

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Acquisition and Logistics



Boston Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) Forum
Summary Report

Submitted by:

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Summary

This report is a compilation of the detailed notes and feedback from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) Forum held Thursday, July 19, 2012, at the Sheraton Boston Hotel in Boston, Massachusetts. Fifty-four representatives from forty-two companies participated. Participants included representatives from the following industry categories:

- Management
- Other (included Security, Environmental, IT, Furniture/Manufacturing, Shipping)
- Medical Equipment
- Healthcare

The agenda can be found in Appendix A, and the list of attendees can be found in Appendix B. Appendix C includes a list of common acronyms for reference. Appendix D contains the "Plus/Delta" comment card information provided by Supplier participants regarding the SRM forum.

Forum Introduction and Opening Presentations

Introduction

Mr. Thomas A. Burgess, Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Logistics and Supply Chain Management, welcomed all SRM Forum attendees to the 11th SRM Forum. He explained to attendees that this forum is run by VA, but is meant to be FOR and ABOUT Suppliers. This forum does not provide information about specific business opportunities at VA, but rather, helps Suppliers and VA improve the business and contract processes by openly discussing VA contracting in general.

VA is "big business;" the numbers speak for themselves. Mr. Burgess provided attendees with the Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 Procurement Spend of \$17.4 billion, and added that VA spent an excess of \$3.6 billion on Veteran-owned small businesses (VOSB) through the Veterans First Contracting Program. Contract actions in FY 2011 cost VA \$1.4 million. In total, VA had 169,791 contracts with 27,176 Suppliers in FY 2011.

Mr. Burgess stated there are three important "legs" that stand up VA – acquisition leadership, internal customers, and Suppliers. Without any one of these entities, the Department would not be able to sustain itself. The term "customer" is used frequently, but VA sees this term as synonymous with "partner."

In the last 2 years of this forum effort, VA has been able to set a baseline of Suppliers' issues and concerns, and to gather valuable information. However, VA may conduct fewer SRM forums going forward as we implement our Action Plans based on Suppliers' feedback. Nevertheless, VA still wants to continue its open dialogue with Suppliers.

Mr. Burgess explained to attendees about the importance of the "customer experience." It is important for VA to understand Suppliers' perceptions so both parties can operate as a team and work toward success in shared goals.

A common misconception is that if Suppliers "push back" on VA, they will not be treated fairly, and may be "blacklisted." There is no blacklist. Suppliers should feel free to ask ANY questions and engage in discussions without fear of repercussion. This notion rings true not only in these forums, but in every day operations with VA.

The next Supplier Perception Survey (SPS) will be sent out to Suppliers in August 2012 to those who have contracted with VA any time from May 2011 through May 2012. VA asks that all who are sent this survey please complete and submit it. Mr. Burgess addressed several of the lowest rated dimensions in the previously administered SPSs:

- Regarding the lack of ability to provide "one face" across multiple functions, acquisition leadership attending the SRM forums prepare to present VA's "one face" while addressing the Supplier attendees, among other synchronization efforts.
- Regarding perceived ineffectiveness in Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), VA is establishing Commodity Management Offices at the Department level to help define requirements for use Department-wide. This will

help VA determine the total lifecycle costs, and focus on TCO. This initiative is being taken on by Mr. Norbert Doyle, the head of contracting activity (HCA) for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and VHA Chief Procurement and Logistics Officer. The initiative has three phases, and many new people will be hired to take this effort on.

Mr. Burgess noted VA has 586 internal measures of how well it conducts its business, 12 of which are used to ensure acquisition performance is in line with VA's standards for excellence. In addition, the VA Acquisition Academy (VAAA) is focused on training the acquisition workforce, in an effort to standardize and improve skills. VA has invested heavily to improve the workforces' professionalism and capability. Thus far, there have been about 8,000 training scenarios provided by this academy. VA has also embarked on an effort to train customers on how to be better partners. Lastly, VA holds an internal acquisition forum known as the Senior Procurement Council (SPC), where senior leaders address hard issues impacting our performance, and lay out a call to action.

Presentation: Things You Need to Know About Small Business Program

Mr. Tom Leney, Executive Director of the VA Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU), provided Supplier attendees with a presentation about the small business program.

Mr. Leney came to VA from the small business community, making him very aware of small business challenges. He said that small businesses cannot succeed without large businesses, and large businesses cannot succeed in the VA (in the long term) without small businesses. Mr. Leney, as a leader, cannot succeed without having a close partnership with acquisition community in VA. Each entity brings its perspective into the partnership; together, agreements and expectations must be set.

VA OSDBU enables small businesses to add value. The office's first priority is the 23 million Veterans we support. The second priority is small businesses, which add tremendous value, and helping to build their capability to get them "procurement ready." VA does one third of its business with small businesses, and 20 percent of all business goes to VOSBs. The Veterans First, or "VETS First" program is a \$3 million per year effort. It is important to note that there are no other sectors of the Federal Government which have goals for VOSBs.

For dollars spent in the Women-owned (WO), HUBZone, or 8(a) small business categories, most of these in VA are also Veteran-owned. If a Supplier is "disadvantaged" and is not a Veteran, Mr. Leney advises these Suppliers to partner with a VOSB to succeed in VA.

Regarding the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Small Business Performance Scorecard, in the last 2 years VA received an "A" rating, and this year we received a "B." This lower score was given because VA did not meet the procurement goals in two categories. Additionally, VA was required to cap the Veteran-owned businesses procurement goal at 4 percent. We did not do this because that is not in line with our mission, which is to serve Veterans.

There is a culture change ongoing at VA OSDBU. The goal is to provide excellent patient care. OSDBU is now requiring that Senior Executive Service (SES) members are held accountable for contracting officer (CO) dollar obligation. If the contract action was not awarded to a Veteran-owned business, an SES will review and sign off on that contract.

Mr. Leney touched briefly on the VA Veteran-owned verification process. Fraud does occur, but the issue is not as vast as it may seem to the general public. The process is lengthy because VA goes through lengths to ensure the business is legitimate, and VA stands by the results. There are many businesses awaiting verification. If verification takes longer than 90 days, is it likely that that company is "problematic," or VA is seeking clarity on particular items for which further understanding is needed.

Small businesses are agile and accountable. Every contract in VA has a major impact for small businesses. VA does business with people we know, thus, Mr. Leney advised Supplier attendees to continue to dialogue with VA, be procurement-ready, and respond to Requests for Information (RFI).

Breakout Summaries

Following the opening plenary, participants joined industry-focused breakout sessions to discuss their perspectives on VA's acquisition process in more detail.

Breakout: Management

Room: Beacon H

Facilitators: John Condon / Harold Gracey

Note Taker: Ben Rebach

Key Themes

- It is easier to form working relationships with a Contract Officer Representative (COR) than with a CO. Suppliers said this was largely due to the proximity of the COR to the end user.
 - COs are typically remote, in a different city, while CORs are typically on-site.
 - Suppliers find it increasingly difficult to engage directly with COs.
 - Suppliers say it is difficult for remote contracting staff to understand local site priorities and needs related to their contracts.
- Suppliers feel VA high-level leadership is not reaching ground level.
 - Local VA personnel do not reflect ideals expressed by VA leadership.

Recommendations

- VA needs COs who are more easily engaged and knowledgeable; suppliers want more local or accessible COs.
- When communicating with personnel, VA should better emphasize key messages, including the VA Mission and Vision, and presenting 'One VA Face' to Suppliers.

Breakout: Other (Security, Environmental, IT, Furniture/Manufacturing, Shipping)

Room: Beacon A

Facilitator: Pat Tallarico

Note Taker: Joi Adams

Key Themes & Issues

- Specifications in RFPs are often outdated and are not well coordinated with the needs of the end user.
- Access to COs is mixed; some COs welcome engagement, while others do not.
- Design/Build packages include non-building requirements. This means there is a significant markup on things such as security and Information Technology (IT) systems that have little to do with the construction process.
- Suppliers often don't hear responses to RFI submissions, which make them less likely to respond to future RFIs.
- Best Value isn't well defined, and it does not appear as if VA is making decisions on best value – they typically go with lowest cost.
- Modifications are slow, and there is a disconnect between contracts and technical staff. This makes it harder for Suppliers to justify the need for a modification, especially when it requires additional funds.
- The closeout process is unclear and not consistent. Suppliers did not know that VA used the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) to evaluate supplier performance.

- Acquisitions are inconsistent across VA.

Recommendations

- VA should get more input from industry before issuing an RFP, especially on highly technical procurements.
- Have more bidders conferences, and make sure they include COs and technical staff.
- Develop a process for resolving issues that impact performance payments.
- Make better use of the CPARS system to reduce the burden on Suppliers to provide past performance information.

Breakout: Medical Equipment

Room: Beacon C

Facilitator: Paul Cooper

Note Taker: Dan Palcic

Key Themes & Issues

- VA is using FedBid to solicit multiple bids that they then ignore.
- GSA 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 modifications are getting worse.
- Delays: Everything takes too long!
- New employees are doing better with training, but existing COs do not seem to improve.

Recommendations

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

Breakout: Healthcare

Room: Beacon G

Facilitator: Doug Black

Note Taker: Megan Dunn

Key Themes & Issues

- There is a lack of communication and clarity between COs, CORs, Suppliers, and end users.
- The status of funding is not known, or there is a lack of funding at the time of award.
- RFQs have too many reference clauses and request unnecessary information that hurt small businesses' ability to respond in a timely manner.
- There is little management of frequent VA personnel turnover.

Recommendations

- Be more open to communicating with Suppliers, ending the 'protective/defensive' communication culture.
- Encourage early Supplier involvement in the acquisition process; ask for Suppliers' input when developing requirements.

- Increase responsiveness; mandate that COs call us back and answer our questions within a certain amount of time.
- Implement the proposed Supplier Help Desk and an Ombudsman.
- If a requirement is not funded, do not put it out for bid.

VA Café

The purpose of the VA Café is to provide participants with a well-organized opportunity to raise any issues or questions they may have with VA leadership in a conversational environment. Participants were free to move around the room to pre-assigned topic tables to share their questions or comments on that topic. The five topics included:

- Strategic Acquisition Center / Strategic Sourcing Questions
- SAO East and VISN 1 Contracting Programs & Questions
- FSS
- Acquisition Policy Questions

Brief highlights and detailed notes of what was discussed for each topic are included below.

Topic: Strategic Acquisition Center (SAC) & Strategic Sourcing Questions

VA Representatives:

- Tona Braithwaite, Director of the Logistics Policy and Supply Chain Management Service / VA Office of Logistics and Supply Chain Management
- Regina McGregor, Procurement Resource Manager, Strategic Acquisition Center (SAC)
- Beth Davis, Contract Specialist, Strategic Acquisition Center (SAC)

Facilitator: Harold Gracey

Note Taker: Tarryn Reddy

Ms. Braithwaite: There are a number of VHA commodity departments that are newly stood up. We are working with them to get their ideas on strategic sourcing. Then our department develops business cases so that there is sound reasoning behind their ideas. Once this is done we then work with SAC to implement the ideas. Our goal is to be better stewards with our money and decrease the risks of our Suppliers and give them actual data on what we're spending and why we decided to do strategic buys on certain things. We are even looking at enterprise-wide initiatives. It does a number of things. It causes the supply chain to be a lot more efficient.

An example in the past: Vendors would ask for BPAs on a contract. Everybody would ask for BPAs, but it made more sense to do them in the beginning with the enterprise-level so we know what we will expect to spend and eliminates the risk. SAC would have national contracts.

Supplier: What type of products?

Ms. Braithwaite: SAC concentrates on medical surgical items such as, hospital beds, sutures, etc. Also light bulbs, cleaning supplies, etc.

Ms. Davis: We are not doing IT items. Anything IT related will have to go through Technology Acquisition Center (TAC). Electronic items only if they touch the patient.

Supplier: Some of the branches have developed strategic sourcing initiatives on furniture.

Ms. Braithwaite: We are currently working on a business case on furniture; this would be an enterprise-wide strategic sourcing contract that would touch the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

Supplier: Will this include standardized specifications? It seems a little fragmented at the moment.

Ms. Braithwaite: We think we can save a lot of money by standardizing and putting contracts in place instead of local facilities purchasing their own supplies.

Supplier: Have you started anything with durable items?

Ms. Braithwaite: Yes, we are doing business cases on those.

Ms. McGregor: We are doing the business cases to see where the highest money is being spent and then we'll decide which vehicle will work best to acquire the items.

Supplier: If you do an enterprise-wide contract, such as one that includes three different Constant Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) vendors. What's the final product that will go out to industry to bid on?

Ms. McGregor: We start with an RFI and that's how we determine which business side we are looking at. It is really important to respond to the RFIs. If it's on a GSA schedule we might decide to do tier pricing.

Supplier: Once you do your analysis when and how will it go out to industry so we know when to bid on it?

Ms. McGregor: If it ends up on GSA, the rules will be different with advertising. We do look at the GSA library to see what is currently out there.

Supplier: It sounds like the objective is to get things more standard and have fewer Suppliers. Are you trying to model after the Denver purchasing facility?

Ms. McGregor: Not sure if we are trying to model after Denver. Hospitals and medical centers are working with vendors to get discounts of GSA. We are trying to look at national contracts that would be the best fit. So get one vendor to give us the best price on an item and we would guarantee that we would order a certain amount.

Supplier: Denver evaluates products and then narrows it down to three to four vendors, as opposed to NAC's approach, which is more of an open market. These are two different approaches.

Ms. Braithwaite: Let us look at strategic sourcing. We do business cases so that we can determine which strategy is the best. Sometimes it is best to procure from 45 vendors and narrow it down for a better price. Then it may be tier pricing that we ask for. There is not one strategy we look at.

Supplier: The NAC and the Denver Acquisition and Logistics Center (DALC) are not going away. This will be more of a commodity base – that is a blend of the two approaches.

Ms. Braithwaite: So what often happens is vendors will come to VISN and offer them a better price because multiple VISN's are using their products. We want to use this kind of strategy at the national level.

Supplier: How does this square with small business objectives?

Ms. Braithwaite: For example, one company can have seven BPAs; it makes more sense to have one BPA that three or four companies have with numerous supplies. So Number One, we are not managing all these different BPAs for a single item. As far as staff at medical centers, they would not need to buy one item at a time from different vendors. Hopefully, we end up getting in to a win-win situation where vendors will not have to put in all this paperwork for one item.

Supplier: What are you doing for medical staffing bids? COs are putting out bids for staff, but they do not understand what the doctors are actually looking for.

Ms. Braithwaite: The NAC is developing locum tenens positions. We are working closely with VHA on the process. We have also put together some templates for the customers to assist them in what they need and get a better package.

Topic: SAO East and VISN 1 Contracting Programs & Questions

VA Representatives:

- David Fitzgerald – Director SAO East
- Fran Callaghan – VISN 1 NCM

- Dena Kist – Deputy Network Contracts Manager
- Susan Taylor – Deputy Chief Procurement Officer
- Norbert Doyle – VHA Chief Procurement and Logistics Officer
- Mary Connors – Quality and Compliance Officer, Contracting

Facilitator: Paul Cooper

Note Taker: Dan Palcic

Supplier: In VISN 1, my company has a BPA on some of the equipment they offer. We have been running around from office to office within VISN 1, but no one can produce documentation about the BPA. Our company has had the contract for 10 years, and cannot get our hands on the documents. The CO will not talk to us and keeps giving us the runaround.

Mr. Callaghan: This is in regard to wheelchair ramps, and VA has heard this before. If there is a mandatory BPA, VA is not aware of it. VA will issue a notice in the next several months when the contract is up for competition. Everyone is going to have warrants.

Mr. Fitzgerald: VA knows there are issues when it comes to customer relations management, and we are addressing them. VA shares this frustration and understands the runaround is all too common in government bureaucracies.

Supplier: Our company is an SDVOSB whose first federal contract was with VA. We were charged with designing a landfill in North Hampton, and when the design was under review from EPA, VA sole sourced us for \$930,000; however, we requested an equitable adjustment for \$1.3M. I was given the runaround and eventually threatened to litigate. I was told by the CO that if I had not been a Veteran, we would not have gotten the contract in the first place. We are still out \$28,000. I am happy to see that the process is changing, but people at certain levels needs to improve. Forums like these are a step in the right direction.

Mr. Callaghan: This highlights many concerns, mainly whether it was properly solicited. VA must ensure everything we do is in full compliance of the law. If you do have a concern with one of VISN 1's COs, I will follow up with them and get their side of the story.

Ms. Kist: It sounds like it was not solicited properly. The general counsel may have to get involved.

Supplier: If you have won a 5-year RFP, and it takes a while to get a new one out, how many times can you get a 6-month contract? Then, what happens?

Ms. Kist: Once. Then it either expires or gets re-solicited. It cannot go any further after 6 months. If services are still performed with price extension, it is called a ratification, which continues the service but without a contract. It is continued in good faith, but I caution all contractors NOT to do this. Call the CO or COR and ask what is going on. Be diligent, or you'll assume the risk.

Mr. Fitzgerald: If anyone is performing at risk, please let us know. This can happen if there are life and death situations, but you want to quickly resolve these and get the proper paperwork set. Without a contract, you really do not have a legal obligation to be there, and if the CO is making you wait to get paid, this is not good.

Mr. Doyle: The process of getting paid for at-risk work is painful and a lot of work is involved. The process is time consuming, and is exactly the same no matter what the dollar amount.

Supplier: We are seeing the same requirements for our product at multiple VISNs, though one VISN says our product works there, while another says it does not. Why not look at a broad RFI that looks at a nationwide license and save on VA's return on investment? Is there anyone looking at the overall cost savings to VA and how VA is doing things on a large scale?

Mr. Fitzgerald: VA has acquisition centers and is looking at some national buys. VA is starting to look at strategic sourcing. It is the way we need to go.

Supplier: Is your organizational structure available as a link on the VA website?

Mr. Fitzgerald: We are working to develop a more robust website.

Topic: FSS

VA Representatives: Craig Robinson

Facilitator: John Condon

Note Taker: Ben Rebach

VA Action Items

- VA should look at timelines and see if 24-48 hour price reductions are possible for approved, vetted items.
- Craig Robinson will see if there is a limit to the number of modifications per month.
(Reply to: Paula Sollazzo, Government Contracts Administrator, Philips Healthcare – 978-659-4278, paula.sallazzo@philips.com)

Supplier: Is it feasible to arrange 24-48 hour price reductions on approved, vetted items?

Mr. Robinson: I cannot speak to timeliness, but we do have a system for 'fast-tracking' different modifications. VA will look at timelines and see what we can do.

Supplier: Is there a limit to the number of modifications per month?

Mr. Robinson: I will find out. We are working to shave time, reduce Procurement Acquisition Lead Time (PALT), and find if this is an issue of manpower or a process issue.

Supplier: Is there a timeframe for the initial process from submission to award which does not trigger an audit?

Mr. Robinson: Six Months (180 days) is the average.

Supplier: What is the contract preference?

Mr. Robinson: The typical contract hierarchy is FSS first (including BPAs) leveraged against FSS, then regional contracts, then open-market contracts.

Topic: Acquisition Policy Questions

VA Representatives: Jan Frye and Norbert Doyle

Facilitator: Doug Black

Note Taker: Megan Dunn

VA Action Items

Supplier: Please tell us more about FedBid.

Mr. Frye: FedBid is a managed network. If you are not in the network, and VA is using FedBid, you cannot bid on the work. VA wants to do reverse auctions internally in the future.

Supplier: As an SDVOSB, can we sub our work out to someone who does have the certification, and still be accredited the SDVO set aside?

Mr. Frye: As long as you are doing at least 51 percent of the work. The prime contractor must have the certification.

Ask the VA: Question and Answer Session

The question and answer session began with a few selected questions that emerged from the breakout sessions. After these selected questions, participants were encouraged to ask additional questions.

Questions were answered by a panel of Jan Frye, Deputy Assistant Secretary, OAL; Norbert Doyle, VHA Chief Procurement and Logistics Officer; Tom Burgess, Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Logistics and Supply Chain Management; Tom Leney, Executive Director of OSDBU; Susan Taylor, Deputy Chief Procurement Officer for

the VHA Procurement and Logistics Office; Felton Jones, Director, VBA Acquisition Staff; and Dave Fitzgerald, Director SAO East. The session was moderated by Pat Tallarico.

Question: How do you escalate a problem issue? Why is the process of submitting modifications on FSS contracts so complicated?

Mr. Frye: Funding will come soon and we are going to stand up an ombudsman through whom you can voice your concerns. We hope that you will get a response within 24 hours. We want to treat people the best way possible and take care of everyone. Until then, please work with your CO.

Ms. Taylor: If you are not getting through, reach out to your boss and have him reach out to the CO.

Mr Doyle: People email me with their problems, and then I move it down the chain and try to find out what is going on.

Mr. Frye: We know that you cannot find a complete organizational chart. We are working on getting that together so you can understand the organization, and understand what is going on.

Mr. Leney: OSDBU gets a number calls. All too often and it elevates up to me and then I have to work with COs. People want them to fix the problem, but then feel discouraged to say anything to COs. One, be sure you are able to separate the process problem from a CO problem. And you have to stand up and be able to be accountable. If it is a process issue, COs have been good about working out the problem. People are afraid of being blackballed.

Mr. Fitzgerald: We are happy to field calls from you. We have three to five key issues that you have mentioned.

Question: What determines which contracts are flagged for the set-aside percentages, currently at 3 percent for Service-Disabled Veterans?

Mr. Leney: More than 150,000 SDVOSBs work with OSDBU and work with small business offices through integrator processing teams. We do market research, and then the company can provide pricing. Then we determine the set-aside. We go down the GSA schedules list and try to use a contract that is already in place. We have been working on putting together national contracts.

Question: What is the VA's current policy for FedBid? Is it a requirement? What is the threshold?

Mr. Frye: COs are required to consider a reverse auction. If they do not use it they have to say why. The answer is it is not mandated. Sixty-four percent of the work that goes through FedBid goes to small business.

Question: How can a vendor present a new idea and get a contract out of it?

Mr. Burgess: VAI2 is a platform we have used in the past to submit ideas. We understand using RFIs requires trust and faith in the process, and trust in us with your ideas. It is a risk.

Question: How likely would it be to get unsolicited proposals?

Mr. Frye: At the Small Business Conference, I talked with small business owners; I took their cards and tried to connect them with the proper decision makers at VA.

Mr. Leney: You need to separate something that is new from something that is new to the government. The reality is the VA is not a "bleeding edge" or even a "leading edge" organization by any dimension. Government organizations are risk adverse. You need to try your idea on the commercial market and then try to sell it to VA once you have proved it works.

Mr. Dolye: Think about developing the contract at the regional level. Read the instructions and follow them and do not be afraid to answer the questions. It is better to ask the question than miss the question on the test. You need to make sure all the technical factors and requirements questions are answered. You need to have the people that will match for what is being requested, and show they have relevant past performance on past work. Your responses must be geared to the RFP! There is no need to answer technical requirements before you assemble the right team and people.

Mr. Burgess: For the IT acquisition center, we have often Suppliers submitting draft RFPs. The government then does its due diligence and has a private meeting with bidders. Get honest answers from customers and they can decide if they want to accept the risk.

Mr. Leney: Now most contract offices are risk adverse, so it's unlikely they will meet with you. It takes leadership to get COs to open up. You need to have realistic expectations about what people are able to do. You need to take opportunities like the Small Business Conference in Detroit to meet with COs.

Mr. Fitzgerald: Vendor fairs with COs are a great way to meet the contracting community and acquisition officers. Just to give you an idea, within the SAO East we had over \$482 million in actions last year, 920 personnel and \$5.3 billion in obligations."

Question: *Where can we go to find a publication of products that you sell, use as research, or do a cost estimate?*

Mr. Leney: The Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS) (www.FPDS.gov) has all the information. The small business assistance offices can give you a brief tutorial.

Question: *Why are security and fire alarms not part of contracting process?*

Mr. Frye: Several years ago, VA consolidated all of its IT. We now have 160 contracting officers assisted by 50 more people. We strategically source all IT services.

Question: *How is the VA using open source innovations? The Federal Government is utilizing the open source software. Is there any way the VA is able to embrace these innovations?*

Mr. Frye: Platforms like VAI2 architecture brings great value. How can companies provide this technology? I agree these innovations are of great value. You will need to contact IT.

Question: *Is the VA considering pre-solicitation planning meetings, and laying out the requirements for the year?*

Mr. Frye: Contractors are so caught up in just stocking the products. They are not using prime vendors to restock and they are not paying the lowest price. We are working on compliance and trying to encourage more use of this.

Supplier: Those order limits are not defined by contracts; they are defined by what products people are ordering in local places. There needs to an opportunity to share ideas without retribution. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) does an annual census for what they will need for the next year, and it gives a heads-up to small business if they are going to use a small business. Is it at all possible to find the right hard targets and spend less money chasing contracts?

Mr. Leney: Advance planning modules can provide you with data so that it feeds into a contracting opportunity and to the public. There are requirements management systems on the OSDDBU website, www.Vetbiz.gov

Mr Dolye: This only addresses new procurements. The old items will not show up.

Mr. Leney: These items are not everything, but it is a great place to start. No agency is able to forecast with any accuracy; we are relying on COs for requirements. That said, FPDS is a tremendous forecasting tool and tells you when contracts end. This will give you one year to get past the awareness and obstacles.

Question: *How will VA share business opportunities for construction as they will be building fewer facilities?*

Mr. Frye: Within VHA there are leasing clinics relating to contracts valued less than \$10 million. Major contracts (over \$10 million) are available on FedBizOpps.

Question: *Is your acquisition academy using Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting Program (FAC-C)? Are the lawyers going to the Academy?*

Mr. Frye: We put a plan together to pay over 60 lawyers that work on contracts. We need to certify acquisition officers in FAC-C and FAC Project Management Professional (PMP). We are putting up training at VAAA. We are giving

Program Managers IT training. We hope to take our entire acquisition workforce to volunteer to be part of the acquisition COR. Then we want to send these people out to manage Program Managers.

Mr. Doyle: Programmatic issue: 1585 program managers should improve the requirements that COs are sending out. We are trying to improve our customer service abilities through training, cost analysis, distance learning. We have spent \$34 million on the Program Manager training.

Survey Responses

Participants were encouraged to participate in a survey at the beginning of the session to identify where they stood in terms of key relationship indicators. These results were then combined with results from the national supplier perception survey and presented to the audience. The presentation that contained these results may be found on the SRM Web site, <http://www.va.gov/oal/business/srt/srtForums.asp>.

Appendix A: Agenda

Time	Event
8:00 am	Registration
8:30 am	Welcome and Introduction
8:35 am	SRM Update
9:10 am	OSDBU Update
9:30 am	Participant Survey
9:45 am	Break
10:00 am	Facilitated Breakout Session
11:45 am	Optional Networking Lunch for Participants
1:00 pm	VA Café
1:45 pm	Break
2:30 pm	Ask the VA
3:30 pm	Break
3:45 pm	Survey Results Report Out to Participants
4:00 pm	Afternoon Survey
4:15	Winding Down
4:30	Adjourn

Appendix B: Attendees

Last Name	First Name	Organization or Agency
Antonelli	Joyce	Mission Search USA
Arnold	Patrick	Gordon Industries Inc. DBA Amramp
Auth	Marcia	Steelcase Inc
Bays	Patrick	ADDEN
Beuttler	Silvia	Phillips Healthcare
Bittle	Dave	Advanced Environmental Solutions, Inc
Braithwaite	Tona	VA
Callaghan	Fran	Department of Veterans Affairs/Veterans Health Administration
Capers	Robert	CFM
Cochran	Rick	Mobile Medical International Corporation
Connors	Mary	Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration
Conroy	Brian J.	Office of Information and Technology, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Conroy	Kathleen	Office of Information and Technology, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Davis	Beth	Department of Veterans Affairs
Donati	Peter	ABCO HVAC and Solutions
Donovan	Marge	Corflex
Doyle	Norbert	Department of Veterans Affairs
Fanrlli	Raymond	Veteran Homestead Inc.
Fava Jr	Albert	WORK Inc
Finnegan	Kathleen	Centerspan LLC
Finnegan	Edward	Centerspan LLC
Fitzgerald	David	SAO East-Dept of Veterans Affairs
Fox	Robert	Medical Monofilament
Frye	Jan	VA
Grant	Robert	NeopostUSA
Griffin	Jan	Pine Street Inn, Inc
Hanson	William	Liberating Technologies, Inc
Hardiman	Thomas	Medical Monofilament
Harris	Richard	Northeast Supply LLC

Last Name	First Name	Organization or Agency
Horan	Michelle	W. B. Mason Co., Inc
Howell	Robert	Ben Taylor Company
Jay	Randy	Access Distributors, Inc
Jones	Denise	
Jones	Felton	Department of Veterans Affairs
Kenny	Patrick	P&O LLC
Kloeckener	Sharon	Eaton Corporation
Leney	Tom	VA
MacKinlay	William	The Task Force Inc
Mayes	Tommy	Coram Specialty Infusion Services
McGregor	Regina	OAO/SAC Fredericksburg, VA
McKee	Robert	ETEX Corporation
McNeil	Casey	
Mee	Brenda	New York City Industries for the Blind, Inc.
Meehan	Jonathan	Corflex
Mizell	Troy	AvKare
Molinari	Anthony	Foresight Imaging
Munroe	Mark	Mobile Medical International Corporation
Nizowaty	Gigi	
Ovale	Ralph	Vantage Burglar Alarm Corp.
Patel	Tanmay	Neopost New England
Payne	Stephen	
Picard	Bill	Advanced Environmental Solutions, Inc
Pierce	Nathan	Shanix Technology
Reinhard	Naomi	Mobile Medical International Corporation
Resosky	James	
Rice	David	Dewberry Engineers, Inc
Robinson	Craig	FSS/NAC
Sachdev	Anupam	Indus Systems Inc Affiliation
Slawter	Andrew	M Squared Strategies, Inc
Simpson	Sandy	Coram HealthCare

Last Name	First Name	Organization or Agency
Sollazzo	Paula	Phillips Healthcare
Taylor	Susan	VHA
Taylor	Remona	Bosma Enterprises
Teta	Jim	W. B. Mason Co., Inc.
Volino	Don	Shanix Technology
Walker	Miles	
Wertman	Alaina	Gordon Industries Inc. DBA Amramp

Appendix C: Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
APBI	Advanced Planning Briefings for Industry
BPA	Blanket Purchase Agreement
CFM	Construction and Facilities Management
CO	Contracting Officer
COR	Contract Officer's Representative
CPAP	Constant Positive Airway Pressure
CPARS	Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System
CS	Contract Specialist
CVE	Center for Veterans Enterprise
DALC	Denver Acquisition and Logistics Center
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DoD	Department of Defense
DOI	Department of Interior
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FAC-C	Federal Acquisition Certification Contracting
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
FSS	Federal Supply Schedule
FY	Fiscal Year
GSA	General Services Administration
HCA	Head of Contracting Activities
IAG	VA Industry Advisory Group
IDIQ	Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity
IT	Information Technology
NAC	National Acquisition Center
NCA	National Cemetery Administration
NISH	National Institute for the Severely Handicapped
OAL	Office of Acquisition and Logistics
OALC	Office of Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction
OAQ	Office of Acquisition Operations
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
OSDBU	Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
PALT	Procurement Acquisition Lead Time
PMP	Project Management Professional
POC	Point of Contact
PTAC	Procurement Technical Acquisition Centers
RFI	Request for Information
RFP	Request for Proposals
RFQ	Request for Quote

Acronym	Definition
SAO	Service Area Organization
SDVOSB	Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business
SES	Senior Executive Service
SOW	Statement of Work
SPC	Senior Procurement Council
SPS	Supplier Perception Survey
SRM	Supplier Relationship Management
TAC	Technology Acquisition Center
TCO	Total Cost of Ownership
TRM	Technical Reference Model
USACE	United States Army Core of Engineers
VA	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
VA CARES	VA Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services
VASH	Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing
VAAA	VA Acquisitions Academy
VBA	Veterans Benefits Administration
VOSB	Veteran-Owned Small-Business
VHA	Veterans Health Administration
VISN	Veterans Integrated Service Networks