# NEXTGEN VOICES

## 2026 NIGP NEXTGEN LEADER

**Leah Grothe, NIGP-CPP, CPPB, FCCN, FCCM**
**Sr. Contract/Compliance Specialist**
**South Florida Water Management District**

### What does this recognition mean to you?

Being selected as a member of the inaugural group of NIGP NextGen Leaders is incredibly meaningful because it reflects my journey from intentionally choosing public procurement to continually finding new ways to serve the profession. This recognition has reinforced my confidence as a leader and encouraged me to continue contributing to its future.

### Why did you choose a career in public procurement?

While many public procurement professionals describe having "fallen into" the profession, I intentionally chose procurement as my career path while earning my Bachelor's Degree in Public Management. After taking public procurement courses in college, I was drawn to the way the profession combines public service, problem solving, collaboration, and accountability. I recognized early on that procurement would allow me to do meaningful work that positively impacts public organizations and the communities they serve.

### How has NIGP helped support your growth and learning?

NIGP has played an important role in my professional and leadership development. Programs such as the Edge Program reshaped how I view leadership and gave me greater confidence in my abilities. Through my experiences with NIGP, I have learned that leadership is about stepping forward, serving others, and creating opportunities for people to succeed.

My involvement with the Southeast Florida Chapter of NIGP began at my very first Chapter meeting when there was a call for volunteers. I stepped forward that day and have continued diving in ever since. That decision led me to serve in several leadership roles,

including Chapter President, and provided opportunities to make a meaningful impact. Among my proudest accomplishments are helping expand our scholarship program from approximately $8,000 and eight recipients to more than $30,000 and 33 recipients and helping the Chapter earn its first Platinum Performance Standard Seal this year.

## Did you attend Forum in person or virtually? What was your experience like?

Attending NIGP Forum 2026 in person gave me the opportunity to learn, connect with other procurement professionals, and represent both my organization and Chapter. I left Forum feeling energized, proud of how far I have come, and excited to apply what I learned and continue giving back.