

Civilian Agencies Council – Acquisition Best Practices

The Professional Services Council’s (PSC) Civilian Agencies Council (CAC) is collecting examples of acquisition best practices implemented by federal agencies at various phases of the acquisition lifecycle. By sharing these illustrations with agencies and their implementing partners, we hope to encourage their expanded adoption and to uncover additional examples that can be promoted to enhance acquisition outcomes throughout the federal government.

#	Best Practice	Department/Agency/Organization	Champion/PoC	Description	Intended Outcome	Acquisition Phase (Select)
1	Quarterly Business Forecast	United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	Aman Djahanbani, Director, Office of Acquisition and Assistance, USAID	USAID publishes quarterly business forecasts (with more frequent updates) as "an informational resource on potential funding and partnership opportunities at USAID. It is an advanced look at grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements that USAID is in the process of developing and plans to issue in the coming year. Included on the Business Forecast is helpful information such as a description of the award, estimated dollar amount, anticipated date of award, location, and point of contact at USAID. Two separate Forecasts [are] developed each quarter – one for USAID Missions overseas and one for USAID in Washington, DC." The agency also holds quarterly conference calls with prompt written follow-up to questions submitted.	<p>Potential bidders are better able to anticipate the agency’s needs and can allocate personnel and proposal resources accordingly. Companies are better able to respond to agency RFPs, greatly enhancing the likelihood of improved outcomes and cost savings for the customer agency.</p> <p>Many agencies publish a “forecast” of contract opportunities; USAID is still a “work in progress,” but is getting better.</p>	1. Requirements Generation
2	Monthly PALT Update Meetings with Industry ¹	Army Program Executive Office Simulation, Training and Instrumentation (PEO STRI)/ Army Contracting Command – Orlando (ACC – Orlando)	Joe Giunta, Executive Director/ Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting (PARC)	Monthly “Procurement Administrative Lead Time” (PALT) meetings with industry allow for bilateral communication about potential requirements, timelines, programs, funding, etc., up to the time that an RFP is issued.	As with USAID’s business forecast (above), early communication with industry better enables contractors to respond to RFPs and helps the government ensure that its requirements are properly suited to meeting its needs.	1. Requirements Generation

¹ See also: <http://www.ncmahq.org/files/Articles/CM0713%20-%2054-59.pdf>; <http://www.agility-grp.com/transition-peo-stris-contracting-center/>

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2a		[Also Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems Division; SOCOM monthly industry days (Hondo Geurts); USAID tracks PALT]				
3	Service Acquisition Workshops (SAWs) [Includes Acquisition Requirement Roadmap Tool (ARRT) training]	Defense Acquisition University (DAU)	T.R. "Randy" Pilling, Program Director, Services Acquisition	“Interactive, centrally-funded course that applies performance-based techniques to services acquisition...Participants learn how to use the ARRT to define and refine requirements in order to create an initial draft of the Performance Work Statement (PWS) and the Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan (QASP). Includes “Multi-Functional Integrated Process Team (MFIPT)”, not just contracting; required for contracts >\$1B; recommended for contracts >\$100M	<p>“This process has proven to significantly improve the quality of requirement documents while: reducing costs, increasing the likelihood of effective competition, and shortening acquisition lead times.”</p> <p>DAU is also looking to use the SAW process to track PALT in the future.</p>	1. Requirements Generation
4	One Acquisition Solution for Integrated Services (OASIS) acquisition industry input process	General Services Administration (GSA)	Jim Ghiloni, OASIS Program Executive Officer, GSA	<p>In the months leading up to the issuance of this major opportunity, GSA engaged frequently with potential bidders and other stakeholders to seek feedback on many elements of the OASIS vehicle, including issuing a draft RFP for comment, and provided detailed information on how industry input was incorporated into the final RFP.</p> <p>GSA undertook a similar process for the HCaTS and NS2020 acquisitions.</p>	The open and active process through which GSA engaged industry, while not perfect, was effective at addressing many of industry’s concerns and enhancing their understanding of what GSA sought from offerors, and has served as a model for subsequent acquisitions at GSA and other agencies.	1. Requirements Generation
5	Technical, Acquisition, and Business Support Services (TABSS) IDIQ contract vehicle migration to OASIS	Department of Homeland Security (DHS)	Soraya Correa, Chief Procurement Officer, DHS	Recognizing the considerable overlap between its TABSS vehicle and OASIS, DHS chose to meet its requirements via OASIS following the expiration of TABSS in 2017-2018, rather than pursue a follow-on contract of its own.	Utilizing an existing vehicle rather than creating a new and potentially duplicative one conserves agency acquisition resources and saves contractors from having to choose where to allocate their own bid and proposal resources (although it is not without controversy).	1. Requirements Generation

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6	“Comparison of Major Contract Types” Chart	Defense Acquisition University (DAU) Acquisition Community Connection	-	The chart provides a high-level overview across a spectrum of ten different contract types (e.g. Firm-Fixed-Price, Cost-Plus-Award-Fee, Time & Materials, etc.) and offers general guidance on when to use—and when not to use—each type based on various elements of the requirements to be fulfilled, and on statutory and regulatory requirements tied to particular contract types.	<p>A resource of this type helps ensure the proper alignment between requirements and acquisition strategies, streamlining the acquisition process and helping ensure outcomes that are beneficial both to the government and to industry.</p> <p>Aligns with the 2013 PSC Leadership Commission recommendation to implement a common “taxonomy” to align attributes of the requirements being sought—prominently including associated risks—with appropriate contract types.</p> <p>While the DAU document is a useful tool, it could be improved by creating a companion document or expanding its applicability to services acquisitions, and to civilian agencies. PSC’s Acquisition and Business Policy Council (ABPC) is currently developing recommendations on how to do so.</p>	2. Pre-Award
7	Acquisition Institute CON DBF Training & Debriefing Seminars	Department of Homeland Security (DHS)	Harrison Smith, DHS Industry Liaison	Interactive Contract Award Debriefing Workshops (CON DBF) are designed to provide government participants with the opportunity to obtain real-life experience in conducting oral debriefings with DHS industry partners. The workshops include role play scenarios unique to the DHS mission and give participants and industry the opportunity to dialogue in a risk-free environment. DHS also holds seminars with industry to assess the effectiveness of the CON DBF training.	<p>Thorough debriefings reduce the likelihood of industry protests and better enable contractors to respond to future solicitations by enhancing their understanding of agency needs and processes.</p> <p>Aligns with the 2013 PSC Leadership Commission recommendation to require substantive, interactive debriefings.</p>	3. Source Selection & Debriefing

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8	“Acquisition 360” Industry and Internal Customer Feedback Surveys	Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP); CFO Act Agencies	Anne Rung, Administrator, OFPP	March 18, 2015 OFPP memo titled “Acquisition 360 – Improving the Acquisition Process through Timely Feedback from External and Internal Stakeholders” contained three surveys intended to solicit “actionable feedback from external and internal stakeholders,” including a “Rate the Agency” survey for industry to assess the pre-award and debriefing processes, and directed rapid implementation for the 24 CFO Act agencies.	<p>While not intended to rate or compare individual contracting officers, program managers, or contracting offices, the surveys are “meant to help agencies identify strengths and weaknesses with industry partnerships so they can make internal improvements on the planning and making of contract awards,” and to “promote the use of transactional data to better target opportunities for improvement.”</p> <p>Aligns with the 2013 PSC Leadership Commission recommendation to implement 360 degree assessments of acquisitions including key government and industry stakeholders.</p> <p>While the pilot program is an important first step, extending the reviews beyond the debriefing process to assess acquisition outcomes would greatly enhance their utility.</p>	3. Source Selection & Debriefing
9	R&D Spending Coordination	Department of Defense (DoD); NASA; NIH; DHS		DoD and NASA have undertaken initiatives to leverage both government and industry spending on independent research and development (IR&D). NIH has a related effort in medical research and the DHS Office of Science and Technology has examples of information sharing, as well.	The 2013 PSC Leadership Commission report recommended such initiatives to leverage and coordinate R&D spending, and in particular that the U.S. Chief Technology Officer (and subsequently agency chief technology officers) facilitate a collaborative information sharing initiative to better leverage the benefits of R&D spending by federal agencies and by contractors across agencies, while also reducing the risk of duplication.	4. Contract Administration

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10	Acquisition exchange program with industry	Army Contracting Command (ACC), 2012, OSD, and others		Several DoD agencies, such as the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Army Contracting Command, have established limited government-to-industry and industry-to-government acquisition exchange initiatives, wherein government acquisition and other functional personnel are embedded with their industry partners, and vice versa.	The 2013 PSC Leadership Commission report recommended an increased exchange program between government and industry. Congress twice specifically authorized a government-industry exchange program for information technology and OPM had issued preliminary implementing rules for that exchange program. Such programs enable participants to gain insight into their counterparts' perspectives that they can draw upon in future interactions.	4. Contract Administration
11	Kick-off meetings	Defense Acquisition University (DAU); other agencies		The purpose of the meeting is to bring together all involved parties to ensure that there is a common understanding of the requirements to be met, how the work will be performed, and how the oversight of performance will be accomplished. Many agencies use similar "kick-off" sessions after award.	The PSC 2013 Leadership Commission report and the 2014 PSC Acquisition and Technology Policy Agenda both highlighted the value to joint government-industry kick-off meetings involving contract award winners and all agency stakeholders before or at the time of the notice to proceed. This is not a time to rewrite the contract; but since many agency stakeholders may not have kept (or been kept) fully up-to-date on changes that may have occurred during the bidding process, this will ensure that all stakeholders have a common understanding of the way forward and address at the outset expectations and ambiguities.	4. Contract Administration
12	Acquisition Gateway and Category Hallways	GSA	Laura Stanton, GSA Acquisition Gateway Lead	The GSA Acquisition Gateway is the workspace for acquisition professionals to learn, connect, and act upon acquisition information, expertise, and advice. Its content is divided into product and service category hallways and resources.	Government acquisition professionals will find and can interact with solution comparisons, expert articles, templates, lessons learned, market research tools, prices paid data, and more to achieve successful outcomes at each step of the acquisition lifecycle.	Throughout the acquisition lifecycle

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13	HHS Acquisition Workforce Community Workshops	Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Grants and Acquisition Policy and Accountability (OGAPA), Division of Acquisition	Angela Billups, Ph.D., Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisitions and Senior Procurement Executive	Training for all HHS operating and staff divisions providing an overview of the entire HHS acquisition lifecycle, including developing requirements, managing and assessing risk based on mission and complexity, delineating roles and responsibilities of program managers, contracting officers and other key stakeholders, and more.	The training, which includes role-playing exercises, is designed to foster critical thinking, improve stakeholder communication and collaboration, enable meaningful innovation, and enhance the focus on desired outcomes as part of the broader focus on the acquisition lifecycle.	Throughout the acquisition lifecycle
14	DoD WHS Acquisition Directorate Professional Development Program	Department of Defense (DoD) Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) Acquisition Directorate (AD)	Patricia Watson, Contracting Specialist and Training Coordinator	<p>The WHS Acquisition Directorate’s Professional Development Program was created to provide new and experienced contracting specialists as well as its program customers with training that is customized to the types of contracts AD creates and administers through all phases of the acquisition lifecycle: acquisition planning, contract formation and contract administration.</p> <p>Acquisition staff deficiencies are identified as a result of both PMR findings and annual file reviews. Training is then tailored to augment DAU courses by focusing on these issues. In delivering the training, instructors use specific case studies drawn from WHS AD’s contract files. The goal of this training program is to improve and refine contracting specialists competencies in the acquisition process and also to assist program customers in better understanding their roles.</p>	<p>These benefits have accrued to AD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Over the past two years, over 450 Acquisition Professionals participated in customized, focused training that was based on their types of requirements and relevant to their purchasing environment. ● AD is developing its acquisition professionals in a collaborative environment that creates partnerships among the acquisition staff as well as between the acquisition staff and their customers. ● Further, since implementing this program, the quality of the requirements documents or purchase request has improved, as noted in WHS/AD's 2015 PMR. 	Throughout the acquisition lifecycle

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Additional Examples						
#	Best Practice	Department/Agency/ Organization	Champion/ PoC	Description	Intended Outcome	Acquisition Phase (Select)
a	Use of Critical Hiring Authority – examples?			Discussed in 2014 PSC Acquisition Policy Survey		Choose an item.
b	Counting small business subcontractor participation toward prime goals on major systems	Department of Energy		From PSC 2013 PSC Leadership Commission Report		Choose an item.
c	Performance Improvement Officer metrics for small business/ procurement	Department of the Treasury		From PSC 2013 PSC Leadership Commission Report		Choose an item.
d	2014 OMB Smarter IT delivery: strategic sourcing and shared services	Office of Management and Budget (OMB)		From PSC 2013 PSC Leadership Commission Report		Choose an item.
e	Initiatives to reduce non-value-added regulatory burdens	Department of Defense (DoD) 2014; GSA et al (2015; national dialogue)		From PSC 2013 PSC Leadership Commission Report		Choose an item.
g	Documentation of decision rationale in proposed and final acquisition regulations	Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Council/ Defense Acquisition Regulation (DAR) Council		From PSC 2013 PSC Leadership Commission Report		Choose an item.

