

NASPO Procurement Tabletop Exercise: AFTER ACTION REPORT



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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late 2019, a coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2 emerged, and within weeks, the virus had spread across the globe. In response, on January 31, 2020, the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared a public health emergency, and on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic. Subsequently, on March 13, 2020, the U.S. President declared a national emergency pursuant to the Stafford Act. The coronavirus, known as “COVID-19” or “COVID” in common parlance, left in its wake catastrophic effects on the economies and supply chains of countries around the world, as well as most people’s everyday lives.

In the fall of 2020, based on stories shared during weekly calls with state procurement offices, NASPO engaged a team of academics to research the pandemic procurement response, more specifically by interviewing NASPO state members and selected partners. Interviews with the states were held in the fall and winter of 2020, and their work, *Assessing State PPE Procurement During COVID-19: A Research Report*, was published in March 2021. Based on those interviews, NASPO decided to conduct a Tabletop Exercise that could bring relevant partners together to discuss the development of recommendations for improving emergency response from a procurement perspective and identify best practices to share.

On May 18–19, 2021, NASPO conducted a Procurement tabletop exercise (PTTX) with its invited members and strategic partners, including state and local entities, higher education, suppliers, federal agencies, and other associations. The PTTX discussion was structured around four modules: (1) organization, (2) supply chain breakdown, (3) synchronizing state and federal efforts, and (4) dealing with internal frictions/challenges.

Two overarching recommendations resulted from the PTTX. One, state procurement officials must develop and maintain key relationships prior to any emergency to respond most efficiently. And two, procurement officials must be engaged as key stakeholders during state emergency response planning and mitigation. Well-established relationships with all stakeholders involved in emergency response are critical to an effective and efficient response. Developing such relationships builds trust, facilitates understanding, and increases cooperation.

The PTTX recommendations identified should enable state procurement officials to be better prepared for any future national or global pandemic. Best practices include identifying key partners, implementing training and processes, and understanding the specifics of supply chain management. As a result, state procurement officials can position their states and administration to react quickly and confidently in uncertain emergency situations.



II. BACKGROUND

Max Mayfield served as director of the National Hurricane Center during some of the most deadly and destructive hurricanes ever to make landfall in the continental United States. During his time as director, Hurricanes Gilbert, Andrew, Isabel, and Katrina devastated entire communities. Mayfield once said, “Preparation through education is less costly than learning through tragedy.” The National Association for State Procurement Officials (NASPO) is no stranger to bringing together procurement professionals when the need is great. NASPO was founded after the Second World War left surpluses in the states, and an organized effort was required to redistribute and utilize the surplus. During an initial meeting of state procurement officials held in Chicago in 1947, NASPO was born. Fitting, perhaps, that 73 years later, in 2020, NASPO was called on once again to bring together the stakeholders, experts, and resources needed to assist states in getting what they needed during a global pandemic.

After watching the resourcefulness, stamina, and heroism of procurement officials, NASPO sought to help answer the question most asked after the first wave of the pandemic—how do states better prepare for the next national or global emergency management crisis? Leveraging the words of Mayfield centering on preparedness through education, NASPO leadership resolved to conduct a Pandemic Tabletop Exercise. In mid-2021, NASPO convened thought leaders from across the nation to discuss the pandemic, hypothesize its outcomes, and develop recommendations to be better prepared for a future national or global emergency.

COVID Emergency

In late 2019, a coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2 emerged, and within weeks, the virus had spread across the globe. In response, on January 31, 2020, the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared a public health emergency. Later, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic. Subsequently, on March 13, 2020, the U.S. President declared a national emergency pursuant to the Stafford Act. The coronavirus, known as “COVID-19” or “COVID” in common parlance, left in its wake catastrophic effects on the economies and supply-chains of countries around the world, as well as most people’s everyday lives.

The Stafford Act emergency declaration increased federal interagency support to the HHS in its role as the lead federal agency for the pandemic response. As a result, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was directed to further assist state, local, tribal, and territorial partners with their respective responses to protect public health. On March 27, 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, was signed into law by the U.S. Congress, providing \$2 trillion in aid to hospitals, small businesses, and state and local governments.

By late March, the worsening pandemic dramatically increased global demand for personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning and antiseptic agents, and other specialized medical equipment, making these items difficult to procure. In response to the high demand and rapidly dwindling supplies of health providers, most states began using the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) of PPE and other medical supplies. Realizing that the supplies provided through the SNS were insufficient for the emerging need, commercial, state, and federal entities began to purchase PPE, antiseptics, and required medical equipment independently of the SNS.

Procuring essential products and services with urgency is not a new concept to procurement officials. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, generated an especially challenging environment where urgency and market uncertainty with a rapidly changing global supply chain landscape dominated. Organizations faced the upending of procurement plans for items that were, until the crisis, generally regarded as easily available and a low priority when it came to the development of strategized purchasing methods. Additionally, organizations experienced extremely high demand for the same specific supplies due to the worldwide spread of the virus. That demand created competition for these resources between local, state, and federal agencies, as well as the private sector.¹

The rivalry among public buyers changed the marketplace as well. The demand-driven approach common for procurements largely morphed toward supplier-driven approaches and a seller's market, leading to significant price volatility of essential goods and services. Intermediaries (brokers) stepped in between the public sector and the suppliers. Many suppliers also demanded advance payment to secure supplies—but in some cases, even this was not enough of a guarantee to ultimately secure the goods. The extremely high demand for certain products also increased the risk of fraud and misconduct, such as price-gouging by suppliers and service providers.²

These factors contributed to an unprecedented set of challenges being thrown at public procurement officials from multiple entities. There was a need to purchase a wide variety and large quantities of medical supplies, equipment, and contracted services rapidly, all in an environment of disrupted supply chains, nefarious actors, and stiff global competition for resources. Most importantly, the normal procurement process often was bypassed, omitting central procurement offices entirely during these emergency procurements.

In the fall of 2020, based on stories shared during weekly calls with state procurement offices, NASPO engaged a team of academics to research the pandemic procurement response, more specifically by interviewing NASPO state members and selected partners. Interviews with the states were held in the fall and winter of 2020, and their work, *Assessing State PPE Procurement During COVID-19: A Research Report*, was published in March 2021. Based on those interviews and the picture they created of pandemic response successes and opportunities to improve emergency response, NASPO decided to conduct a Tabletop Exercise that could bring relevant partners together to discuss the development of recommendations for improving emergency response from a procurement perspective and identify the best practices to share.

¹ OECD. (2020). Public procurement and infrastructure governance: Initial policy responses to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis [Policy brief]. <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/public-procurement-and-infrastructure-governance-initial-policy-responses-to-the-coronavirus-covid-19-crisis-coab0a96/#contactinfo-d7e2195>

² Ibid.

Pandemic Tabletop Exercise

On May 18–19, 2021, NASPO conducted a procurement tabletop exercise (PTTX) with our members and invited strategic partners, including state and local entities, higher education, suppliers, federal agencies, and other associations. A complete list of exercise attendees is provided in Appendix A.

The exercise was an interactive, discussion-based activity aimed at:

- examining the role of the state’s central procurement office in emergency response,
- identifying the key relationships necessary to respond in an emergency effectively,
- identifying the supply chain, and
- developing emergency best practices in procurement.

The desired outcome was to write an after-action report (AAR) documenting the important discussions between participants and recommend best practices that would assist state procurement officials in developing their own internal emergency engagement framework and response plan. The PTTX discussion was structured around four modules: (1) organization, (2) supply chain breakdown, (3) synchronizing state and federal efforts, and (4) dealing with internal frictions/challenges.

Organization

Participants explored the “key players” in emergency response, how they work together, and where procurement fits within the overall structure of the emergency response. Based on the discussion, the engagement of state central procurement offices in the pandemic response varied by state. States that saw procurement leaders included in strategy discussions with ongoing communication and engagement across state departments saw improved efficiency in purchasing critical goods and services as they responded during the pandemic. States that embrace annual emergency training also fared better than others. That training included procurement emergency best practices, departmental communications, identification of existing contracts, and supplier relationships. Additionally, states with central procurement staff participation in the states’ Emergency Operations Center (EOC) saw improved response times as procurement professionals were available immediately to start the purchasing process from an existing network of state and national contract portfolios.

Support from the governor and top state administrators was essential for the pandemic response. As leaders of their states, both the administration and legislators wanted to ensure that the state was responding rapidly. However, it was also imperative for states to demonstrate that they followed the state procurement code and used taxpayer dollars for sound purchases. States that collected and shared real-time PPE product orders and spend data saw more support from governors, legislators, and the public. Procurement spend, order tracking, shipping and receiving, and product compliance are critical data points and will be important pieces of emergency information to support the audit process and compliance assessments. Once an emergency is abated, state legislative and finance officials typically begin the audit and compliance assessment to evaluate procurement processes and procedures during the emergency. States that engaged their central procurement offices in emergency response saw fewer procurement issues as emergency responders had access to professionals who could assist in processing purchases in compliance with state procurement laws.

Supply Chain Challenges

The supply chain challenges presented by the pandemic were discussed by the participants, including, but not limited to, market demand signals, identification and vetting of suppliers and products, international sourcing, shortage of raw materials, contracting challenges, inspection and acceptance of goods upon delivery, short and long-term storage of goods, and distribution.

Understanding supply chain management was critical to successful emergency response during the pandemic. With the increased demand for items and broker-led conversations about available resources, supply chain management became essential in the state central procurement office. However, even as states came together regionally to procure critical supplies, suppliers struggled to fulfill large orders due to manufacturing and raw material shortages.

Due to the increased scope and attention of working with established suppliers and vetting new ones, multiple states stood up websites and portals to collect product or service information from suppliers that had inventory. Some states contracted with third-party companies offering quality control outsourcing to help identify bad actors that would slow the response or misuse critical resources. NASPO ValuePoint, the cooperative contracting division of NASPO, provided additional connections to potential suppliers through their existing contract network and suppliers who directly reached out to NASPO ValuePoint.

With limited supplies, the focus shifted to supplier performance, product specifications and compliance, and quick deployment of purchase orders. States that were able to relax standard terms and conditions were more successful in placing and fulfilling orders. States also found success with suppliers who submitted specifications before order placement with subject matter experts (health departments) who validated compliance and equivalency with product requirements. Others mentioned success with sending a subject matter expert to manufacturing locations to inspect and conduct quality control prior to shipment and product delivery.

To prevent potential supplier qualification issues like those experienced during the recent pandemic, some states are now implementing pre-qualified supplier lists to identify responsive and responsible companies that can provide products and services as needed as part of future emergency preparedness.

Suppliers played an additional role in state procurement's pandemic response. Due to a push toward "just-in-time" procurement, few states had adequate warehouse space and lacked internal logistics or distribution capabilities – and suppliers filled the gaps. Many suppliers provided value-added services to states by offering warehousing and logistics services for PPE and testing products when the state had few internal options to consider.

Suppliers currently under contract with states have expressed a desire to do more training with state procurement staff on emergency preparedness and how they can assist in the event of an emergency. Suppliers also encouraged states to consider asking suppliers how they can offer value-added services such as inventory management, logistics, training, fraud protections, cost savings, etc. Incorporating value-added services into a request for proposal (RFP) document will provide state procurement staff insight into supplier capabilities. Regularly meeting with suppliers can help procurement staff build and foster relationships with suppliers, which will help provide insight into how a supplier and their network of products, services, and relationships could help a state in the event of a future emergency.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) identified three primary stress points on the supply chain during the pandemic: inventory management, supply chain transparency, and single-source and single-region suppliers. Based on CISA's findings, it is recommended that states consider incorporating questions in future RFPs requiring suppliers to explain how they manage and refresh inventory and identify tiers of subcontractors, resellers, and raw material providers.

During the height of the pandemic, states had to rethink risk assessment and determine an acceptable risk level for doing business with unknown and untested suppliers—both local and international. Outside of conversations

with other states and third parties like NASPO ValuePoint, who could share information they'd received, federal partners also assisted in identifying and preventing fraudulent purchases through bad actors. The FBI has been a strategic partner of NASPO's throughout the pandemic and provided valuable resources on supplier vetting strategies and shared information on suppliers. States are encouraged to build and strengthen relationships with local FBI contacts in the event assistance is required due to fraudulent supplier activities.

Synchronizing State and Federal Efforts

Early in the pandemic, it became clear that the federal government would not be mobilizing a national strategy to combat COVID. States were expected to manage their own emergency response. However, the CARES Act provided \$2 trillion in federal aid. As a result, PTTX participants considered relationships with surrounding states to procure PPE and testing; shared roll-out plans for testing and vaccines; discussed the issues surrounding competition amongst the states; contemplated a hypothetical federally coordinated response; and developed a network encompassing federal, state, and local leaders, emergency responders, and state procurement officials.

During the pandemic, many PTTX participants stated that the first line of defense for a state was the state itself and its internal resources. Along with the widespread impact on the state as a whole, state government agencies took varying degrees of responsibility for the response. Understanding the various roles in state emergency response and emergency processes and procedures is crucial in managing any emergency. States and federal partners have an opportunity to collaborate and discuss future opportunities to improve the strategic national stockpile and identify critical products that may be needed in future emergencies. Clear, concise, and frequent communication between state departments involved in the emergency response proved to be a critical factor in managing the emergency successfully. A key takeaway is that state chief procurement officials must prioritize developing relationships with key emergency response personnel within their states and educate them on the role of the central procurement office and the value they can bring to emergency response.

Understanding the rules and requirements surrounding federal funding for COVID response became quite complicated during the pandemic. Some states contracted with third parties to track and manage federal funding usage and reimbursement. Through state and federal collaboration and dialog, NASPO plans to promote and support training efforts to improve state procurement professionals' understanding of federal requirements, processes, and procedures specific to emergency procurement.

During the pandemic, malicious URLs, phishing, malware, and ransomware attacks increased. Most governmental entities allowed staff to work from home, which increased network vulnerabilities. In the PPTX, experts recommended that states discuss these cybersecurity challenges and incorporate precautions, training, and responses into their respective emergency operations plans with state information technology experts, emergency response personnel, and procurement officials, ensuring plans are well understood and refreshed often.

State Fusion Centers are state-owned and operated centers that serve as focal points in states and major urban areas to analyze, gather, and share threat-related information between State, Local, Tribal and Territorial (SLTT), federal and private sector partners. These centers are an excellent resource for cybersecurity assessment and may provide training for procurement staff. All state procurement staff should be trained in the basics of cybersecurity and protocols in the event of a data breach or attack.

Internal Frictions, Staff Burnout, Physical Fatigue, and Public Perception

PTTX participants examined staff burnout, emergency procurement processes and authority, training in a virtual environment, remote work, educational partnerships, and public perception. PTTX participants agreed the pandemic exhausted everyone involved in its response, including state workers. State EOCs that had staff rotations and bench strength in key positions fared better than those who did not. Training additional staff can deepen a state's bench and provide coverage and longevity if an emergency lasts for an extended period.

States saw success utilizing third-party employment placement agencies and temporary employment services to supplement staff during hiring freezes. Having these contracts in place prior to the onset of the pandemic was critical in effectively handling staffing shortages.

Communication was vital in helping staff stay calm during the first few weeks of the pandemic. States held virtual town halls and communication sessions for employees to share information and keep the staff updated. In some cases, states developed COVID information portals on state and departmental websites to ensure critical information was easily accessible by employees and constituents. Many states provided weekly updates on state spending because of critical PPE and other pandemic expenditures. Those states with transparent disclosures of COVID-associated spending indicated they garnered more public trust.

As the pandemic worsened and staff transitioned to work from home models, many states started offering online counseling and mental health services to help their staff cope with the stress of the pandemic, COVID illness, the new remote work environment, and homeschooling/remote learning for children. Some states had previously never offered a remote work environment and found that they were unprepared and lacked the technology to transition quickly and keep work moving. Other states embraced remote work environments or had already done so and easily made the transition. Generally, states reported seeing improved efficiency from staff under work-from-home requirements. Based on this finding, many states have decided to keep some form of a hybrid remote/on-premises work schedule. States moving to a hybrid or fully remote work environment should focus on effective communication strategies to keep staff connected to their department and colleagues, ensure work is conducted efficiently and effectively, and make cybersecurity a high priority.



III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STATE PROCUREMENT OFFICIALS

Two overarching recommendations resulted from the PTTX. One, state procurement officials must develop and maintain key relationships prior to any emergency to respond most efficiently. Two, procurement officials must be engaged as key stakeholders during state emergency response planning and mitigation. Well-established relationships with all stakeholders involved in emergency response are critical to an effective and efficient response. Developing such relationships builds trust, facilitates understanding, and increases cooperation.

State procurement officials must seek to establish relationships with the following key stakeholders: (a) state government entities, (b) other states, (c) federal partners, (d) public entities and higher education and public education entities, (e) other strategic partners, and (f) suppliers. Each relationship is discussed below, including strategies for best practices.

RECOMMENDATION ONE:

Procurement Officials Must Develop and Maintain Key Relationships Prior to an Emergency to Most Efficiently Respond When the Need Arises

RECOMMENDATION TWO:

Procurement Officials Must Be Engaged As Key stakeholders During State Emergency Response Planning and Mitigation.

1. State Government Entities

State procurement officials must develop relationships with various state entities that are often engaged in emergency response. While most states' emergency procurement laws do not require the engagement of the state's central procurement office in the event of a declared emergency, by creating relationships that recognize procurement's value service, these entities may voluntarily engage state procurement officials when an emergency arises. It is recommended that procurement officials seek out and establish relationships with the following state departments/divisions due to their frequent engagement and leadership during emergency response: (a.) the Governor's Office, (b.) State Emergency Management (c.) Public Health, (d.) Information Technology, and (e.) the National Guard.

The Governor's Office

It is recommended that procurement officials establish and maintain a relationship with the Governor's office. As the directors of emergency response within their states, governors need to understand the role of procurement and the benefits of incorporating the state's central procurement office into its emergency response plan. Governors can enact executive orders to authorize the expenditure of public funds without the engagement of the central procurement office through executive orders, but procurement's engagement on an active level will improve the emergency response. Developing a close working relationship with the governor's office can also facilitate relationship building with other state agencies, promote procurement integration in state emergency response plans and procedures, and ensure procurement officials are informed of key events like emergency declarations. State procurement officials should be prepared to provide the governor's office with procurement data and analytics that provide insight into state spend, contract compliance, cost savings and avoidance, market trends and risk assessment, customer satisfaction, and supplier performance. Additionally, state procurement should work with the governor's office and other state leadership involved in emergency response to assess state stockpiles, procure emergency response products and equipment to increase the stockpile adequately, and execute contracts with suppliers to augment stockpiles by incorporating storage and distribution services that promote efficient and effective emergency response.

State Emergency Management

The state Emergency Management Agency (EMA) is typically the coordinating department/division deployed in the event of an emergency, and state procurement can be a significant partner with the EMA when a close relationship between the two exists. State Chief Procurement Officers (CPOs) are encouraged to share contract portfolio information with the EMA staff, so they know the products and services readily available to them via current contracts. By eliminating the need to work through a separate solicitation, quote, or contract negotiation process, the state not only sees savings by placing orders through an existing state contract but also allows EMA staff to focus on emergency response rather than working through the procurement process. Because state contracts are developed and managed by the central procurement office, procurement staff can assure the EMA those contracts comply with state procurement codes and administrative rules, significantly reducing the possibility of an audit finding after the emergency has abated. The state central procurement office may also have access to spend and other analytics reports that can most benefit the EMA staff as they track purchases, oversee logistics, and manage inventory in response to an emergency.

In addition to educating EMAs on current state contracts, state CPOs must meet with the EMA to review the state's emergency operation plan and identify sections where procurement can be a critical resource. Once sections are identified, CPOs can develop secondary strategies on how they and their central procurement staff might bring value to abate the emergency. The EMA may find value in emergency procurement code process documentation/training, development of emergency procurement checklists, emergency purchasing support, development of terms and conditions specific to emergency procurements, and supplier vetting and engagement. Because state emergency procurement plans change frequently, it is recommended that state CPOs engage with the EMA annually.

Public Health Departments

As a public health crisis, health departments took on vital leadership roles in the emergency pandemic response. CPOs are encouraged to meet with state public health and human services officials to understand their role in the state's emergency response plan and discuss ways the central procurement office can provide support in the event of an emergency. By making them aware of state and cooperative contract offerings, public health officials will better understand the products, services, and resources available to them, supporting a more effective and efficient response.

Information Technology

Forging relationships with the state's Chief Information Officer (CIO) and other key technology leaders will prove valuable for state CPOs. Technology procurements tend to be complex and require cross-collaboration with information technology experts and procurement professionals to succeed. It is recommended that CIOs and technology staff collaborate with state central procurement offices to conduct training on such topics as drafting technical specifications and requirements, state and federal technology standards, how standard terms and conditions impact technology projects, and risk assessment for insurance requirements. Many state procurement officials have indicated that standard contract terms and conditions templates don't offer adequate coverage or flexibility for complex technology procurements. Therefore, state procurement officials are encouraged to coordinate with state CIOs and their respective legal counsel to draft terms and conditions specifically for information technology procurements.

The National Guard

The National Guard is unique as it supports both state and federal functions. In a state emergency or natural disaster, the National Guard may be deployed as first responders as they are statutorily positioned to protect the state. It is recommended that state procurement officials engage with the leadership of the National Guard to understand their procurement needs as they develop emergency response plans. Assessing state and federal contract portfolios and identifying gaps in product, service, and equipment needs prior to an emergency will be valuable. The National Guard regularly coordinates with local officials who manage critical infrastructures such as power grids, communication networks, and water supplies. They are well-positioned to support these infrastructures in the event of a disaster but may need the support of state procurement offices as they respond during an emergency.

NASPO is prepared to work with state procurement officials to develop a relationship strategy that will promote the engagement of the state's CPO and central procurement staff in state strategic planning efforts for emergency response.

2. Other States

In the event of another widespread national or global emergency, states must be prepared to respond without guidance from the federal government. By developing strong relationships with other states, especially those nearby, state employees will have an opportunity to discuss and compare emergency response plans for alignment and to identify ways to work together and share resources, rather than competing or working in opposition to one another.

NASPO is in a unique position to foster relationships between state central procurement offices. Through organizational engagement, NASPO primary and state members have an opportunity to connect during regional and national events to share best practices on procurement's role in emergency response and the resources required to demonstrate the value of procurement's engagement during an emergency. As demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, state cooperation can lead to identifying new purchasing opportunities, bulk purchasing power that results in lower prices for all participants, and practical operational considerations for states who may be in a different phase of the emergency, allowing those states to prepare better. It is recommended that NASPO facilitate shared services and resources through the NASPO Network or other virtual platform to improve the state's situational awareness and ability to respond in an emergency. Through the NASPO ValuePoint public purchasing cooperative, states have access to a wide variety of suppliers, products, and services that can be accessed quickly and easily. It is recommended that NASPO ValuePoint staff review and train state procurement staff on the availability of products and services and identify resources that states might need in another pandemic or emergency.

3. Federal Partners

Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP)

The Office of Federal Procurement Policy was instrumental in the development of NASPO's Procurement Tabletop Exercise. During NASPO's 2020 Annual Conference, the former Director of OFPP served on a panel discussing the COVID-19 response. As part of the discussion, he challenged NASPO leadership to bring members and strategic partners together to discuss the emergency response and identify procurement best practices that have come about as partners have collaborated and engaged with one another throughout the pandemic. The OFPP team was instrumental in facilitating introductions between NASPO, its members, and several federal strategic partners that provided valuable resources to our members during the pandemic. NASPO is committed to continuing our strategic partnership with OFPP and its new leadership.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

As the lead federal agency for national emergencies and disasters, Federal Emergency Management Agency is a critical partner for state CPO engagement. Procurement officials must be well-versed in federal funding rules applicable to emergency response to ensure state solicitations and contracts result in state spending eligible for federal reimbursement when appropriate. Federal procurement and funding eligibility rules change frequently, and CPOs are encouraged to partner with regional FEMA representatives to participate in suitable training.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Bad actors will always try to take advantage of an emergency, so it is essential to develop a relationship with law enforcement, including federal entities such as the FBI. States should be aware of their local FBI offices and understand how to bring a complaint or concern to that office's attention. NASPO has been and will continue to work closely with FBI representatives to gather COVID-19 resources for our members.

4. Public and Educational Entities: Cities, Counties, Municipalities, and Higher and Public Education

Public entities played a critical role in the COVID-19 response, and state central procurement offices should develop relationships with local cities, counties, and municipalities to fully understand their role in the state's emergency response plan. All public entities typically have public procurement professionals included on staff; each office can share best practices, professional development, training, and resources by engaging with each other.

Similarly, state procurement should also develop relationships with local higher education institutions that may be affected by local emergencies. Colleges, universities, and school districts have a specific population to care for, and state procurement may help identify suppliers or options in addition to what the college or university has under contract. During the discussion, participants revealed that many universities significantly assisted the state with the pandemic response. Equipment warehousing and logistic services, COVID-19 test development and testing centers, and supplier identification and vetting services were all ways states worked with local higher educational institutions.

Arizona State University (ASU) was instrumental in assisting with framework development for the NASPO Tabletop Exercise. In concert with OFPP and other strategic partners, ASU academic partners assisted the NASPO team and its primary facilitator in developing meaningful discussion modules identifying procurement best practices specific to emergency response. NASPO continues to assess future training opportunities on emergency response with our academic and strategic partners.

5. Strategic Partners

Strategic partners such as the National Governors Association (NGA), National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL), Council of State Governments (CSG), National Association of State Chief Administrators (NASCA), National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO), and others played a critical role in information sharing during the COVID-19 pandemic. These exceptional partners exchanged information on how their members engaged in pandemic response and what resources might be available to further emergency response efforts. NASPO, already engaged as a strategic partner with the organizations listed above, is in a unique position to support relationships between state central procurement offices, strategic partners, and their respective members. Through training, collaboration, and conferences and events, NASPO commits to engage strategic partners in meaningful dialog as we emphasize and promote the value of public procurement professionals. NASPO is prepared to engage with and assist its members to better understand each organization's respective mission and role in emergency response.

6. Suppliers

When appropriate, NASPO supports states' efforts in broadening engagement and communications with suppliers as partners. Suppliers can provide valuable insight into their corresponding market and role during the emergency response (and beyond). Suppliers may have diverse networks of resellers and fulfillment partners that can assist states in identifying out-of-the-box solutions during an emergency. By establishing strong relationships with suppliers prior to an emergency, the network is already in place to call upon contacts for assistance in identifying products, services, and logistical and warehousing support in the event of an emergency. It is recommended that all state public procurement offices offer suppliers an opportunity to connect with officials to promote greater transparency when fostering supplier relationships. Options may include a feedback mechanism on the state's central procurement website, a telephone hotline designed to collect information from suppliers, or events that promote conversations between suppliers and state procurement staff. It is also recommended that

state procurement offices track and foster supplier relationships in the U.S. and abroad that could be providers of emergency products and services based on assessing the state's emergency operations plan.

NASPO ValuePoint is the procurement division of NASPO and is the largest public procurement cooperative in the nation. Through state-led solicitations and master agreements developed by state procurement professionals, suppliers can provide products and services nationally through state and public entity channels. NASPO ValuePoint is committed to promoting fair and transparent supplier engagement with states and public entities. NASPO ValuePoint encourages states and suppliers to contact the organization to learn more about national cooperative opportunities.



IV. CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on everyday procurement operations and emergency response in the United States. Whether those changes remain post-pandemic remains to be seen, but the lessons learned can be applied to future emergencies, no matter their nature. The PTTX identified several recommendations that will enable state procurement officials to better prepare for any future national or global emergency. Directly linked to developing relationships with key stakeholders as a best practice, implementing training and processes, and understanding the specifics of supply chain management can position state procurement and its administration to react quickly and with certainty even in uncertain conditions.



APPENDIX A

Attendees

Alabama Department of Finance, Division of Purchasing

Arizona State University

Avantor

California Department of General Services, Procurement Division

City of Phoenix

District of Columbia Office of Contracting and Procurement

Fastenal

FEMA

Grainger

NASPO ValuePoint

National Governor's Association

New Jersey Department of the Treasury, Division of Purchasing and Property

Oregon State University

South Carolina State Fiscal Accountability Authority

State of Florida Digital Service

State of Florida Procurement

State of Maryland Department of Health

State of Maryland Procurement

State of Utah Purchasing and General Services

Tennessee Department of General Services

Tennessee Emergency Management Agency

The Council of State Governments



APPENDIX B

Resources

[California State Telework Guide](#)

[CARES Act Provider Relief Fund: FAQs | HRSA.gov](#)

[Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency – Building a More Resilient ICT Supply Chain: Lessons Learned During the COVID-19 Pandemic, An Analysis \(2020\)](#)

[FBI Liaison Information Report \(LIR\) - Indicators of Fraudulent 3M Personal Protective Equipment](#)

[FBI Press Release: FBI Warns of Advance Fee and BEC Schemes Related to Procurement of PPE and Other Supplies During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[FBI Press Release: FBI Warns of Emerging Health Care Fraud Schemes Related to COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[FEMA Fact Sheet – Purchasing Under a FEMA Award: State Entities](#)

[FEMA Fact Sheet – Purchasing Under a FEMA Award: OMB Revisions](#)

Jim Hawkins, Tabletop Exercise Facilitator, Dynamis

[National Guard Cyber Security State Partnership Program](#)

[Prohibitions on Expending FEMA Award Funds for Covered Telecommunications Equipment or Services \(Interim Policy\) \(Effective August 13, 2020\)](#)

[State of Florida Division of Emergency Management Contractual Services Template](#)

Note: 2 CFR 200 details the federal procurement requirements. 200.317-318 says that states must follow the same policies and procedures it uses for its non-federal procurements. 200.326 says that Non-Federal entity's contracts must contain applicable provisions described in Appendix II of Part 200 – Contract

Provisions for non-Federal Entity Contracts Under Federal Awards. Please see section 18 of the attached contractual service agreement for the terms Florida includes in its solicitations and contract documents.