



Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Supplier Relationship Management Output from Breakout Sessions

Regional Forum – Boston, MA
July 19, 2012





Breakout Room – Healthcare

Key issues

- Lack of communication and clarity between COs, CORs, suppliers, and end users
- Status of funding is not known, or lack of funding at the time of award
- RFQs have too many reference clauses and unnecessary information that hurt small businesses' ability to respond in a timely manner
- Little management of frequent VA personnel turnover



Breakout Room – Healthcare

Recommendations

- Be more open to communicating with suppliers, ending the ‘protective/defensive’ communication culture
- Encourage early supplier involvement in the acquisition process – ask for our input when developing requirements
- Increase responsiveness – mandate that COs call us back and answer our questions
- Implement proposed supplier help desk and an Ombudsman
- If it’s not funded, don’t put it out for bid



Breakout Room – Medical Equipment

Key issues

- VA is using FedBid to solicit multiple bids they then ignore
- eBuy is great
- RFI/RFPs take too long because of CO turnover and overwork
- Problems with Modifications: Delays, poor communication, limits to the number you can submit – and mods are getting worse
- Delays: Everything takes too long
- New employees doing better with training, but existing COs haven't improved



Breakout Room – Medical Equipment

Recommendations

- Better oversee use of warrants so buying practices are more consistent
- COs have more knowledge of the goods/services they procure
- Lighten CO workloads so they can complete tasks on time



Breakout Room – Other

Key issues

- Specifications are outdated and/or not well coordinated with end users
- Access to COs is mixed
- Design/Build packages include non-building requirements – markup
- Often don't hear responses to RFI submissions
- Best Value isn't well defined
- Modifications are slow; there is a disconnect between contracts and tech staff
- Closeout process is unclear
- Acquisitions are inconsistent across VA



Breakout Room – Other

Recommendations

- VA should get more input from industry before issuing RFP
- Have more bidders conferences and make sure they include COs and technical staff
- Develop process for resolving issues that impact performance payments



Management and Engineering/Construction

Key Themes

- It is easier to form working relationships with COR than with CO
 - Increasingly difficult to engage directly with COs
 - COs are typically remote, in a centralized location, while CORs are on-site
- It is difficult for remote contracting staff to understand local site priorities and needs related to their contracts
- VA high-level leadership is not reaching ground level
 - Local VA staff do not reflect ideals expressed by VA leadership



Management and Engineering/Construction

Recommendations

- VA needs COs who are easy to engage and knowledgeable
 - More local/accessible COs
- Better emphasize the key messages, including the VA Mission and Vision, and presenting 'One VA Face' to Suppliers