



# 2025 George Cronin Awards

## Case Study: Michigan

### EFFICIENTLY TRAINING NEW HIRES IN A PROCUREMENT OFFICE

New hires typically experience a substantial onboarding period at the start of any job. The period can be particularly lengthy for procurement professionals as they become familiar with a detailed public procurement process, terminology, and deadlines—and the work of procurement professionals does not pause to allow for training. State procurement offices, therefore, should consider how to train new hires while allowing them to contribute as soon as possible. One answer comes from [Michigan Central Procurement Services](#) (MCPS). MCPS developed rAMP UP!—a training program for new hires that relies heavily on a comprehensive website. rAMP UP's goal is to provide thorough, self-paced training online, complemented by supervisors and voluntary mentors who answer questions.

#### BALANCING TRAINING AND OFFICE WORK



- **SOW Practice Activity Instructions**
- **SOW Aggregate Project Kickoff Notes**
- **SOW Writing Rubric**

After completing the SOW modules, trainees write a practice SOW to demonstrate their learning.



#### SOW Practice Activity Binder

Figure 1: This MCPS PowerPoint slide offers a glimpse into the Statement of Work training module.

Prior to rAMP UP!, new hires at the MCPS office faced an awkward period that could stretch for weeks, during which new procurement professionals lacked job-specific knowledge to begin their assigned tasks. New hires might have taken on significant work, like drafting statements of work, before they were fully comfortable. Even with a strong procurement background, a new hire would need to get up to speed on organizational policies, resources, and procedures. Plus, comprehensive training saps time from supervisors. So, the MCPS office pondered how to onboard staff as quickly as possible with minimal supervision.

#### ABUNDANCE OF TRAINING RESOURCES

The MCPS office developed a website as the centerpiece of its onboarding and training program. It gathered input from a range of stakeholders. These stakeholders included employees with all experience levels to ensure that the training program meets the needs of everyone in the office. Mentors who participate earn credit toward their required five-year professional development recertification.

The website includes learning formats presented in digestible chunks. It promotes consistent learning over a lengthy period, which prevents information overload and facilitates reflection. New hires work through simple scenarios to build familiarity and confidence. They then complete interactive hands-on assignments with case studies to demonstrate their understanding.

Module topics include:

- Navigating Michigan's eProcurement system
- Completing a contract change notice
- Identifying and analyzing a contract portfolio using the state's contract database
- Conducting cost modeling and determining pricing
- Using the state's e-signature tool
- Preparing for and facilitating Joint Evaluation Committees
- Completing statements of work

Because the program is designed modularly by topic, content can be added quickly to address changing needs. The program uses Microsoft Teams, SharePoint, Microsoft Office Suite, and Articulate 360. A full-time employee, as well as others on a part-time basis, regularly update the training platform. Updates come as new materials become available and as policies and procedures change. Many resources are available to new hires:

- Annotated guidance documents
- Building maps
- Centralized training webpage
- Checklists
- Emergency procedures
- Hands-on assignments
- Instructions on reserving conference rooms
- Instructor-led training sessions
- Job shadowing request forms
- Office news
- Onboarding manual
- Realistic, guided scenarios with immediate feedback
- Reference guides
- Scavenger hunts to find places in the office
- Short video clips
- Templates
- Trivia questions
- Web-based and micro-learning training modules

A quick visit to the site reveals plenty of flair. Designers began with a three-color palette but then expanded dramatically to a 20-color palette. "rAMP UP! is very colorful," Curriculum Development Specialist Robin Moore said. "We went for it." A persona named Zoey demonstrates for users how to complete the statement of work modules, which Moore calls the "crown jewel" of the program.

After devising the rAMP UP! name, Moore couldn't help but remember a childhood activity that would often cause her to skin her knee. "[The name] made me think of skateboards," Moore said.



Figure 2: The rAMP UP! website employs a skateboard theme with a 20-color palette.

## PAIRING NEW HIRES WITH MENTORS

The mentor-mentee pairing occurs early in the process. Selections are based on interests, experience, and availability. Managers and mentors determine the schedule that best meets the needs of the employee and the office. Mentees in the hybrid-schedule office regularly communicate about training needs in Microsoft Teams chats. Individualized for each new hire, the program allows them to complete training and daily work at a comfortable—but still productive—pace.

When they begin work, new hires receive a checklist of tasks to complete on a tentative schedule over a three-week period. Additional learning materials can be finished at a later time. As new hires progress through the online training, mentors are a conduit for job shadowing experiences, questions, and other guidance. At the start of their work, new hires receive email templates that they can fill out and send to managers and mentors throughout the program cycle. The mentees use these emails to explain their progress and what they have learned, which the mentor and manager review and provide feedback. Mentors and supervisors work together to provide guidance and regular check-ins.

## RESULTS

**Retention of new employees has been the clearest benefit of the program.** All 12 buyers hired since February 2023 have remained on staff, except for one staff member who left due to excessive commute times.

The office estimates savings of \$266,000 per decade if at least one procurement professional is retained.

**Additionally, the office has enjoyed reduced management times and more effective recruitment efforts.** The program has become an added layer of comfort and confidence for new hires, which has incentivized them to stay with MCPS for the long term. “We want to be like your safety net,” Professional Development Manager Corinna Batora said. “We want you to be able to be comfortable asking questions that you don’t feel comfortable asking other people.”

## CONCLUSION

The solution developed by the MCPS can be transferred to any state procurement office. The website relies on accessible and inexpensive tools. Many of the learning objectives, topics, activities, lessons, and other program elements are applicable to all state procurement offices. The program is also continuing to develop, becoming more formal as it builds. rAMP UP! has become the first impression for new hires in MCPS. Based on the retention rate, that first impression is a strong one.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Cronin Awards 2025: Michigan’s rAMP UP! to Success for New Buyer Training and Retention](#)
- [2025 Cronin Submissions Booklet](#)
- [Customizing Mentorship Programs for Any Procurement Organization](#)