County's procurement function is now more data-driven, responsive, and aligned with operational needs.

This presentation will showcase how the County of Orange designed and implemented this initiative, including change management strategies, stakeholder engagement tactics, and lessons learned along the way. Attendees will walk away with replicable ideas to enhance their own contractor evaluation processes, regardless of agency size or system constraints.

Presenters:

- Nicole Swain, Sr. Procurement Contract Manager, County of Orange - Procurement Department



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Procurement Starts with Preparedness: Empowering Local Vendors Through Maricopa County's Vendor University

Maricopa County Small & Local Business Advocacy Program is committed to ensuring small and local businesses are ready and prepared to respond to the opportunity to compete for a piece of county spending. As a part of the program Vendor University was built in direct response to small business feedback indicating confusion around registration, compliance requirements, and how to navigate the public bidding process.

Vendor University is a unique and engaging opportunity for vendors to increase their readiness to do business with the County. This hands on program has been attended by over 350 businesses since January 2025 and has resulted in an increase in the average number of responses received for informal solicitations as well as the value awarded to small & local businesses. From how to register in BidNet Direct, to understanding certification requirements, reviewing open solicitations, and submitting compliant responses, the presentation provides clear, actionable information in a format that is easy to distribute and simple to understand.

Vendors have the opportunity to follow along in completing their own registration in the County's E-procurement platform so they leave ready to receive automatic notifications about opportunities matching their commodity code selections. As a result, vendors have become more confident and accurate in their submissions, more small businesses are getting engaged in the vendor process, and internal teams have noted fewer registration errors and a reduction in time spent troubleshooting common issues.

The outcomes speak for themselves: the County has experienced a rise in qualified, small local vendors completing certification successfully, and submitting responsive and responsible bids. Several vendors who previously hesitated to pursue County work have now entered the process, with some already receiving their first awards. This has led to more competition, improved pricing, and stronger vendor relationships—benefiting both the County and the local economy.

100% of survey respondents gave Vendor University 5/5 stars overall

87% of survey respondents said they would recommend Vendor University to a friend or colleague

Vendor University has proven to be a simple yet powerful tool in helping small and local businesses take the first step into public contracting and succeed. Vendor University demonstrates that when public procurement agencies invest in vendor readiness, everyone wins—from procurement staff to community-based suppliers, to taxpayers.



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Presenters:

- Lisa Bernhard, Procurement Administrator, Maricopa County
- Ryan Dixon, Small Business Advocate, Maricopa County

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