



Department of State Acquisition Priorities

Strengthening Mission Outcomes in U.S. Foreign Policy



The Assistant Secretary for Administration & Chief Acquisition Officer with the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Acquisition & Senior Procurement Executive are pleased to announce our current acquisition priorities at the Department of State. We believe continuous investment in the acquisition program at the Department of State is paramount to strengthen mission outcomes in U.S. foreign policy. Both government and industry have shared equities in the success of the acquisition program and together we strive to deliver maximum value for taxpayer dollars. These priorities represent strategic efforts to guide the Department of State acquisition program for the short and medium term.



1. Foster a climate that encourages competition and supplier diversity with emphasis on the construction portfolio (e.g. large embassy and consulate building and infrastructure projects) and the diplomatic security portfolio (e.g. local guard programs).

Encouraging a diverse industrial base in support of the Department's overall acquisition program is essential to drive price competitiveness and innovation. Removing barriers and undertaking efforts to increase competition reduces risk in delivering on our mission by augmenting capacity in the marketplace and achieving budget flexibility. The Department will make a concerted effort to bolster industry outreach so industry and government can learn about the unique aspects and constraints of doing business overseas and structure requirements accordingly through informed dialogue with industry and effective internal cross-collaboration in a way that maximizes participation from interested parties.



2.

Support the industrial base by innovating acquisition planning and reducing the usage of interim contracting solutions for services that extend periods of performance.

Interim contracting solutions that extend the life of service contracts beyond their original periods of performance are sometimes necessary to achieve quality procurement outcomes. However, contract extensions usually result in the Department of State paying more long-term for services, while missing out on the benefits of new advancements in the marketplace. The Department is working to achieve a significant shift in how we do business and to better partner with our industrial base. Action items include the implementation of a methodical approach for acquisition planning to build appropriate acquisition strategies and set realistic milestones

well in advance of contract expirations; the use of formal Integrated Project Teams to keep procurements on schedule and guide successful source selections; and, delivering appropriate stakeholder governance to monitor the Department's largest and most complex major acquisitions. ★ ★ ★



3.

Foster quality pre-award procurement activity and post-award contract administration to maximize return on investment for taxpayer dollars through discretionary spending.

Focused attention is required in both pre-award and post-award environments to realize better outcomes for the Department's outsourced capability needs. Greater emphasis on the acquisition strategy phase of the procurement life cycle is a must. Negotiation needs to be prioritized by Contracting Officers to ensure Department of State customers are receiving maximum benefit for program budgets. Contractor performance must be monitored and assessed more closely and timely to ensure contracts are staying within established cost and schedule baselines and to promptly address contract problem areas and support industry partners as they attempt to leverage successful past performance to bid on future work.



The Department of State can achieve an overall improvement in contract administration supported by the use of clean and actionable procurement data to inform enterprise decision-making and ensure that contract files are up to date with regulatory requirements. Delivering on our investment in a new and proactive Quality Assurance Program, better procurement planning to create milestone flexibility allowing for discussions with offerors in accordance with acquisition strategies, and stronger collaboration between Contracting Officers and their respective Contracting Officer Representatives is essential for advancing better procurement outcomes. ★ ★ ★



Maximize the capacity and prowess of the Acquisition Workforce and build an Acquisition Community of Practice across the enterprise.

As the Department of State's overall acquisition program continues to grow in spend and complexity and the federal regulatory environment becomes increasingly more fluid, it is necessary to invest in the line of business to keep pace and provide outstanding mission support. Increasing the number of procurement professionals that do operational contracting, execute policy, and perform support functions with a commensurate increase in the number of

trained and qualified Contracting Officer Representatives to perform contractor surveillance and assist with contract administration is vital to success.

Program management must also be reinforced as a critical discipline with a significant increase in the number of certified and qualified Program Managers leading acquisition programs across the Department and dedicated support offerings that enable them to do their jobs effectively.

In addition, the structure of the contracting function at the Department of State must evolve to meet growing demands, strive for frictionless procurement, adopt more standardized procurement processes, leverage the Department's buying power while supporting small and disadvantaged business concerns, and create new and sustainable talent pipelines for the mission-critical Acquisition Workforce. ★ ★ ★



Promote an innovative procurement culture centered on enhancing the Acquisition Experience for customers, practitioners, and stakeholders using alternative approaches and cognitive tools.

Executing the business of government through federal acquisition requires constant agility to keep pace with market trends. To attract the best talent and



lower barriers to entry for the supplier base, the Department needs to adopt a dynamic approach to procurement that gives our practitioners flexibility to ideate and incentivizes industry to offer optimal solutions to meet the needs of the Department.

The acquisition program should place the collective experience of all parties involved at the forefront of process and policy improvements, and new tools and techniques should be designed to reduce friction, automate rote procedures and tasks to preserve human intelligence for more valuable knowledge work, and take the totality and quality of touchpoints into consideration as a means of executing the goals and objectives outlined in the Department's Acquisition Experience framework.

While the Department will continue to pursue legislative authorities that offer flexibility, new innovative procurement techniques should also be developed and piloted in applicable settings. For example, Contracting Officers should look for unique ways to scale best practice approaches of prototyping capability by creating solicitations with new methodologies like Question-Based Requirements (QBRs) that streamline the Statement of Work in the form of problem statements and open-ended questions by task area to allow industry maximum latitude to

propose truly innovative solutions. Other examples include the use of Challenges, expanded use of modular contracting, or having design sessions and co-creation events early in the lifecycle of a program to ensure requirements are jointly created with Industry to ensure optimal solutions can be acquired, and continually looking for opportunities to improve outcomes and mission performance.

New tools and capabilities leveraging emerging technology platforms (e.g., artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotic process automation, blockchain, etc.) must also be developed which can integrate into existing technology platforms to support Program Managers, Contracting Officers, and Contracting Officer Representatives in all phases of contract formulation and administration. ★ ★ ★

