



Questions and Answers

Straight Talk, Straight Answers: Tiered Evaluations

June 20, 2018

1. Will the slides be made available following today's session?

Slides for the presentation can be found on the VA OSDBU website at <https://www.va.gov/OSDBU/acquisition/tiered-evaluations-town-hall.asp>.

2. Where do we find a copy of the VA Tiered Evaluations Policy Memo?

A copy of the VA Procurement Policy Memorandum (PPM) 2018-04, Guidance and Procedures regarding use of Tiered Evaluations (Cascading) for use in solicitations set-aside in accordance with the VA Rule of Two can be found online at: <https://www.va.gov/oal/docs/business/pps/ppm201804.pdf>.

3. While not the subject of this Straight Answers session, could you please provide an update on VA VECTOR?

The Veteran Enterprise Contracting for Transformation and Operational Readiness (VECTOR) is currently under protest before the Government Accountability Office (GAO), which means VECTOR is under a stay of performance until the protest is decided. The GAO decision is due in October 2018, which is the beginning of FY 2019. This means we will likely continue to be on hold for this contract until the next fiscal year.

4. Is this for Supplies only, or does it apply to Construction bids?

The tiered evaluation process may be used in all VA procurements regardless of industry. Usage is not mandatory.

5. Now that we have our CVE SDVOSB certification who do we call on? It is very difficult to find these buyers. I've asked officials at the VA Minnesota Hospital and they don't know who the buyers are. Why can't the VA compile a national directory of contact names?

There are multiple members of the acquisition team, responsible for making purchases for VA. Program offices develop requirements based on their needs, and pass that information on to contracting officers, who execute the purchase of the required items and services. There are many thousands of people involved in the

purchasing of goods and services for VA, and they change daily. Publishing a list of all requirements generator's or contracting officials would be impractical, as the list would be obsolete before it was even published online. It is recommended that you perform some research on what organization or activity would purchase your goods or services, and contact the appropriate small business point of contact to help identify individual program staff. Additionally, VA has outreach events, industry days, and the [National Veterans Small Business Engagement \(NVSBE\)](#) to assist Veteran-Owned Small Businesses meet with procurement decision makers. You can obtain the names of small business professionals from the VA OSDDBU website at <https://www.va.gov/osdbu/about/contacts.asp>. VA OSDDBU also provides a toolkit that includes a calendar of events that can be accessed at: <https://www.va.gov/osdbu/outreach/soc/index.asp>.

6. In my area, when dealing with the county, vendors have asked what is the budget for a particular solicitation. Can that be asked to the contracting officer?

It would be more appropriate to ask the requiring activity what the budget would be for their programs and requirements in the planning stage. When doing an outreach event (direct access event), or industry day, program offices will provide general information on what their budget is and what requirements they might have. Once the requirement is developed and submitted to contracting for execution, cost estimates will not be discussed, as that will release procurement sensitive data, and could potentially provide information that gives one vendor a competitive advantage over another.

7. How do tiered evaluations improve delays in the procurement process?

Tiered evaluations will eliminate the need for VA to put out the same solicitation multiple times. With tiered evaluations, we can now go on to the next tier down before we are required to put out a solicitation again.

8. Have you (VA) experienced any difficulties with implementation of the tiered evaluation process?

The tiered evaluation process is slowly proliferating through the contracting community. The PPM has only been out for just over four months. It's too early to determine if there are any problems with the approach, and the methodology right now. VA OSDDBU will continue to review the usage of the evaluation methodology and analyze data to determine its effect on the Veteran, small business, and large business community. VA OSDDBU is currently evaluating the utilization of tiered evaluation and the effect on the procurement review process, to ensure maximum consideration of Veteran owned and other small businesses, consistent with sound business practices.