

INL buys local with Wiest

Idaho National Laboratory is a unique and diverse place. Not only is INL the nation's lead nuclear energy research and development laboratory, but it also is a world leader in broader clean energy R&D and the effort to protect and make more resilient the nation's critical infrastructure against man-made and natural threats.



Amy Lientz
INL

It takes an incredible number of moving parts to ensure that the lab functions well. Behind the globally recognized science and research are the leaders and game changers with the vision and talent to solve our world's most complex problems.

This month, I am featuring Michelle Wiest, Director of Acquisition and Contracts Management at INL.

Michelle and her team purchase the supplies and services INL's more than 4,200 staff members need to do their jobs. In Fiscal Year 2016, INL spent \$136 million with small businesses just in Idaho.

Michelle has 30 years of leadership experience in the Department of Energy management and operator contractor environment. She earned a Bachelor's of Science degree in finance and a Master's of Science degree in environmental studies from the University of Idaho.

Michelle is from Idaho Falls, and lives with her husband and two boys.

Q: What is your day job?

A: I lead a diverse team of contract professionals to purchase goods and services necessary to operate INL, sell services and capabilities to external clients, and manage the contract relationship with the Department of Energy. In short, my team and I connect resources to research.

Q: Explain to the average person, "Why is your job important?"

A: It is critical that we have the capability to tap into resources and



Michelle Wiest is the Director of Acquisition and Contracts Management at INL. Her team purchases supplies and services for INL's more than 4,200 staff members. In Fiscal Year 2016, INL spend \$136 million with small businesses in Idaho. (INL photo)

IDAHO GAME CHANGERS

develop partnerships with local, regional, national, and international businesses to help execute and support our diverse mission.

Q: What is the biggest challenge you face today?

A: Ensuring we are nimble and flexible in our approach to contracting while effectively executing within the federal guidelines that govern the contracting process.

Q: How does your team build partnerships with businesses outside INL?

A: When building partnerships, our initial focus is on identifying and aligning INL needs with capabilities provided by potential business partners. When we identify potential business partners our top priorities include fairness in opportunities to be selected as a partner, equity in our relationship, and transparency.

Q: What are the biggest areas of opportunity in partnering with INL?

A: Construction: new construction as well as refurbishment of existing facilities, roads, and grounds. We are aggressively seeking businesses that can support our needs in this area.

Q: Why are public-private partnerships so important to INL and the nation?

A: They enable each party to play to their strengths. INL can leverage its unique capabilities and infrastructure — that may not be readily available in the commercial marketplace — to develop and test technology, and private partners can leverage their expertise in getting technology into the marketplace.

Q: If a company is interested in contracting with INL, how does it get started?

A: The first step is getting connected with INL's Small Business Program Manager (procurement.inl.gov). The INL website can facilitate this initial contact that can open a dialog to understand the contractor's capabilities and areas of interest.

Q: What do you enjoy most about your career?

A: The people I get to work with every day. The team generates a lot of "thought diversity" and is committed to doing their best work. To top it off we like to mix in a healthy dose of fun along the way.

Q: Did you always want to do what you are doing? If not, what did you want to be growing up?

A: Growing up I always had an interest in science but after my first year of college I was drawn to the college of business. To be honest when I graduated from college I did not know that the contracting profession even exist-

ed. I feel incredibly fortunate to have chosen a career where I look forward to coming to work every day.

Q: What do you enjoy most about living in eastern Idaho?

A: I love the outdoors so being in eastern Idaho offers something different in every season. Idaho Falls does a great job offering a variety of events to the community. Most weekends you end up choosing between events not hunting for something to do.

Q: When are you happiest?

A: Getting together with friends and family around the campfire. Telling a great ghost story for the kids and watching them try to figure out if it could be real always adds to the fun.

Q: What do you value most in your friends?

A: That we stay connected and have built traditions that I hope carry on with our kids when they become adults. They also inspire me to check things off my bucket list like Karaoke!

Q: What is your favorite book?

A: Wow, this is like picking a favorite child. I would have to say that I really enjoy historical fiction, but have a wide pallet of other types of books I enjoy. A few favorites include: the Poisonwood Bible, Geek Love and A Thousand Splendid Suns.

Q: Favorite movie?

A: Jason Bourne movies are always great but I would also give a "shout out" to National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation.

Q: Tell me what you like to do when you're not working?

A: Anything outdoors. I play on a co-ed softball team in the summer and we actually win a fair share of the games. Right now I am looking forward to a good snow year for skiing.



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