



Progress Through Regional Cooperation In The Alleghenies

State of the Southern Alleghenies APEX Accelerator – September 2026

by James F. Gerraughty
SAP&DC APEX Accelerator Program Manager



I asked in The July 2026 newsletter if it was “hot enough for you?” I was in Florida for a training conference in mid-August, and I can assure you that it can be hotter and more humid. Great conference, I learned a lot and had some good conversations with agency folks who were in attendance. Very green, the afternoon thunderstorms are a thing and over relatively quickly, and I will say it was like being in my dog’s mouth if I went outside during the day.

Last month also had the announcement of the CMMC Level 2 3rd party verification being paused for 60 days, starting 13 JUL 2026. While the pause is in effect until 13 SEP 2026 (as of this writing), it is imperative to understand that:

- Cybersecurity is an important thing to your business, and that CMMC is a checklist/procedure review, and
- Review all your options and contract language. Level 2 could be a market differentiator for your company.

Any questions about cybersecurity, or any other government contracting issues? Don’t hesitate to reach out.

Please review our training opportunities that are coming up in the last third of 2026 (and beyond) for our APEX Accelerator and PREP Partners. We have:

- **Save the Date:** The 7th Annual Tri State APEX Accelerator Mega Matchmaker on 1-2 DEC 2026. More details as they come along.

While the list above looks a bit thin, please review and register for upcoming events on our eCenter page, <https://sancnt.ecenterdirect.com/> Stop back often, as the training events do pop up there pretty frequently!

If you have ideas for topics, or would like to learn more about a government contracting-related topic, please drop us a line at (814) 949-6500 or at apex@sapdc.net. We’d love to hear from you!

CMMC Works. Now let’s sharpen it.

By Katie Arrington, Fmr Official Performing the Duties of the Pentagon CIO

Note: The APEX Accelerator (and formerly PTACs) worked with and got candid updates from Ms. Arrington since 2017.

I built the Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification because self-attestation was failing our war industrial base. Contractors could simply promise they were following basic cybersecurity practices, with no verification behind that promise. Our adversaries noticed that gap long before Washington did—and they have not eased up since. If anything, the opposite is true.

Nation-state actors and the ransomware crews they tolerate or direct are more aggressive, better funded, and faster than they were five years ago. This is not the moment to loosen the standard. The Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement requirements behind CMMC should not change, and I would not support it if they did.

But defending a program doesn't mean pretending it's perfectly aimed. Now that CMMC is a final rule moving into real contracts, it's the right time to ask: are we targeting it precisely enough? I don't think we are yet—and artificial intelligence, used correctly, can help fix that without touching the cybersecurity bar itself.

Read more at: <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2026/08/cmmc-works-now-lets-sharpen-it/415470/>

CISA still finds water system controls exposed online amid multistate hacks

By David DiMolfetta, Cybersecurity Reporter, Nextgov/FCW

Federal cyber officials are still finding water system controls exposed to the public internet, even as the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and the FBI help utilities recover from a series of cyberattacks affecting at least 12 states, acting CISA Director Nick Andersen told Nextgov/FCW on Thursday.

“We’re seeing things like [programmable logic controllers] that are open and accessible on the internet with either no password set or default password set,” Andersen said in a brief interview on the sidelines of the Black Hat cybersecurity conference. “We’re not making ourselves hardened targets.”

Programmable logic controllers, commonly dubbed PLCs, are small computers used to operate pumps, valves and other equipment inside water facilities. Connecting them to the internet can allow operators to manage equipment remotely but it can also give hackers a path into systems that directly control physical processes.

Read more at: <https://www.nextgov.com/cybersecurity/2026/08/cisa-still-finds-water-system-controls-exposed-online-amid-multistate-hacks/415266/>

Federal agencies quietly joined health data superhighway governing council

By Christian Robles, Technology Reporter, Nextgov/FCW

The rapidly growing superhighway — known as TEFCA — will help federal agencies digitally obtain health records from thousands of hospitals, clinics and other medical providers.

Officials with the Consumer Product Safety Commission, Social Security Administration and Indian Health Service were added to the governing council for a federal initiative designed to facilitate the exchange of health data in June, Nextgov/FCW has learned.

The council's recent additions highlight how agencies are increasingly eyeing participation in the initiative — known as the Trusted Exchange Framework and Common Agreement, or TEFCA — to obtain digital health records that would help quickly process disability claims, track consumer safety issues and improve medical care.

Read more at: <https://www.nextgov.com/digital-government/2026/08/federal-agencies-quietly-joined-health-data-superhighway-governing-council/415324/>

About US

The Southern Alleghenies APEX Accelerator at SAP&DC is an economic development entity that bridges the gap between supplier and buyer in the government marketplace. The APEX Accelerator stands ready to support businesses across 18 counties in the central PA Alleghenies region in the pursuit to secure contracts with local, state and/or federal government agencies nationwide.



Due to the generous support of our Commonwealth and Federal funding partners, services provided by the APEX Accelerator are free of charge.

Whether you are an experienced contractor or new to the government marketplace, the APEX Accelerator will provide one-on-one counseling utilizing all of the program resources necessary to increase your share of contract awards. We will also coordinate assistance, if needed, with our PA PREP partners.

Contact us today at the Southern Alleghenies APEX Accelerator at SAP&DC to get started!

Email: apex@sapdc.net

Phone: (814) 949-6500

Web: APEXAccelerator@SAP&DC

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SAP&DC | 814-949-6528 | jgerraughty@sapdc.net | <http://www.sapdc.net>
3 Sheraton Drive
Altoona, PA 16601



SAP&DC | 3 Sheraton Drive | Altoona, PA 16601 US

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