

# eVA Connections

May 2008 Issue 2

Virginia's Total e-Procurement Solution

[www.eva.virginia.gov](http://www.eva.virginia.gov)

## eVA: Providing Insight For Business And Government

Knowing what state government spends the people's money on has not always been an easy question to answer. In theory, this purchasing history belongs to the public. However, historically, purchasing information has varied by state agency, residing in various office locations and formats.

The time required for manual tabulations would make information available eventually—but not in enough time to effect change or enhance business decision making.

Enter eVA. The Commonwealth's web-based purchasing system. Its powerful data warehouse captures and stores the state's purchasing transactions electronically, meshing the data with other information from many sources—information used by accounting departments, accounts payables offices, inventory managers, and budget and finance managers.

eVA takes thousands of transactions daily, originating from hundreds of state agencies from around the Commonwealth, involving a host of financial and enterprise systems, and folds the information into one homogeneous set of historical data.

eVA users enjoy a convenient reporting feature, which allow them to pull from this massive sea of data, uniform summaries geared to a specific business purpose. Each summary can be neatly downloaded into Excel, for easy analysis.

"The purpose of this type of business intelligence is better decision making," explains Bob Sievert, eVA's Director. "When it used to take months or sometimes even an entire fiscal year to accumulate, and manually tabulate these activities in the past—the results were great for long-term strategies and historical views. But, now, having instant, virtual access to all of the Commonwealth's government purchasing, allows management to be more nimble, and use eVA data for shorter term, more tactical decision making."

For example, an agency can look at eVA transactions by NIGP code, by user, or vendor, and even evaluate their SWaM utilization. Procurement managers can use eVA reports to see where to improve SWaM use, and identify buyers with the strongest SWaM performance.

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**Welcome!** Welcome to eVA Connections, an e-newsletter published by the Bureau of e-Procurement, Division of Purchases and Supply, Department of General Services. eVA Connections brings together the businesses, state and local government buyers, other public bodies, and various public service officials, who contribute to eVA's success. eVA Connections highlights various eVA tools, users, and experiences, in celebration of the value that e-procurement brings to the Commonwealth.

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# eVA: Providing Insight (cont'd from Page One)

Monique Robinson, Buyer with Virginia State University explains how VSU uses eVA reports. “When we’re preparing for a vendor outreach event, we use eVA to identify our existing vendors—firms VSU has purchased from in the past. We invite them so they can meet

buyers from other university departments. Then, we pull another list of all of eVA’s vendors based on our typical purchases—vendors we haven’t bought from in the past, but whose capabilities match our

typical buying needs—and invite them, as well. It’s all about sparking new relationships.” VSU has held two successful vendor outreach fairs. Their recent event in 2007 drew almost 150 people.

“eVA’s transaction history doesn’t just reveal state government trends,” says Sievert. “We have almost 500 local governments and other public bodies that use eVA. Their eVA transactions are part of the data pool, as well.

Debbie Field, is an eVA local government account executive and assists Virginia localities and other public bodies with eVA implementation for their purchasing shops. “Many of our local government clients track specific types of purchases over time, then identify opportunities for volume purchasing,” she explains. This conversion from frequent spot purchases to term contracts

helps public bodies get volume pricing where it makes the most business sense. “One locality may buy a lot of paper, another may buy lots of security equipment. eVA lets them do the analysis that suits their individual needs over time,” she adds.

*“When we’re preparing for an outreach event, we use eVA to identify vendors we haven’t bought from in the past. It’s all about sparking new relationships.”*

Monique Robinson  
Buyer  
Virginia State University

eVA vendors can run reports on purchases by NIGP code to zero in on their primary target audience.

Vendors, once bogged down with phone books or creating manual call lists, can review and download buyer

information right from the data warehouse.

Out of more than 14,000 eVA buyers, vendors can capture just the buyers who’ve bought their line of products or services in the past.

Several public reports are available from the eVA home page. Most eVA buyer reports are behind secure access to protect sensitive vendor information such as tax ID.



## All In A Day’s Work

May 1, 2008

*Over \$39 million in orders were processed in eVA.*

*\$23.5 million with certified SMALL vendors.*

*A total of 7,847 orders.*

## Top 10 Purchases By Dollar Amount

Description/ NIGP	Approximate Amount
Excavation Svcs./ 91244	\$13.6M
Fab and Pre-Fab Bldgs./ 15513	\$6.8M
Demolition Svcs./ 91240	\$3.5M
Earth Mvng. Equip. Rntl./ 97534	\$2.2M
Bldg. Mnt. & Repair Svcs. 91000	\$2.1M
Truck/Van Rntl./Lease 97586	\$800K
Software Mnt./Support 92045	\$658K
Lab Equip. & Acces. 49300	\$652K
Asphalt 74521	\$539K
Bldg. Maint. 91052	\$457K

# City Of Lynchburg Reaches \$5 Million

The City of Lynchburg began using eVA in September 2003 when they wanted access to eVA's contracts for copiers and vehicles.

"It just mushroomed from there," says Deborah Powell, Buyer, with the City. "Now we buy copiers, vehicles, equipment (office, industrial, and police) and supplies (office and cleaning). "We've purchased over \$5 million in eVA since we started," she adds.

Tammy Farmer, a buyer in Lynchburg's Procurement Office from 2001-2004, learned about eVA at a procurement conference. Instead of just using a couple of statewide contracts, she wanted the City to take full advantage of eVA's internet tools, on-line shopping and the efficiencies of electronic communication.

"We were facing many challenges," Tammy explains. "Trying to do more with less. I saw a real opportunity for Lynchburg to get more with its local tax dollars by streamlining the purchasing process, cutting back on paper, and taking full advantage what eVA had to offer." "eVA is often viewed as merely a purchasing tool," explains Tammy. "But purchasing is only one feature," she said.

Before joining the City of

Lynchburg, Tammy's procurement career included eight years of Navy service, involving aviation procurements. She followed



The Lynchburg eVA Pilot team, from left to right: Gail Kemper (DGS), Tammy Farmer (VDBA), Cindy Fowler, Sue Boyers, Florence Randolph, and Sharon Sanchez, all with City of Lynchburg.

*"I saw a real opportunity for Lynchburg to get more with its local tax dollars by taking full advantage of what eVA had to offer."*

Tammy Farmer  
Formerly, Buyer  
City of Lynchburg \*\*

\*\*Tammy is currently a Procurement Assistance Manager with the Virginia Department of Business Assistance.

her Navy stint with eight years in the private sector focused mainly on construction procurement. After Tammy left the City of Lynchburg in 2004, she joined the Department of General Services as a Local Government Account Executive. The City of Lynchburg was one of Tammy's accounts. She continued to work closely with the City

conducting quarterly eVA training sessions for new eVA users. "I was glad I could still work with the City of Lynchburg and assist them in growing their use of eVA" says Tammy. Tammy is currently a Procurement Assistance Manager for the Department of Business Assistance. In this role, she uses her extensive

procurement experience and eVA knowledge to help businesses understand the state's procurement process.

How does a locality go about making the move to e-procurement? When it comes to embracing new technology, typical reactions in the public and private sectors, include resistance to change and fear that new systems or processes will hamper workflow, rather than improve it.

"A successful implementation should involve any other department that might be impacted," Tammy explains. Lynchburg's eVA adoption committee represented the departments of Finance, Procurement, Budget, and IT.

"We decided to use a phased adoption," Tammy explains. "First we set up a pilot program with four users from departments who made the most purchases for the City. These departments were Procurement, Police, IT, and Social Services. After a successful pilot program, we added every City department to eVA, creating unique approval flows according to each department's needs. We continued ongoing training and support as needed, updating user access as people's roles changed in departments," she added.

"Lynchburg had a lot of support from the eVA team during implementation,"

*"We're talking about public money, here. Our taxpayers put significant trust in us to use our funds wisely. If we can find ways to stretch our resources, then we've lived up to that public trust."*

Deborah Powell, Buyer  
City of Lynchburg

says Deborah Powell, who took Tammy's place as Buyer for the City. "Gail Kemper, with the eVA team, was

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# City Of Lynchburg Reaches \$5 Million

(cont'd from Page Three)

the point of contact who initially asked us if we had thought about a City-wide implementation of eVA.” says Deborah.

What’s the real secret to success for local governments to move to e-procurement? It is not that different from how the Commonwealth approached eVA before it was launched in 2001.

“At first, you need the directors in each department to buy in to the concept of e-procurement,” Tammy explains. “The departments need to stay involved to encourage the continued use of eVA.”

Deborah Powell talks about eVA’s tools. “We love to use Quick Quote for informal bids with our purchase card. It’s a lot less paperwork. eVA pulls the bid list together, notifies vendors, and tallies responses. eVA even creates the purchase order for you!”

She adds “When we want to advertise larger projects, eVA notifies vendors throughout the state. This increased competition helps us make sure we’re getting the best price for the taxpayer. And also allows us ‘public visibility’ of

our procurement activities.”

“We also use eVA’s management reports to monitor spending



throughout the City. Anywhere we see volume purchases by specific commodities, we consider a term contract for that product or service, and go after volume pricing. We wouldn’t be able to do this big picture analysis of where our money goes without eVA,” she said.

For example, eVA allowed the City of Lynchburg to analyze paper purchases. Historically individual city departments used their delegated purchasing authority to buy paper as needed.

Once this data was combined into one easy-to-analyze report,

the City saw an opportunity for savings, by sourcing and pricing one large paper purchase centrally, then providing the product to individual departments upon request.

“We’re talking about public money, here,” says Deborah. “Our taxpayers put significant trust in us to use our funds wisely. If we can find ways to stretch our resources, then we’ve lived up to that public trust.”

**SIGN UP!** Want to join eVA as a buyer for local government or other public body? Go to [www.eva.virginia.gov](http://www.eva.virginia.gov), and click the “Sign Up” tab in the center of the home page.

## eVA Welcomes New Localities!

Town of Amherst

Town of Ashland

Bedford County

City of Lexington

Prince Edward County Social Services

Town of Stephens City Parks and Recreation

Suffolk Redevelopment Housing Authority

City of Suffolk

Town of Tappahannock

Virginia Housing Development Authority

## Need Help?

Contact one of our local government account executives:

Debbie Field  
804-786-1074  
[debbie.field@dgs.virginia.gov](mailto:debbie.field@dgs.virginia.gov)

Bob Pareene  
804-225-3354  
[robert.pareene@dgs.virginia.gov](mailto:robert.pareene@dgs.virginia.gov)

## eVA’s Successful Model Studied By e-Commerce Industry

eVA, one of the first public sector e-procurement systems, and the largest of its kind, is also the most successful. eVA, which has received national acclaim, is often the focus of industry e-commerce articles which look at why similar efforts in other states have not caught on as well. The success of adoption efforts like Lynchburg’s is key to eVA’s continued growth.

eVA is also contacted frequently by other states, and even Canada, who are attempting to learn from the Commonwealth’s experience, as their management considers e-procurement.

Is eVA one-size-fits-all? Just the opposite. eVA is very flexible, and allows each locality or agency to customize user access, approval authority, and spending limits, according to the organization’s existing workflow and purchasing rules.

## eVA Buyers: Boost Your Knowledge

### Richmond Training

From [www.eva.virginia.gov](http://www.eva.virginia.gov), click “eVA Training” on the left hand navigation bar. Look for “Sign Up For A Buyer Training Class.” Use our easy on-line registration for these popular half-day training classes, offered once a month, free of charge. Classes are held at DGS headquarters.



*Next Richmond Training Class  
July 18!*

### Online Training

eVA Buyer Training On Demand. From [www.eva.virginia.gov](http://www.eva.virginia.gov), click “eVA Training.” You’ll find “virtual” demonstrations of eVA’s buyer tools and get

instant help with common user issues.

### Current Online Topics

*Creating Requisitions*

*How To Reset Your Password*

*How To Create Future Procurements*

*Sign Up For A Buyer Training Class*

*Required Settings For Internet Explorer 5.5, 6.0 and 7.0*

*Having Trouble Resetting Your Password?*

### Regional Training

Need buyer training in your neighborhood? Let the eVA professionals come to you. eVA will partner with any state or local government to coordinate a regional buyer training class. Start with a few buyers from your own shop, add a computer lab with internet access, and eVA will recruit other eVA users in the region to fill the class. It’s a great way to learn and network with your colleagues in the field. For information contact [shane.caudill@dgs.virginia.gov](mailto:shane.caudill@dgs.virginia.gov) or 804-786-3855.

## Local Government IT Buyers: GSA Schedule 70 Now On eVA

If you’re a local government eVA buyer, and have a purchase card, you can buy from the Federal Government’s GSA technology contracts! eVA now includes an easy shopping link to these IT contracts on the GSA Advantage system. Simply create your electronic purchase orders in eVA’s *Shop Now* in one convenient transaction.

Why hunt down your own pricing? Just use your PCard and eVA’s GSA Schedule 70 link to fill your IT purchasing needs.

Enter “GSA Schedule 70” into the keyword search field at the top of your *Shop Now* screen.

If you need help, contact [eva-customer@care@dgs.virginia.gov](mailto:eva-customer@care@dgs.virginia.gov) or 1-866-289-7367.

### Quick Quote

eVA’s paperless alternative to fax-back and telephone quotes. Learn how to get quotes quickly and efficiently in this half-day “hands-on” course. No more faxing or calling. Learn to create electronic quote requests, obtain automated vendor lists, receive and evaluate electronic bids, and make awards.

### Shop Now

The eVA tool that lets you shop online. In this half-day “hands-on” course, learn how to create electronic requisitions, process electronic orders, get online purchase approvals and practice a variety of electronic “shopping” exercises.

## GSA Schedule 70 Not For State Buyers

*State eVA buyers are required to follow technology procurement guidelines set by the Virginia Information Technology Agency (VITA) and may not use GSA Schedule 70, unless the needed items are determined by VITA to be out of their scope and oversight.*

# Superior Global Solutions Grows Business With eVA

When Sandra Sylvester started her business in 2003, she had no idea she'd come close to one million in sales in only



4½ years. And she certainly didn't expect state government to be her major customer. As a matter of fact, Sandra had a very negative perception about doing business with public sector.

"I had heard horror stories about the bureaucracy, the red tape, and the poor payment schedule," said Sandra.

But Sandra's perception of doing business with government quickly changed when the Executive Order for state agencies to do more business with SWAM vendors was issued.

## Sowing The Seeds

To make sure her new company, Superior Global Solutions, had the greatest chance of success, Sandra learned how to use the eVA system, and quickly took advantage of the features and tools.

"I used eVA to research the state government marketplace and contacted state agencies to let them know we were in

eVA, DMBE certified, and ready to do business."

Using eVA reports to get buyer contact info was ideal because it saved time and leg-work that would have been required to navigate a new market.

Sandra also created an electronic eVA catalog, and within a week of uploading it, received her first order. "This tool generates a lot of orders that I don't expect," she says.

Vendors can create an electronic catalog of their products and services and upload it to eVA for free. A kind of "storefront," these catalogs become part of eVA's "e-Mall," and serve as a "shopping" tool, allowing buyers to search by keyword for specific items they'd like to purchase.

## Building Customer Relationships

"In 2004, we participated in the annual DGS Procurement Forum. As part of their vendor expo, we made valuable face-to-face contact with literally hundreds of buyers for state and local government," explains Sandra.

Soon, SGS landed three solid customers: Thomas Nelson Community College, Virginia Department of Health, Department of Correctional Educa-

tion, and Piedmont Virginia Community College.

"In early 2005, our business was increasing to the point we thought our fax machine was stuck or sending duplicates, because the orders and quote requests were coming in so fast! But, no, this was REAL business," explains Sandra.

## Managing Growth

Sandra is a dynamic and highly accomplished executive with experience in sales and management. A busy mother who juggles the responsibilities of family life, while budding as an entrepreneur, Sandra relies on eVA's electronic efficiencies to get her work done.

"eVA's electronic tools help me prioritize my work load each day," she explains.

"Time management is really important to me. Being able to access my orders and customer information in one central place, at my convenience day or night, lets me focus on other

critical aspects of running my business. With eVA, it's also easier to analyze my customer's purchasing habits—and

*"Time management is really important to me. Being able to access my orders and customer information in one central place, day or night, let's me focus on other critical aspects of running my business."*

Sandra Sylvester, Owner and President  
Superior Global Solutions

analyze transactions by individual buyer, an entire agency, or an entire sector, such as public safety."

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# Superior Global Solutions Grows Business With eVA

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The risks with starting a new business are well documented. "Obtaining a business license and getting registered with the SCC is easy. But knowing where to go from there is quite a challenge," Sandra adds.

"Where will I get my business?"

"Who is going to buy from a business with no proven track record?"

"eVA really helps a start-up business find their Virginia government target audience. And the Commonwealth's emphasis on small business utilization helps narrow the playing field," explains Sandra.

"Having the electronic notification of new bid opportunities is also key. I don't have to go out and look for new business--the opportunities come to me. This means not having to work so hard to find business--we just work hard to keep it."

"eVA definitely makes doing business with state and local government a lot easier. But it's only part of my success. Here's my business model: *Be good at what I do, treat my customers like partners, and keep my business evolving with changing needs in the marketplace.*"

Sandra is quick to say eVA is only a tool.

"You can't rest on your laurels. You have to keep marketing yourself and keep your

name out there."

"We take advantage of other bid opportunities and have landed an award to be a sub-contractor on a contract for the Department of Education.



Sandra Sylvester, Owner and President of Superior Global Solutions

We're also listed as a vendor for the SouthWest Information Network Group, Inc. (SWING)

to provide library supplies."

Sandra faced a tragic turn when she lost her business partner to cancer in May of 2007. "This was such a shock to us. We were in the prime of our business and things were busier than ever. I worked hard to insure that my clients did not know of this tragedy." Sandra says her partner encouraged her to keep moving forward, and to stick to business as usual. Most of their clients found out about his illness after his passing.

"I really miss him" says Sandra. "This experience taught me a valuable lesson. Never lose sight of your friends, family, and clients--do the best you can at all times. You never know when life will end."

Sandra says she owes a debt of gratitude to her many state agency clients. "They have been so good to us. We wouldn't have made it this far without them."

**eVA Connections** is published by the e-Procurement Bureau of the Division of Purchases and Supply, Department of General Services. Please submit feedback and story ideas to [deborah.hudson@dgs.virginia.gov](mailto:deborah.hudson@dgs.virginia.gov).

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