

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU)
Market Research Concept Search Workshop
Date: August 22, 2018
Time: 9:00 am – 1:00 pm
Location: 801 I St, NW, Washington, DC 20001, Room 1222

Summary:

On August 22, 2018, a workshop to gather information on concept search capabilities to improve market research procedures and processes at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was conducted by the VA Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU). Members of the small business community shared their thoughts and ideas about how VA might go about implementing a pilot Concept Search Program for VA contracting and acquisition staff. The workshop feedback would be used to aid VA with determination of prospective reasonable outcomes, logistics, and timelines associated with the development of a functional and effective pilot program.

Participants		
Dr. Aaron Aldridge ALEX- Alternative Experts, LLC	Nolan Pollack Foundry AI	Kathleen Martin VA OSDBU
Jeff O'Connell ALEX- Alternative Experts, LLC	Marc Goldschmitt Goldschmitt & Associates	Yiping Osser VA OSDBU
Killian Hemmy ATSG Corporation	Matthew Tiani iTechAG	Joy Pilpel VA OSDBU
Patrick McCollum ATSG Corporation	Dan Quinn PTFS	Michele Prince VA OSDBU
Patrick O'Hearn Brain Space	Khushbu Amin VA OSDBU	Michelle Smith VA OSDBU
Josh Carr Distributed Solutions, Inc. (DSI)	John Fedkenheuer VA OSDBU	Dr. Linda Williams VA OSDBU
Joan Walden Distributed Solutions, Inc. (DSI)	Thomas "Tom" J. Leney VA OSDBU	
Ashok Mehan Fedmine	Chien –Chih Lin VA OSDBU	

I. Welcome and Introduction (VA OSDBU)

- a. Participants of the workshop were welcomed to the meeting by Thomas J. Leney, Executive Director, VA Small and Veteran Business Programs and were invited to provide short self-introductions (to include their names and organizations) to the group.
- b. Mr. Leney reviewed the purpose for today's meeting which was for VA to gather insight on the current concept search capabilities of the small business community and understand appropriate parameters and expectations for implementation of a VA Concept Search Pilot Program.

II. Concept Search Industry Workshop Presentation (VA OSDBU)

- a. Mr. Leney spoke on current issues in the VA market research process that preclude the Agency from enacting good market research efficiently and effectively.
- b. VA's proposed solution to address concerns with the problems experienced throughout the market research process is to develop a VA Enterprise Wide Market Research Toolkit that will enable VA Program Managers, Contracting Officers, and Small Business Vendors to benefit from the tool's capabilities.
- c. An effective concept search tool will enable access for VA Program Managers to previous requirements which will in turn allow them to build actionable packages for procurements more efficiently.
- d. Participants discussed practicality of proposed initial use cases, parameters and reasonable expectations for outputs, data sources, data formats, analytical capabilities, data access and storage, prospective costs, and length of a pilot concept search program.
- e. A VA Path to Capability timeline was shared with participants.

III. Discussion

- a. *The Concept Search Statement of Objectives (SOO)*
 - i. Search results should include a list of rank order artifacts based on conceptual relevance to a supplied synopsis, paragraph or performance work statement.
 - ii. The data set used should be consistent along with dynamic capabilities.
 - iii. Include a detailed list of outputs sought.
 - iv. Provide a description of those who should be given access and permissions needed.
 - v. Provide description of queries that would be needed;
 - vi. Provide list requirements that link back to data sources.

- vii. The CS tool should allow for filters (i.e. North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), set-asides, period of performance, award deadlines, and field (structure data).
 - viii. The tool needs to allow cut and paste capabilities.
 - ix. The tool needs to be able to demonstrate the ability to interrogate different data sources and let users know where data came from.
 - x. The tool needs to have a categorization capability.
 - xi. The vendor needs to develop and provide training for the tool to include a training web site with link to site in tool.
- b. Use Case Scenarios*
- i. Use Case 1 should lead to conclusion on who can help VA reach its end goal and handle size, scope, and complexity of project while also developing an effective algorithm to determine and assign appropriate scores.
 - ii. Use Case 2 should include vendor profile information and URLs to web site, artifact categorization, identification of data sources (internal and external) with link back to source.
- c. Data Sources*
- i. All VA procurement data, Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS) information, FedBizOpps information, Electronic Contract Management System (ECMS) data, and General Services Administration (GSA) data are among the internal and external data sources that should be part of the concept search capability.
- d. Possible Challenges*
- i. Industry vocabulary can differ from organization to organization and over time.
- e. Reasonable Expectations*
- i. Website and video search
 - ii. Visual display of relationships
 - iii. Index for FedBizOpps
- f. Pilot Logistics*
- i. Ensure access for all Program Managers

IV. Parking Lot

- a. Find out what restricted data sets exist and what will require VA authorization for access.
- b. Research if a VA ontology is currently available.
- c. Search for previously conducted research/scholarly material on concept search tools for government, if available.

V. Next Steps

- a. Draft Statement of Objectives (SOO).
- b. VA will schedule demos with firms. (Aug/Sep2018)
- c. Perform pilot. (Sep 2018)