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**Sent:** Monday, March 16, 2020 6:58 AM

**To:** Rick Grimm <[rgrimm@nigp.org](mailto:rgrimm@nigp.org)>

**Subject:** for distribution if appropriate - feel free to make appropriate formatting and grammatical revisions

An open letter to my procurement colleagues:

So here we are in the middle of procurement month. As is often the case, the month we choose to celebrate our profession is overwhelmed by the events of the day. While it is usually by everything from St. Patrick's Day to the NCAA tournament to the regular business of government, this year it is the nationwide response to Covid-19.

For years at the local, state, and national level our profession has fought to professionalize, legitimize and to be recognized as part of the strategic function of government. Over the next days and weeks we will be given the opportunity to prove what we have been saying about our role for years. Many of you will find yourselves on fast response teams, in emergency operations centers, or engaged with elected officials and principles of government closer than ever. All of you will find your organizations touched by these events. We have responsibilities to our leaders, customers and taxpayers, who are also our neighbors, friends and relatives. We also have an obligation to ourselves, our teams and our profession. You are all now brand ambassadors of the public procurement function during a once in a generation emergency management situation. As an NIGP chapter ambassador we talk about the magic of public procurement and how you and your teams are not clerks but strategic functions that save lives.

Over the next weeks your efforts will directly save lives. Depending on your role you will help secure testing kits for Covid-19, transportation for test results and supplies, food for people who are being quarantined, chemicals to keep the water clean and prevent sewage from contaminating populations, medical supplies to support hospitals, supplies and equipment for emergency command locations, personal protective gear for police, fire and medical personnel and many other commodities, services and technologies as needed. There will be days where supplies are in short supply, and small victories on days where the supply chain levels out.

For my peers, I ask, "Who will we be when this emergency goes from response to recovery and begins to ramp down?" Will you have been the clerks who processed paperwork for supplies, or will you have seized the day for our profession, leading you organizations to creative solutions, preparedness and calm in a time when those things will be desperately needed. I hope for and challenge us all to be the latter.

And to achieve that I encourage all of you to pick up the phone and support each other. Remember no state procurement officer must do this alone. There is a professional community to rely on. No local procurement officer or team member must face this challenge alone. There is a large professional community across north America who can support you and each other.

So this Procurement Month and beyond, be the brand for yourself, your team and your profession and don't waste this crisis, but seize it for the opportunity it is to be the best version of ourselves and our profession.