



Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Supplier Relationship Management

Regional Forum – Denver, CO
March 6, 2012





Management – Horace Tabor Room

Key Issues

1. What is the role of procurement? Is it to prevent or enable purchasing and VA's ability to meet its mission?
2. Confusion about when to use VETS First vs FSS
3. Lack of standardization of acquisition process, policy, training and tools across VA.
4. Communication between Industry and VA needs to improve with acquisition forecasts, strategy, requirements, contract vehicles and which acquisition offices do what type of contracting



Management – Horace Tabor Room

Recommendations

1. Define enterprise-wide strategy and mission of procurement.
Procurement needs to enable VA to meet its mission
 - Strategy must go down to tactical and execution level
 - Apply across VA, including standardized tools, policies, training and processes
 - Air Force and Army Corp of Engineers cited as using best practices
2. Clarify when VETS First should be used verses FSS
3. Leverage supplier communication best practices:
 - FBO
 - Industry Days
 - One-on-One meetings



Medical Equipment – Molly Brown

Key Issues

- Lack of Consistency across Contracting Officers and VA facilities/ VISNs
- Lack of awareness among purchasers about key purchasing requirements
- SDVOB requirements/certification process/set asides
- Confusion about the role of OIG in procurement process
- Timing for modifications and contract awards are still long
- Still unclear whether/how VA considers TCO
- Still difficult to find out about new opportunities



Medical Equipment – Molly Brown

Recommendations

- VA should do a better job of monitoring BPA utilization
- VA should exercise more authority over VHA activities
- Develop better process for forecasting opportunities



IT Management and Broadcasting – Larimer Room

Key Issues

- Inconsistent and overworked VA staff
- See poor choices in contract vehicles, apparently for convenience
- Process issues affect the cost of doing business
 - Bidding, Submitting, and Responding to RFPs which get cancelled
 - Leadership and political changes change or cancel projects
 - Budget pressure and appropriations problems affect projects
 - All this cost is passed on to clients eventually



IT Management and Broadcasting – Larimer Room

Key Issues

- Trouble contacting VA staff
 - Email is typically better than phone
 - VA feedback, review, and approval is often not forthcoming.



IT Management and Broadcasting – Larimer Room

Recommendations

- Put a hard deadline on the RFP Question & Answer period, so as to not push back all the other milestones for the RFP
- Improve publicity for APBIs and Industry Days
- Improve content in APBIs and Industry Days; Suppliers have not found enough value in the events as is
- VA should provide a list of deliverables at kickoff.
 - Currently we provide a list of deliverables to VA, which is backwards.



Healthcare & Drugs – Cook

Key Issues

- Suppliers see two “VAs:” Program Office and Contracting Office. They see limited communication between these two entities, and often the two often have different goals and needs.
- Suppliers are concerned with the SDVO certification process
 - They see themselves as being evaluated for capability rather than socio-economic status.
- Suppliers recognize a conflict between various laws, mandates, executive orders, and existing business relationships.
- Suppliers feel that E-Buy forces them to “play a game within a game”
 - Prices must be negotiated two separate times.



Healthcare & Drugs – Cook

Recommendations

- VA needs to commit to relationships with suppliers from the top down.
- Make changes to the price negotiation approach, particularly regarding schedule purchases and E-Buy.
- Contracting Offices and Program Offices must remain in regular communication throughout the procurement process (from requirement identification to contract closeout)
- Make the evaluation criteria for the Contracting Workforce transparent. Include input from Program Offices as criteria if this is not already considered.



Building/Construction/Engineering Group – Tabor Auditorium

Key Issues

- Contracting Officers lack understanding of what businesses experience and their challenges.
- The SDVOB verification process isn't transparent, takes too long, and doesn't have a reasonable appeals process.
- Contract awards take too long and are sometimes cancelled without an explanation.
- VA seems to prioritize price over value.



Building/Construction/Engineering Group – Tabor Auditorium

Recommendations

- Create an internship to give procurement staff private industry experience.
- Establish a standard length of time between proposal submission and award of contract.
- Scale the RFP requirements to the size and complexity of the project.
- More training for procurement staff in project management.
- Better define who makes decisions.