

Transcript of Questions from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Supplier Relationship Management Webinar

Submitted Questions Detail (Q-Question, A-Answer)

Q) The FY 2010 VA Service Contract Inventory is a very useful and user friendly tool. The FY 2011 Inventory eliminated two very important characteristics: specifically, it eliminated all of the worksheets, which were previously organized very effectively by PSC Code, and secondly, it eliminated the drop-down auto-filter capability which was also a very helpful tool. Please update the 2011 inventory to include those features, as it is almost unmanageable in their absence.

A) Office of Acquisition and Logistics (OAL)/Office of Policy, Systems, and Oversight (OPSO): Here are the step by step instructions to filter the information. The following steps will allow for "drop down auto-filter capability":

- 1) Go to the following link: <http://www.va.gov/oal/library/scalInventory.asp>
- 2) Under the heading of Fiscal Year 2011, select the document titled, "SCA Inventory"
- 3) Once the Excel spreadsheet is opened, click in the top left corner box of the spreadsheet, between the "1" and "A"
- 4) The entire spreadsheet should now be highlighted
- 5) On the "Home " tab, access the "Editing" tool bar
- 6) Click on the "Sort and Filter" button
- 7) Scroll down and click on the "Filter" button
- 8) Drop down, auto-filter capability should now be enabled for each of the data columns within the SCI Sample
- 9) A single left mouse click on any of the downward facing arrow boxes in the lower right corner of an individual data column will now enable the Sort/Filter function

Q) The presenters had little or no mention regarding companies that are minority, woman, hubzone, and 8(a) certified. Is the VA planning to increase procurement requirement for companies that have those certifications?

A) National Cemetery Administration (NCA): NCA is always trying to target those companies, and consistently meets the Secretary's goals for our Administration.

Q) Hello, thank you for sharing your time today. How are contractual disputes resolved when the end-user and the related VISN are non-responsive? Is there a chain of command that can be suggested or perhaps some names that can be shared?

A) OAL/OPSO: Always work with the contracting officer (CO). If there is an impasse, COs will render a final decision and the contractor can appeal to the Civilian Board of Contract Appeals. In rendering a final decision, COs will give contractors their appeal rights.

Q) Our schedule number is 736 "temporary administrative staffing", we provide court reporting services, why is there not a specific category for those type of legal services? We are not office staff, we are legal service providers for courts, hearings and depositions? Thank you

A) OAL/National Acquisition Center (NAC): Your question references a Federal Supply Schedule number not managed by VA. Please contact the General Services Administration as it has program responsibility for any questions relating to the types of services mentioned in your question.

Q) Is there a point of contact for payments not received due to procurement of funds issues or other reasons?

A) OAL/OPSO: Please check with the CO for that particular contract. They should be able to give status on payments.

Q) Besides FedBizOps, is there any other website where VA posts bids for woman owned small business set asides?

A) OAL/OPSO: All solicitations over \$25,000 must be posted on FedBizOps.

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Q) There has been a moratorium on the purchase by VA for any RFID system since 2009. This includes Patient safety systems. There is currently an RFP VA118A-12-RP-0118 for RTLS limited to a single technology WI-FI which has never been proven to be able to provide patient safety systems. Our technology based upon 433 MHz has provided patient and staff safety systems at large VA campuses since 2002. The RFP does not currently include patient safety and at the same time VA campuses cannot purchase a proven system because of the moratorium.

A) Office of Acquisition Operations: As part of VA Management Initiatives, VA is directly addressing a desire to advance clinical and administrative efficiencies through the implementation of Real-Time Location Systems (RTLS) throughout the Department (Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, and NCA). Patient and Staff tracking (which includes requirements for safety) is one of many applications that will be included in the RTLS suite of products. VA facilities will have the option to procure applications that satisfy patient and staff safety requirements under the contract solicited by RFP VA118A-12-RP-0118, which is expected to be awarded in June 2012. VA has chosen to retain the moratorium on individual purchases until that time; however, the Department continues to address issues of urgent nature related to staff or patient safety purchases as they arise.

VA has chosen to deploy RTLS technology using an enterprise approach with a standardized database, user interface, and infrastructure. VA has chosen to use RTLS technologies that utilize an 802.11 infrastructure and allow for supplemental technologies (Ultrasound, Infrared, 433MHz, etc) to be used in conjunction with 802.11 to meet all VA requirements. The reasoning behind the inherent focus on 802.11 technologies for this procurement is that the Department is currently in the process of upgrading its wireless infrastructure which will provide all VA facilities with extensive networking infrastructure to facilitate RTLS, along with wireless data communication of laptops and medical devices on a single network. By leveraging an existing 802.11 installed network, VA is able to minimize the need for additional installation costs and implementation of a separate networking backbone.

Incorporation of patient and staff tracking, for enhancing Patient and Staff Safety, is not negatively impacted by the use of an 802.11 RTLS solution. Technology advancements have greatly improved the ability, for said tracking mechanisms, to occur with an 802.11 RTLS solution. Extensive market analysis has been conducted on RTLS technologies to establish a strong, long-term, framework for this initiative.

Q) What do we do if we believe that an RFP is "fixed" directed at one company. The RFP does not call for best value by allowing for best technology

A) NAC: You should first contact the contracting officer if you believe that a specification or requirement is restrictive thereby limiting competition. The question of whether a best value acquisition should be done to leverage best technology depends on the commodity and the defined needs of the user community. If you don't feel that you get an adequate response or are unsatisfied with the response you have the opportunity to protest as identified in Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 33 – Disputes.

Q) Contracting officer has outside/satellite offices that are not inspected nor are they open during required days as spelled out in contract. How is this remedied?

A) OAL/OPSO: Contractors should contact the CO by phone or e-mail if offices appear to be closed. They should reach out to Contracting Officer Representatives as well.

Q) The Procurement Lawyer states that, "A big part of the problem with the verification process is that the CVE is now too quick to deny applications." It further states that, "a fair share of firms have been denied because the CVE overlooked portions of its rules or applied the rules in overly restrictive, impractical, and non-business friendly ways." What, if anything is being done to correct this ongoing problem?"

A) Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU): In addition to our normal Quality Review process which reviews 10% of all cases, we have a review process in place which is administered by a different examiner. We also utilize the Office of General Council to do a final review.

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Q) I am an emerging small business. My employees are almost all veterans. I have a real opportunity to help our young men and women veterans to help them get employed and potentially take ownership of these services. While the idea to support service disabled vets and vets is great does anybody really think these returning young men and women will be able to start and operate a small business. This is highly unlikely but I can train them to do so. Is there a mentoring program available so this goal can be accomplished?

A) OSDBU: The Department of Labor provides assistance to all Veterans with employment services through the VETS program. VETS proudly serves Veterans and service members, provides resources and expertise to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities, and protect their employment rights. To learn more about the VETS program, please visit the following Web site:

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/>

