



Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Supplier Relationship Management – Output from Breakout Sessions

Regional Forum – Atlanta, GA
April 10, 2012





Breakout Room – Copeland Information Technology

Key Issues

- Consistency is lacking within VA.
- Doing business is difficult in an environment where so much emphasis is put on shifting risk to the suppliers.
- There is a (natural) bias to incumbents.
- Despite reference to Best Value, VA is very obviously Lowest Cost Technically Acceptable.



Breakout Room – Copeland Information Technology

Key Issues

- VA claims ‘we don’t want to eliminate your profitability’ - but that’s already done.
- Not aware of VAAA and the other initiatives.
- I don’t know who my end customer is; we are only exposed to the CO.
- The lack of planning combined with short timeframes in solicitations is a problem



Breakout Room – – Copeland Information Technology

Recommendations

- If you are targeting a bid for a specific supplier, please just write a sole-source justification.
- Make the CIO a permanent position to avoid '4-year panic.'
- If VA releases large batches of solicitations directly before holidays, please include appropriate timelines.
- Prioritize the '16 challenges' so then can be reasonably addressed with the existing workforce and infrastructure.



Breakout Room – Foster Other

Key Issues

- Lack of communication between suppliers and VA COs to improve RFIs and RFPs/RFQs
- Lack of consistency between VA VISNs and facilities within VISNs
- Need to define “best value” evaluation criteria
- Improve quality of post-award communication, such as debriefs
- VA CVE is not an advocate for SDVOB and VOB
- More industry days
- VA personnel has no sense of time and money management



Breakout Room – Foster Other

Recommendations

- Hold pre-RFP vendor outreach events to capture industry expertise
- Define and enforce VA procurement policies across the Department
- Define “best value” evaluation criteria for each contract to reflect contract requirements
- Improve quality of debriefs and update award status
- Train COs and CORs to understand impact of their decisions on staffing, delivery, and on our profits



Breakout Room – Healthcare

Key issues

- There is no streamlined process or accountability for 621i renewal.
- This whole performance feedback (PPIRs) process is a mess.
 - Not centralized/ no common access.
 - Not consistently used either in contract closeout or source selection.
- Pervasive feeling that suppliers are viewed as “vendors” and not “SMEs”.
- Forums are not useful if there is no issue resolution as a result.
- VISN/Hospital level contracting staff seems to have limited authority.



Breakout Room – Healthcare

Key issues

- VOSB and SDVOSB recertification process is difficult- seen as a barrier.
- Procurement Process inhibits adequate education of Veteran (Consumer) about the care available to them.
- Financial Component of procurement process (for example: obligation of funds, payment) is timely.
- VAAR clause giving preference for SDVO or VO businesses is inconsistently applied.
- Reverse bid auction is a joke.



Breakout Room – Healthcare

Recommendations

- Reexamine and standardize 621i renewal process
- Establish consistent use of PPIRS
- Ensure appropriate engagement of VA technical/medical expertise
- Provide more visibility around resolution of issues raised at the Forums and found within surveys
- Streamline the SDVOSB and VOSB certification process.
- Clarify Veterans First Clause and its application across various types and sizes of procurements.



Breakout Room – Construction

Key Issues

- Lack of understanding of the VA organizational structure and who to contact.
- VA does not understand “what it means” to be a small business.
- VA is “passing down” shrinking budgets to suppliers in various ways.
- Partnering works well if all key stakeholders are involved early.
- There are no repercussions for large business to meet or not meet small or Veteran-Owned business goals.
- There is a lack of information about anticipated bids and budgets.
- Service-based performance contracts place large liability on suppliers and they are challenging to evaluate consistently
- There great variability in terms of CO performance



Breakout Room – Construction

Recommendations

- Use a standardized past performance system.
- Provide tools to link prime contractors and subcontractors.
- Conduct a 360 evaluation, to include VA, at contract closeout.
- VA should plan a contract with contingency money in anticipation of modifications.
- VA should provide response deadline extensions to accommodate delays on the VA side (bid and modification).
- Pre-bid meetings/site visits should be mandatory.
- VA should conduct facility long-range planning.
- VA should provide bid options (NEED versus WANT).
- Provide a list of VAAA graduates in the Supplier Newsletter and give them a designation.
- Allow small businesses to have multiple mentors.



Breakout Room – Porter Medical Equipment

Key Issues

- The modification process is “pitiful”
 - Some mods take too long; COs sit on paperwork and extend their deadlines, adding costs to VA
- Some Contracting Officers do a poor job
 - Communication: They do not respond to emails or phone calls
 - COs are not knowledgeable enough to do their job
 - Some COs continue to see suppliers as the enemy
 - Low performers are not fired or disciplined
- Suppliers are reluctant to go to superiors for fear of being blacklisted



Breakout Room – Porter Medical Equipment

Recommendations

- VISNs share Best Practices with one another
- VA should get training and Best Practices from GSA and DLA
- Have industry days to get supplier feedback before determining requirements
- Use arbitrators to resolve disputes between VA and suppliers
- Make timely award decisions