

Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations PDF Playbook

Version 1.2



Welcome to the Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations (PTAI) PDF Playbook. This document aims to replicate the PTAI website, found here: <https://acquisitiongateway.gsa.gov/periodic-table>.

The purpose of this document is to allow the user to have access to all the material found on the website, but with enhanced functionality. This enhanced functionality is outlined below with special attention paid to the **search functionality**.

Benefits

- This allows the user to navigate the content and transfer back and forth between techniques more seamlessly.
- As a physical document, you can use **Ctrl+F** to search for key words found within the document to include the text behind each technique.
- The document opens, just as the website does, in the **Acquisition Techniques** view. Simply click on the **Acquisition Automations** button in the top left corner in order to open that playbook view.
- All documents found on the website are included in this document, which allows for an enhanced search functionality. The website does not allow for a key word search within its document library.

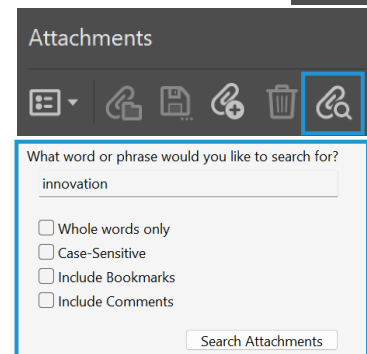
To do an enhanced search of key words within all document attachments

1. Download the pdf file and open it from Adobe Acrobat

2. Click the attachments icon on the right-hand pane



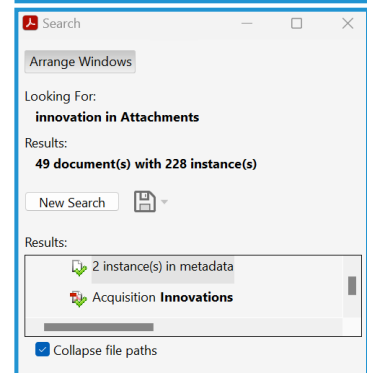
3. Click the magnifying glass over the attachments icon



4. Input your keyword search or phrase and click 'Search Attachments'

5. View the Results and click the down arrow next to a document to find the lines/pages within the document

6. Click on that line from the document and the attachment will open to that spot with your key word or phrase highlighted for visibility



Here is a sample result when searching for "innovation".

Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations

The government-wide acquisition knowledge management portal for innovative business practices and technologies.

Acquisition Techniques

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Commercial Solutions Opening

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Innovation Title

Category



The 'Small Business' identification is applied to those practices that either reduce the administrative burden of small business participants or increase the participation rate of small businesses within the government procurement process.

FAR

Non-FAR

FAR and Non-FAR

These icons indicate if the innovation is only available for procurements following the FAR, not following the FAR, or available for both.

Alternative Authorities

Statutory authorities not included in the FAR.

Market Research

Strengthening communication and increasing transparency between industry and government during acquisition planning.

Solicitation

Methods when building the solicitation for effective contract formation and administration.

Evaluation

Techniques for identifying the best possible solution from industry while making the evaluation process more effective.

Award

Identifying the best industry solution given the evaluation criteria while shortening the time to award.

Post Award

Improving communication with offerors following contract award and improving better contractor performance.

About

The PTAI is a collaborative government-industry initiative, sponsored by the Chief Acquisition Officers (CAO) Council and supported by the contributions of federal agencies. The tool is designed to increase workforce and industry awareness of tested innovative business practices and technologies and encourage further testing, adoption and adaption of these techniques and technologies, as appropriate and consistent with agency policy, the FAR, and applicable law.

Acquisition techniques reflect business practices consistent with the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), unless noted otherwise. Acquisition automations use innovative technologies, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, natural language processing, and robotic process automation to reduce human intervention in processes or improve decision-making. The automations are provided as examples to encourage further experimentation and testing of existing automations, developing, and sharing of new automations across the acquisition lifecycle, and partnering on projects, which leverages limited resources. The acquisition techniques and automations on the PTAI have helped agencies achieve one or more of the following results: reduced barriers to entry, accelerated award, faster delivery, improved customer satisfaction, increased accuracy, saved or redirected labor hours, and/or cost avoidance.

Alternative Authorities

Statutory authorities not included in the FAR.

Commercial Solutions Opening

Non-FAR



Summary

Pilot authority for sourcing innovative commercial solutions. Can use both FAR and Non-FAR authorities.

Description

The Commercial Solutions Opening (CSO) is an authority for acquiring innovative and commercial solutions. Section 880 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017 (Pub. L. 114-328) authorized DHS and GSA to implement a pilot program to competitively procure innovative commercial items, technologies, and services using CSO procedures. This authority can be implemented as FAR or non-FAR based, the authority is silent on the direction.




Problems Solved

High barriers of entry and low incentives (in part due to onerous FAR terms and conditions) restrict non-traditional contractors from providing innovative solutions to the government.

Benefits of Use

- Streamlined acquisition process
- Simplified contract terms
- Attracts start-up companies and others who have not previously worked with U.S. Government
- Can be used as either FAR or non-FAR based
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Lowers the barrier for entry for non-traditional companies to do work with the U.S. Government by targeting innovative commercial products while not requiring the commercial FAR clauses innovation card. This prevents single users from creating duplicate responses. Information stored by cookies is used by FAI.gov only and not shared with any third parties

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Workforce Guide: GSA Procurement Innovation Resource Center CSO Guide](#)
- [Workforce Guide: DIUx Commercial Solutions Opening: How to Guide](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS CSOP CBP LASO](#)
- [Solicitation: DHS CSOP CPARS AI](#)
-  [Workforce Guide: DHS CSOP Guide](#)

Related Cards: [Other Transactions](#)

Joint Venture Partnership

Non-FAR

Summary

Authority targeting innovative companies, academia, and non-profits to solve complex government data challenges. Agencies use an interagency agreement with DOC's NTIS.

Description

The National Technical Information Service's (NTIS) joint venture partnership authority, within the Department of Commerce, leverages leading, innovative companies, academia, and non-profits to help solve complex data challenges within the federal government. Agencies can leverage this authority by entering into an interagency agreement with NTIS.



Problems Solved

Complex data challenges focusing on critical mission priorities using applied data science innovations in areas such as artificial intelligence, machine learning and predictive analytics.

Benefits of Use

- Provides agencies quick access to the NTIS authority.
- Facilitates identification of the problem to be solved.
- Delivers innovative solutions through collaboration with vetted stakeholders.
- Accelerates results through the use of Agile methodologies.

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Vignettes: DOC NTIS Program Outcomes](#)
-  [Success Stories: DOC NTIS Capability Statement & Short Stories](#)
- [Website: DOC NTIS Partner with Us](#)

Related Cards: [Other Transactions](#)

Other Transactions

Non-FAR

Summary

Non-FAR authority sanctioning commercial business practices for research, prototype, and limited production efforts.

Description

Other Transaction (OT) authorities were created to give DoD the flexibility necessary to adopt and incorporate business practices that reflect commercial industry standards and best practices into its award instruments. As of the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) Section 815, the DoD currently has permanent authority to award OT under (10 U.S.C. 2371) for (1) Research, (2) Prototype, and (3) Production Purposes. 11 other agencies have OT authority -including DHS and NASA.


Problems Solved

Allows for rapid procurement from non-traditional contractors without FAR-based competition

Benefits of Use

- Rapid procurement
- Non-FAR competition
- Iterative prototyping reduces risk and cost
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Focuses on reducing barriers for non-traditional or new entrant small business contractors participating to a significant extent

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Workforce Guide: DOD Other Transaction \(OT\) Guide](#)
- [Website: DHS Streamlined OT Procedures for S&T Silicon Valley Innovation Program](#)
- [Website: DARPA OT Samples & Resources](#)

Related Cards

- [Broad Agency Announcement](#)
- [Commercial Solutions Opening](#)
- [Joint Venture Partnership](#)

Prize Competitions

Non-FAR



Summary

Industry competes to solve difficult problems when money, prestige or access is up for grabs.

Description

The America COMPETES Reauthorization Act, Public Law 111-358, is available to all federal agencies and invites ideas and solutions through crowdsourcing. Prize competitions are useful when ingenuity, flexibility, and collaboration are desired and other government contract instruments are not likely to attract sufficiently innovative solutions. Prize competitions are successful at attracting individuals, small disadvantaged businesses and nontraditional contractors. Prize competitions are not suited for routine services or well understood requirements.

Problems Solved


Collects ideas and solutions from the public and encourages cross-sector collaboration to respond to ideation, design, and visualization problems. Applicable problem sets can arise from the business, data analytics, ideation, design, scientific, technology, software, and information technology sectors. Prizes can be monetary (above \$1M cash prize with Head of Agency approval only) and non-monetary in nature (e.g., recognition, ability to participate in follow-on actions).

Benefits of Use

- Establishes an ambitious goal and pays only for success without having to predict which team or approach is most likely to succeed
- Reduces barriers to participation in an agile process, starting small with the ability to scale
- Better aligns risk/reward profiles with the way advanced technology industries seek compensation and profit
- Increases opportunities for crowdsourcing and participation for cross-functional teams to deliver creative solutions to agency needs
- Encourages partnerships and citizen-solvers to innovatively solve problems with breakthrough solutions
- Federal agencies create partnerships with other agencies and organizations (nonprofit and for-profit) and bring in expertise to (i) inform a prize “ask,” (ii) think through evaluation criteria, (iii) judge submissions, (iv) serve as mentors to solvers, and (v) broaden communication channels
- Reduces innovators’ burden of intellectual property ownership requirements; allows government flexibility with regard to ownership of solutions.

- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Entrepreneurs and small businesses wishing to participate in federal procurement have the opportunity to gain experience with a challenge.

Use Case and Documentation

- [Website: Challenge.gov Toolkit](#)
-  [Authorizing Legislation: America COMPETES Reauthorization Act](#)
- [Case Study: Digital Service Contracting Professional Training and Development Program - Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\)](#)
- [Case Study: DHS TSA Passenger Screening Algorithm Challenge](#)
- [Case Study: DHS InnoPrize Program Prize Challenges](#)
- [Website: US Army's xTech Search COVID-19 Ventilator Challenge](#)

Related Cards

- [Challenge-Based Acquisitions \(ChBA\)](#)
- [Commercial Solutions Opening](#)
- [Other Transactions](#)

Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Phase I-II Competitions

FAR and Non-FAR



Summary

Competitive procedures both link small businesses with government requirements and facilitate commercialization of innovative technology.

Description

The Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program is a three-phased competitive awards-based program that enables small businesses to explore their technological potential and provides the incentive to profit from its commercialization of Research/Research and Development (R/R&D) efforts.

- **Phase I** establishes the technical merit, feasibility, and commercial potential of the proposed R/R&D efforts. During this phase, the awards are capped at \$250,000 ceiling and has a maximum duration of six (6) months.
- **Phase II** continues the Phase I effort and demonstrates the scientific and technical merit of the R/R&D effort and its commercial potential. During this phase, the awards are capped at \$1,000,000 ceiling and have a maximum duration of two (2) years.
- **Phase III** is for the small business to pursue commercialization objectives resulting from the Phase I/II efforts. During this phase work may be for products, production, services, R/R&D, or any combination thereof. The work does not have any SBIR related restrictions on the value funded, duration or size of small business performing the work. See *SBIR Phase III Sole Source Awards card in the PTAI for additional details*.

Phase I and II awards can only be made by participating agencies listed [here](#). Any agency, including non-SBIR agencies, can issue a Phase III award described in the “SBIR Phase III Sole Source Awards” card.

Problems Solved

Encourages domestic small businesses to engage in Federal R/R&D that has the potential for commercialization.

Benefits of Use

- By including qualified small businesses in the nations R&D arena, high-tech innovation is stimulated, and the United States advances entrepreneurial spirit as it meets its specific research and development needs
- By acquiring or further developing products and services developed under SBIR awards, the products and services leverage prior R/R&D and expedite the process to meet new Federal requirements

- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Increases opportunities for small businesses to develop and bring their products to market, thereby strengthening the small business industrial base

Use Case and Documentation

- [Website: About SBIR](#)
- [Website: SBIR Resources for Federal Agencies](#)
- [Website: SBIR Participating Agencies](#)
- [Website: DHS SBIR](#)
- [Website: GSA SBIR](#)
- [Website: Army SBIR](#)
- [Website: Defense SBIR](#)
- [!\[\]\(31b03e46ee8a80a1f1467b8c03bd76e8_img.jpg\) Workforce Guide: NASA SBIR](#)
- [Video: NASA Between Two FARS Episode 24 : The 1, 2, 3's of SBIR Contracting](#)
- [Success Stories: NASA SBIR Success Stories](#)

Related Cards

- [Broad Agency Announcement](#)
- [Commercial Solutions Opening](#)
- [Small Business Innovation Research \(SBIR\) Phase III Sole Source Awards](#)

Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Phase III Sole Source Award

FAR and Non-FAR



Summary

Sole-source awards without further written justification to leverage the results of SBIR Phase I and II investments.

Description

Small Business Innovation (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) Phase III awards provide a rapid and agile approach for all federal agencies to leverage the Research/Research & Development (R/R&D) investments made through competitive SBIR/ STTR Phase I and/or II awards. Agencies are authorized, to the greatest extent practicable, to make awards to SBIR/ STTR Program participants for work that derives from, extends, or completes efforts made under either a prior SBIR or STTR Phase I or Phase II funding agreement.

The following are examples of the types of activities that constitute SBIR Phase III work:

- Commercial application including R/R&D, testing and evaluation of services or technologies.
- SBIR-derived commercial or modified commercial products or services intended for use by the Federal Government.
- Continuation of Phase I or Phase II SBIR work.

See “Use Case and Documentation” for specific agency applications.

Problems Solved

- Provides for the rapid procurement of the production and/or delivery of products, and/or services stemming from SBIR/STTR investments.
- Provides options for acquisition programs to adapt or further develop previously developed internal or cross agency technology.
- Reduces duplication of effort, building on previous investment.
- Offers opportunity to cross-pollinate or develop lateral applications of innovative technologies into new markets.
- Enables “bridging the gap” between R&D and commercialization.
- Reduces pre-award administrative effort and award development time.




Benefits of Use

SBIR/STTR Phase III awards can increase efficiency and deliver value and savings to agencies and their R/R&D programs by leveraging the Government’s R/R&D investment

in previous SBIR Phase I and/or Phase II efforts. This also maximizes the return on investment made through the SBIR/STTR programs.

- **Flexible and rapid access to promising R&D investments**
 - Any agency, including non-SBIR agencies, can issue a Phase III award.
 - Awards can be based on either a SBIR/STTR Phase I or II award.
 - There is no limit on number, duration, contract type, or dollar value of Phase III awards, and there is no time limit by which a Phase III award must be made following a Phase I or Phase II award.
 - Agency is not required to execute a sole source justification under FAR Part 6 or publicize a planned or executed sole source award under FAR Part 5 if the award is issued under the authority of 15 U.S. Code § 638(r)(4).
 - Phase III awards may be issued to other-than-small businesses.
- **Reduced technical risk and delivery time**
 - Proof of concept is already established.
 - Prototype or working model may have been developed.
 - Testing and evaluation is likely to have been accomplished.
 - Adaptions to an existing system or component can reduce development effort.
 - Incremental improvements to address key performance parameters can yield alternative and/or cheaper innovative solutions.
- **Small Business Benefit**
 - Reduces barriers to entry helping disadvantaged, woman owned, and other small businesses concerns (SBC) become established sources for the Federal government.
 - Provides capital to help SBC's "bridge the gap" between R&D and the commercial marketplace.
 - Expands marketplace options to SBCs.

Use Case and Documentation

- [Example of work "derived" from prior SBIR phase: NOAA Uncrewed Tools to Improve Hurricane Forecast Models](#)
-  [Example of work that "extends" a prior SBIR phase: DOE Electric Vehicle Spinoff](#)
-  [Example of work that "completes" a prior SBIR phase: DOE sensing technology for rapid response inspections](#)
- [Success Stories: DOE - SBIR Phase III Success Stories](#)
- [Success Stories: DOT - SBIR Phase III Advanced Fatigue Modeling for Individual Differences](#)
-  [Success Stories: DHS Success Stories](#)
- [Success Stories: NOAA Phase III Commercialization](#)
- [Success Stories: SBIR.gov Success Stories \(Includes both Phase II and III Guides and](#)

material)

- [Video: NASA SBIR Phase III](#)
- [!\[\]\(2824aab9645d9fab95bae27ff6828dab_img.jpg\) Guide: NASA Phase III Guidelines](#)
- [!\[\]\(0fbf3ad74a6c8dc44ba9ea17fc2aca5e_img.jpg\) Guide: Air Force Phase III Desk Reference](#)
- [!\[\]\(c42d0234b47eca423823087b9f2f5716_img.jpg\) Guide: Navy Phase III Guidebook](#)
- [Guide: DHS SBIR Phase III Job Aid](#)
- [Guide: AFWERX Guides - Executing SBIR Phase III Contracts](#)
- [!\[\]\(0a4e27b70a7e12aa1778c291185d94b0_img.jpg\) Policy: GAO Decision \(August 28, 2020\) ASRC Federal Data Network Technologies, LLC \(File B-418765\)](#)

Related Cards

- [Broad Agency Announcement](#)
- [Commercial Solutions Opening](#)

Market Research

Strengthening communication and increasing transparency between industry and government during acquisition planning.

Affordability

FAR



Summary

Early disclosure of quality government cost estimates provide for better alignment of industry capabilities and government requirements.

Description

Independent Government Cost Estimates (IGCEs) are often developed during the procurement process and drive many decisions in the federal acquisition strategy even when they are done poorly. To take some of gamesmanship out of the buying process, consider releasing the Government's "affordability."






Problems Solved

Here is sample Affordability text to include in solicitations: OFFER AFFORDABILITY
The Government seeks offers (or quotes) with a total price less than \$10M. Offerors (or quoters) should not interpret this figure as a ceiling (or as a floor) on offers; rather, this information is provided as a courtesy to prospective offerors. The Government may select an offer for award with a price below, at, or exceeding this figure if it finds that offer provides the best value and funds are available.

Benefits of Use

- Having robust IGCEs or providing the Government's "affordability" helps level the playing field, removes some of the inherent incumbent advantages, ensures a more competitive or realistic pool of offerors, and makes the process more efficient
- Increases transparency
- Aligns proposals with real requirements
- Increases cost realism
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Helps ensure small businesses understand the anticipated magnitude of each effort so they can decide whether to invest significant bid and proposal costs

Use Case and Documentation

- [Workforce Guide: USDS' Agile Team Estimator](#)
-  [Workforce Guide: FAI Independent Government Cost Estimate](#)
- [Workforce Guide: DOI Independent Government Cost Estimate](#)
-  [GAO Report: GAO-17-398](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS USCIS myUSCIS Request for Proposal \(RFP, pg. 56\)](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS CBP TASPDP Request for Quote \(RFQ\), pg. 134](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS USCIS QISD Fair Opportunity Notice \(FON\), pg. 46](#)

- [Video: PILCast Episode # 7 Affordability](#)

Related Cards: [Self Scoring Model](#)

Facilitated Requirements Development Workshop

FAR and Non-FAR

Summary

Facilitation of a multi-functional integrated project team through the performance-based acquisition process.

Description

A facilitated requirements development workshop is a collaborative engagement where the integrated project team planning for a specific acquisition spends a block of time together, with other stakeholders as well as a facilitator/coach, working through various aspects of the requirement. The facilitator/coach walks the team through development of the project vision/mission, high-level objectives, performance requirements and performance-based strategies for the agency project and implementation roadmap.

DOD manages the Services Acquisition Workshop (SAW) program and GSA manages the Civilian Services Acquisition Workshop (CSAW) program, including train-the-trainer opportunities. Modeled after the CSAWs, the DHS Procurement Innovation Lab (PIL) facilitates PIL Acquisition Workshops (PAWS).

In a workshop, the facilitator enables the team to effectively arrive at consensus on key decision points for the project's requirement and resulting acquisition. These workshops are typically conducted very early in market research. PAWs, which may be as short as one day or as long as one week, are workshops dedicated to discussing and finalizing the market research, finalizing requirements development, and formulating procurement strategies. The SAW and CSAW workshops (no cost to federal customers) typically take a full week or two with the team. Workshops have been effectively used for professional, human resources, information technology, construction, and medical services acquisitions. Additionally, workshops have been used for manufacturing challenges as well as for policy development. Federal Agencies can implement facilitated requirements development workshops within their organization, and it can be done virtually or in-person.

Problems Solved





- Workshops enable easier adoption of performance-based acquisition (see FAR 2.101) steps.
- Facilitated workshops can help teams develop more precise and concise requirements.
- The workshops force teams to work together, in smaller teams and in a group setting, through the development process. Siloed functional roles can lead to suboptimized requirements development that fails to reflect an organized demand signal.
- Decisions are not continually delayed for another meeting down the road, they can

happen within the workshop which will streamline the procurement process.

Benefits of Use

- Enhanced awareness of best practices in market research, requirements writing, and source selection--all tailored to the specific needs of the team, the project, and the acquisition.
- Effective collaboration of integrated project teams
- Better defined requirements and acquisition strategies
- Reduced procurement administrative lead times
- Improved project management and better performance outcomes
- Increased stakeholder buy-in in the end product
- Increased engagement with end users and industry, improving the overall requirements and procurement process
- A high-level roadmap to accomplish the project

Use Case and Documentation

- [Video: CSAW overview](#)
- [Website: DoD SAW](#)
- [Website: About SBPA, CSAW](#)
- [Information: About the CSAW](#)
- [White Paper: CSAW](#)
-  [Success Stories: NASA Category Management CSAW](#)
-  [Process Map: CSAW](#)
-  [Presentation: DHS PIL Webinar #54 Charts](#)
-  [Yearbook: DHS PIL FY2021 \(page 25\)](#)

Related Cards: N/A

Interactive Q&A

FAR

Summary

Use of Q&A sessions allow for more fruitful exchange of information with vendors.

Description

Interactive sessions could clarify questions themselves, highlight issues RFPs, uncover unrealistic requirements and disseminate information to industry quickly without risking the acquisition schedule. These sessions can be virtual webinars, in person, or over the phone after the release of the draft solicitation and prior to the submission of Q&As.

Problems Solved

The traditional Q&A process, only done via email, provides answers to carefully crafted questions, as interpreted by the Government, this often leads to onerous follow-up questions, confusion, or both.

Benefits of Use

- Clear understanding of both questions and motivations
- Ability to ask follow-up questions quickly
- Rapid dissemination to industry without risking schedule

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Solicitation: DHS TSA Flexible Agile Scalable Teams \(FAST\), pg. 5](#)
-  [Pre-Submission Conference: DHS TSA Flexible Agile Scalable Teams \(FAST\)](#)

Related Cards: [One on Ones](#)

One on Ones

FAR

Summary

The government team meets individually with vendors.

Description

[Market research](#) must be conducted thoroughly to ensure the right strategies, industry participants, and process are established to conduct an efficient, robust competition. Prior to issuance of the solicitation, government officials -including the program manager, users, or contracting officer - should meet with potential offerors to exchange general information and conduct market research related to an acquisition. While meeting with potential offerors, there is no requirement that the meetings include all possible offerors, nor is there a prohibition on one-on-one meetings.




Problems Solved

Market research that is done purely with Requests for Information, or other purely written submissions may not result in enough information to thoroughly ensure all aspects of the requirements or evaluation strategy are well communicated with industry.

Benefits of Use

- Increased understanding of the Government requirements

Use Case and Documentation

- [Workforce Guide: USDS for agile acquisitions](#)
-  [Workforce Guide: DOD](#)
-  [Policy: OFPP myth-busting memo #3](#)
-  [Workforce Guide: Pilot IRS template](#)

Related Cards

- [Interactive Q&A](#)
- [Reverse Industry Day](#)

Reverse Industry Day

FAR

Summary

The industry presents its perspectives to the acquisition community.

Description

Industry presents its perspectives to the federal acquisition workforce.

Problems Solved

It is sometimes difficult to apply innovative procurement approaches to new requirements. Industry may be able to provide better procurement approaches, or at least their perspectives to the Government audiences.

Benefits of Use

- Agencies gain a better understanding of how procurements, processes, or innovative techniques are approached by industry
- Potential improvements to the acquisition process

Use Case and Documentation

- [Website: DHS RID](#)
-  [Examples: IRS Reverse Industry Day Materials](#)
- [Video: HHS CMS RID](#)

Related Cards: [One on Ones](#)

Solicitation

Methods when building the solicitation for effective contract formation and administration.

Betterment

FAR and Non-FAR

Summary

Proposal and Evaluation process to enable the government to evaluate the value of Betterment solutions and incorporate them into the resulting award.

Description

Betterment is a process where vendors have the opportunity, in a dedicated space in their quote or proposal, to outline specific aspects of their proposed solution that exceed or enhance the government's requirement and the value those aspects bring to the government. These Betterment promises are submitted as a stand-alone factor and are considered in the overall tradeoff analysis. These Betterment promises are captured and included in the awarded requirements document (award) replacing the former minimums of the original requirements document (solicitation). Example, an offeror proposes a definite promise of 600 actions per day with an explanation of the value impact it brings and how it can exceed the government's minimum document production of 400 actions a day.




Problems Solved

- Allows vendors to propose an enhanced solution and the government to evaluate and incorporate it into the award document, if selected for award.
- Allows vendors a dedicated space in the proposal submissions to identify how their unique approaches exceed or enhance the government's minimum requirement.

Benefits of Use

- With the Betterment technique, teams can include a separate evaluation factor to allow vendors a place to formally propose a solution that exceeds or enhances the government's requirement in a meaningful way.
- Increase successful outcomes of the work performed under the contract.

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Sample Evaluation: DHS USCIS TDPS Betterment Evaluation Report](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS USCIS TDPS Solicitation](#)
-  [Award Decision: DHS USCIS TDPS Award Decision](#)
- [Overview: DHS PILCast #13](#)

Broad Agency Announcement

FAR

Summary

Notice for scientific or research proposals which may lead to contracts.

Description

A Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) ([FAR 35.016](#)) is a notice from the government that requests scientific or research proposals from private firms concerning certain areas of interest to the government. The proposals submitted by the private firms may lead to contracts.

Problems Solved

Acquisition of basic and applied research and that part of development not related to the development of a specific system or hardware procurement

Benefits of Use

- Allows for funding of state-of-the-art advances without a specific programmatic requirement in place
- Similar to a regular BAA, DHS's Long-Range BAA covers a wide range of subjects and is short on details. This enables DHS to contemplate proposals for original research that fall outside the scope of its more narrowly defined BAAs

Use Case and Documentation

- [Website: DARPA BAA](#)
- [Website: USAF BAA](#)
- [Video: NASA Between Two FARS Broad Agency Announcements Part I](#)
- [Video: NASA Between Two FARS Broad Agency Announcements Part II](#)

Related Cards

- [Commercial Solutions Opening](#)
- [Small Business Innovation Research \(SBIR\) Phase I and II Competitions](#)

Challenge-Based Acquisitions (ChBA)

FAR and Non-FAR

Summary

Call for demonstrations in response to realistic scenarios. Can use both FAR and Non-FAR authorities.

Description

A Challenge-Based Acquisition (ChBA) presents a real-life challenge scenario inviting vendors to conduct technical demonstrations with the capability for the government to test or interact with the technology and select the challenge-proven solution with award to the best suited working prototype or functional automated solution. ChBA uses the Federal Acquisition Regulation or Other Transaction authorities and in both the pre-award and post-award phases.





Problems Solved

- ChBA uses challenges to communicate the needed capability, encourage innovation in a minimally prescriptive environment, assess candidate offerings, and ultimately purchase solutions in quantity.
- ChBA is especially appropriate in situations where the Government's need is urgent and time critical, where no traditional solution seems viable, or where emerging technologies have the potential to provide non-traditional solutions.

Benefits of Use

- Focus (encourages Government understanding of sought capability gaps)
- Innovation (communicates needs without constraining the solution space)
- Risk Management (understanding the range of solutions without a major commitment of resources)
- Verification (if you don't see it, you don't buy it, no more paper proposals only)
- Synergy (incentivizes industry participation and engages user community)
- Fairness (levels the playing field for small, innovative companies)
- Procurement (at the end, unlike prize competitions, you can buy the solution in quantity, not just the prototype)

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Innovative Contracting Case Studies \(Refer to pages 13-14 and 79-83 in the report](#)
- [Challenge-Based Acquisition Handbook 5th Edition](#)
-  [Case Study: JIEDDO Counter-IED Culvert Challenge](#)
-  [Case Study: Army Cyber Innovation Challenge Using OTA](#)
-  [Case Study: USDA's Farmers.gov Portal Development](#)

-  [Toolkit for Developing a Challenge/Demonstration](#)

Related Cards: [Technical Demonstrations](#)

Commercial Simplified Development Procedures

FAR



Summary

Technology development made easy.

Description

Reimagine use of Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subparts 12.6 and 13.5, to procure technology development services using commercial procedures. Acquisitions are marked by brief and goal-oriented requirement documents, short proposal times, multiple awardees and contracts with short periods of performance (base and option periods). Option periods are used as performance phases, where only successfully demonstrated solutions are carried forward.

Problems Solved

- Provides for government sponsored new development work without the need for Cost Reimbursable contracts and the challenges associated with traditional development programs.
- Maximizes flexibilities of traditional FAR procedures.
- Solicit commercial products and services without special authorities.

Benefits of Use

- Accelerates technology development for government-unique requirements
- Increases access to new entrants
- Accelerates time to award
- Decreases risk of incompatible technologies
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Improves opportunities for small businesses to obtain Government contracts through manageable commercial-style processes that focus on helping offerors engage with potential government customers, minimize administrative requirements, and maximize opportunities to demonstrate strengths

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Solicitation: Pilot IRS -Treasury-wide Data Governance and Analytics \(DGA\) Initiative](#)
-  [Solicitation: Pilot IRS -Data Mashing Initiative](#)

Related Cards

- [Commercial Solutions Opening](#)
- [Small Business Innovation Research \(SBIR\) Phase I and II Competitions](#)
- [Modular Contracting](#)

Discovery

FAR



Summary

In-depth requirements review and familiarization for offerors prior to delivery of final proposals.

Description

Government buyers often want prospective offerors to learn more about requirements before submission of full proposals. Discovery is like an in-depth site visit that allows interested sources to conduct due diligence. The government may provide a reading room and access to key requirement owners for direct exchanges with individual companies. In order to get the best possible proposals, the Discovery process takes the site visit concept and makes it more interactive, letting offerors ask specific questions. This is typically done after release of the final solicitation and before receipt of full proposals, possibly after phase 1 of a multi-phased procurement when the competitive pool has been reduced to only a few remaining offerors.

Problems Solved

- Reduces the often overwhelming advantage of incumbency.
- Incumbents typically have greater access and insight to close-at-hand information, such as the background of the mission, the environment, or the underlying government need.
- Awardee transition and ramp-up times are reduced due to better understanding of the work.

Benefits of Use

- Builds supplier diversity and resiliency by creating a more manageable playing field for competition
- A thorough understanding of the requirement results in more competitive and customer-responsive offerors from industry.
- Offerors can ask questions of the 'as is' landscape to better understand the scope and to better shape their final phase proposal submission.
- The government receives improved performance due to a better alignment of requirements and the selected offer.
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Allows new entrant small businesses to gain insight and a level of understanding about the requirement that would otherwise not be available

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Presentation Deck: DHS PIL Boot Camp Workbook Innovation Technique #9](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS USCG ISD Fair Opportunity Notice \(FON\) \(para 1.3.4 - P.6\)](#)
-  [Solicitation: DOI BSEE EITCS Request for Quotation \(RFQ\) \(para 4.2, P. 44 - 45\)](#)
- [Video: PILCast Episode # 26: Discovery Sessions for Services](#)

Related Cards

- [Interactive Q&A](#)
- [One on Ones](#)
- [Down-Selects](#)

Enhanced Contract Type Conversion

FAR

Summary

Flexibility to award the appropriate contract type at award with the possibility to convert the contract type during performance.

Description

This technique allows procurement teams to build flexibility into the solicitation to allow for future conversion from one contract type to another, such as from time-and-materials to firm-fixed-price, after award.

Consider this text in your next solicitation: “As appropriate, after award, Labor Hour/ Time & Material (T&M) contract line item numbers (CLINs) may be converted to Firm-Fixed Price (FFP) CLINs through mutual agreement of both parties, based on the rates (and labor categories) negotiated at the time of award.”

Possible clause to reference: **FAR 52.212-4(c), Contract Terms and Conditions – Commercial Items, Changes (Oct 2018)**

Problems Solved




- Allows procurement teams to award the most appropriate type of contract, at time of award, but convert to a more appropriate, less risky, type after enough historical performance data is known.
- Improves collaboration between the contracting office, program office, and the contractor. As appropriate, after award, CLINs may be converted through mutual agreement of both parties.
- Provides the flexibility to include optional CLINs for support that cannot be accurately priced before work commences. For example – an optional T&M CLIN can be converted to FFP when appropriate, such as when the work is more defined after performance or when funding becomes available.
- Allows flexibility when the program office is faced with budget constraints, such as in continuing resolutions. The team can convert CLINs to firm-fixed price when appropriate.

Benefits of Use

- Contract type can be converted during the life of the contract instead of waiting until the next competition.
- Allows for additional flexibility under hybrid-type contracts.

- Increase successful outcomes of the work being performed under the selected contract type. The government and contractor teams can build upon previous work and/or once knowns are more determined, finalizing pricing, within scope and within the awarded price estimation.
- Procurement teams can test a new contract type environment within scope during award.
- Allows the team to be more flexible in meeting the mission during continuing resolutions.

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Solicitation: DHS Financial Systems Modernization \(FSM\) Request for Proposal \(RFP\), pg. 57](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS Service Management Tool \(SMT\) and Support Services Request for Quote \(RFQ\), pg. 11](#)
-  [DHS Presentation: Enhanced Contract Type Conversion, 2021](#)
- [DHS PILCast #5 \(training video\)](#)

Related Cards: N/A

Fusion Procurements

FAR and Non-FAR

Summary

Technique to reduce the number of procurements and streamline the process by incorporating requirements into a single solicitation.

Description

This technique fuses or brings together multiple requirements into a single solicitation from what would normally be multiple separate solicitations for each specific requirement. The varying requirements could be the same, similar, or completely different documents combined into the single solicitation. Prior to issuing the solicitation, the acquisition team would determine the evaluation strategy for each requirement outlined. The team can use the same or different evaluation approach to evaluate responses to the solicitation for each requirement, as established in the single solicitation. After evaluations are complete, the contracting officer issues separate awards for each requirement to the respective successful offeror. The Fusion Procurements technique does not refer to the process of issuing a single solicitation for a multiple award contract or agreement.

Problems Solved





- The government can streamline the review process by submitting one solicitation package for review rather than multiple solicitation packages. This enables only needing one solicitation or acquisition strategy to be reviewed by legal advisors, solicitation review boards, or other reviewers such as source selection teams rather than multiple reviews.
- If teams keep the evaluation process the same for the multiple requirements, then all parties (government and industry) can get through the evaluation process more efficiently.

Benefits of Use

- Streamlines the review and approval processes for government teams.
- Provides teams a method to issue solicitations concurrently rather than separately.
- Streamlines the evaluation process for government and vendors when using the same evaluation criteria for each anticipated award on the solicitation.
- Streamlines buying for same or similar requirements.
- Supports portfolio management, regardless of scope, across programs or agency requirements.
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Includes multiple requirements into one solicitation,

thus reducing the probability of missing a requirement issued by the government and increasing strategic participation in the acquisition by the small business community.

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Solicitation: DHS CBP TASPDP Unrestricted RFQ](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS CBP TASPDP Small Business RFQ](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS ICE LEIDS RFP & PWS](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS TSA ATSS RFQ](#)
- [Webinar: PIL Webinar #64 – One Solicitation To Rule Them All](#)
- [Overview: DHS PILCast #16](#)

Related Cards: N/A

Highest Technically Rated Offeror with Reasonable Price (HTRO-RP)

FAR

Summary

The Highest Technically Rated Offeror with Reasonable Price (HTRO-RP) flips the script on what to prioritize when expediting selection decisions.

Description

This practice allows award to the highest technically rated offer that is also found to have a reasonable price without using trade-offs between cost or price and technical. This practice ranks or rates offerors according to technical factors following either the Self Scoring Model or a government technical evaluation. Price evaluation of only the highest ranked or rated offer proceeds next. Price reasonableness can be determined through various techniques such as benchmarking or statistical analysis (within one standard deviation of offeror distribution, for example). If the offeror's price is not determined to be fair and reasonable, the offer is rejected and the next highest ranked or rated offer is evaluated until award can be made to the highest ranked or rated offeror with a fair and reasonable price.

Agencies have successfully used this technique in FAR 15 and FAR 16.5 procurements. Not recommended for acquisitions where cost is a significant consideration. Also not recommended for FAR Part 8 actions because of statutory and regulatory requirement that best value determinations result in the lowest overall cost alternative (considering price, special features, administrative costs, etc.).

Problems Solved

- Promotes efficiency in acquisition through a streamlined selection decision, especially for knowledge based services where technical ability is of paramount concern to the point that cost is not used as a comparative discriminator among offerors.
- Allows technical capability to be prioritized over price and/or cost without requiring explicit trade-offs between technical and cost that are not likely to change the outcome.
- Ensures proposed pricing is more accurately associated with proposed quality of work.






Benefits of Use

- Simplifies the best value determination; provides a streamlined means to make

award to the highest technically rated offeror.

- Accelerates time to award. An agency reported an award time of 79 days after release of the solicitation compared to 268 days for a comparable procurement.

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Presentation Deck: AIA_USAF_HTRO-RRP.pdf](#)
-  [GAO decision: B-418796.pdf](#)
-  [Solicitation: USAID EPRR \(p. 82\).pdf](#)
-  [Solicitation: VA CEDAR IDIQ \(para E.8 on p. 109\)](#)
-  [GAO decision: B-413559.pdf](#)

Related Cards

- [Self Scoring Model](#)
- [Comparative Evaluation](#)

Modular Contracting

FAR



Summary

Break large contracts into several shorter-term, lower dollar procurements.

Description

Modular procurement is a procurement model that breaks what would traditionally be a large, monolithic contract into several shorter-term, lower dollar amount contracts. When combined with human-centered and agile practices, it can mean allowing those who use your services to use portions of the new software faster.


Problems Solved

As the government needs to more closely monitor the performance of smaller contracts, they can help remedy problems to avoid cost overlays and drawn out schedules. In contrast, the vast majority of larger projects are overbudget or failing

Benefits of Use

- Modular procurement makes it easier to manage software development by segmenting risk
- This acquisition strategy permits isolated failure in one unit of many units, rather than letting it impact the entire project
- Because each project is smaller, they are easier to comprehend and manage, making problems and risks smaller so you can recognize and resolve them more easily
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Smaller contracts provide small businesses more manageable opportunities better aligned with their capabilities

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Solicitation - DHS CWMD HAIBP Backpacks RFP](#)
- [Workforce Guide: GSA 18F - Managing Modular Contracts](#)

Related Cards

- [Down-Selects](#)

On/off ramp

FAR



Summary

Addition and removal of contractors on multiple-award contracts.

Description

This process allows for the Government to remove non-performing contractors, add new contractors during “open seasons”, etc. Too often multiple-award IDIQs or BPAs have contractors that are either not competing for work or require more competition in out years. Here the Government has the flexibility to address issues of performance and competition after the IDIQ or BPA has been awarded, not just prior to award.

Problems Solved

With long periods of performance, a multiple-award contract (MAC) may become less useful over time, reducing access to innovative, best-suited vendors who actively participate in the procurement process.

Benefits of Use

- Maintains access to the best solutions
- Incentivizes vendors to engage in the procurement process
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Gives small business offerors more opportunities to enter an agency’s supplier base by gaining a spot on the contract vehicle after initial competition and award rather than being ‘locked out’ of the market as a prime contractor for a number of years

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Job Aid: On and Off-ramp procedures for BPAs](#)
-  [Solicitation: GSA OASIS IDIQ RFP](#)
- [Announcement: HHS NIH CIOSP3 SB](#)

Related Cards

- [Down-Selects](#)
- [Modular Contracting](#)

Rates Only for Pricing Evaluations (ROPE)

FAR



Summary

Streamline pricing by asking vendors to submit their best hourly rates, then apply the rates to a Government developed estimate, in hours, for each labor category

Description

The Rates Only for Pricing Evaluations (ROPE) methodology alleviates the burden on vendors submitting complex pricing submissions and on contracting officers when evaluating these submissions as part of establishing an indefinite-delivery indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contract or blanket purchase agreement (BPA).

Prior to the issuance of the solicitation, the Government creates a realistic estimated number of hours or a scenario of the labor categories or CLINs to evaluate pricing. In contrast to typical practice, the Government does not share the number of hours with the vendors. Instead, the Government asks vendors to submit only the rates, for the price submission factor, of the requested labor categories for the parent award, using the same scenario or estimate for all price evaluations. The submitted rates by the vendors are evaluated by the Government and inputted into the estimated hours or scenario to come up with the total evaluated price for each vendor. The total evaluated price is used for evaluation purposes only. All proposed labor categories and rates are incorporated into the final award. The scenario and results are shared with vendors as a part of their debriefing or when being given a brief explanation of the award decision. ROPE is recommended for use when using a best-value tradeoff to award single-award IDIQs and BPAs and may be used in a multiple-award environment.

ROPE is highly recommended for labor hour or time-and-materials type IDIQs or BPAs and may be used for other contract types. This technique should not be used for the award of orders against an existing IDIQ or BPA.

Consider this text in your next solicitation: *“To help select the best value Quoter for this BPA [or IDIQ] opportunity, the Government will use the hourly rates from the BPA [or IDIQ] LCAT Pricing Rate Worksheet/Excel Spreadsheet. The Government will apply those rates to an estimated number of hours for each labor category to arrive at a total evaluated price. Quoters shall submit the attached pricing worksheet.”*

OR

“All vendors must complete the LCAT Pricing Rate Worksheet by completing all cells

not already filled-in by the Government. The Government will then apply those rates to a sample task order scenario to arrive at a total evaluated price to use in the best-value tradeoff analysis. The estimate [or ceiling] provided in the solicitation may assist in coming up with discounted rates for the base period and all option periods. The Government will not disclose this sample task order scenario with vendors.”







Problems Solved

- Streamlines the submission of pricing for vendors.
- Enables contracting officers to perform a more efficient evaluation of vendor price submissions.
- Reduces the gamesmanship in pricing submissions.

Benefits of Use

- Streamlines the solicitation, evaluation, and award process. Eliminates the need for a full “sample task order” and instead focuses only on the realistic scenario pricing.
- Streamlines and reduces the complexity of the vendor’s price proposal submission.
- Reduces the burden for the government during price evaluation and streamlines time to award. The government evaluates the rates and discounts submitted for the life of the parent vehicle and applies the vendor rates to the estimated hours or scenario.

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Guide: DHS PIL Innovation Technique 16 \(Rates Only Pricing\), The Next Level Workbook](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS CBP Investment Analysis Office RFQ \(FAR 8.4\)](#)
- [Sample Price Sheet: DHS CBP Investment Analysis Office Price Sheet](#)
-  [GAO Decision: DCSA Rates Only Pricing](#)
-  [Sample: DCSA Instructions to Offerors](#)
-  [Sample: DCSA Evaluation Process](#)
- [Sample: DCSA Price Workbook](#)
-  [Sample: USDA Technique Example](#)
- [Sample Evaluation: USDA Pricing Evaluation Worksheet \(5 Scenarios\)](#)

Remote Acquisitions

FAR and Non-FAR



Summary

New or existing technology is leveraged to facilitate all phases of the acquisition lifecycle.

Description

Agencies conduct mission essential acquisition activities virtually and remotely, leveraging new or existing technology and tools. Virtual and other remote acquisition activities include i) online industry conferences, ii) phone interviews, iii) virtual site visits and inspections, iv) video proposals, and v) virtual oral presentations and consensus evaluations.








Problems Solved

- Innovative virtual and remote activities with online tools and telephone devices can be highly beneficial when in person activities are not practical or possible, with emergency acquisitions (FAR Part 18) or when stakeholders are geographically dispersed.
- In the face of a pandemic, such as COVID-19, remote acquisitions represent not just more efficient practices, but a necessary mechanism to prevent unnecessary disruptions to soliciting new work and enabling continued contract awards in support of pressing mission requirements in a manner that is consistent with the HHS Centers for Disease Control's guidance and shelter-in-place orders.
- Alternative authorities, such as challenges and prize competitions and commercial solutions opening pilots, combined with virtual and other remote activities may help with ideation processes to solve urgent mission needs.

Benefits of Use

- Accelerates time to award.
- Reduces administrative burden.
- Reduces barriers to entry.
- Enables more effective decision-making.
- Enables procurements to continue where they might otherwise be stopped, such as to comply with social distancing guidance for public health safety.
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Allows new entrants, recent entrants, and small businesses to participate in federal contracting opportunities who might not be able to otherwise on equal footing as to established contractors.

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Solicitation: DHS FEMA Video Proposal for Software Design and O&M](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS FEMA Video Proposal for Technology Prototype](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS CBP Phone Interview for Services](#)
-  [Solicitation & Case Study: VA TAC Virtual Technical Demonstration for Coding Artifacts](#)
-  [Solicitation & Case Study: VA TAC Virtual Technical Demonstration for Mobile Application](#)
-  [Solicitation: VA TAC Virtual Post Award Kick Off](#)
-  [Workforce Guide: USAID Tips for Virtual Requirements Development](#)
- [Website: US Army Challenge for COVID-19 Ventilators](#)
- [Commercial Solutions Opening: DHS Teleconference or Videoconference](#)

Related Cards

- [Oral Presentations](#)
- [On-the-spot Consensus](#)

Self Scoring Model

FAR

Summary

Industry evaluates themselves and provides documentation to the government for validation.

Description

Self-certification, or a self-scoring system, puts the burden of proving the contractor's capabilities on them instead of the Government. Bidders score themselves on one or more factors and provide documentation to support their assertions.



Problems Solved

Awarding large multiple-award IDIQs or BPAs is an arduous process. Many vendors may submit proposals while few are actually qualified. It falls to the contracting officer to separate them.

Benefits of Use

- Incentivizes non-qualified bidders to avoid submitting a proposal
- Reduces administrative workload in verifying credentials
- Creates a true “apples-to-apples” comparison among bidders

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Solicitation: GSA OASIS IDIQ RFP](#)
- [Solicitation: DHS CBP TACCOM 2 RFP](#)
-  [Solicitation: GSA VETS2 \(Sections L&M p.74\)](#)
- [Template: GSA VETS2 Self-Scoring Worksheet](#)

Related Cards

- [Comparative Evaluation](#)
- [Confidence Rating](#)
- [Oral Presentations](#)

Evaluation

Techniques for identifying the best possible solution from industry while making the evaluation process more effective.

Comparative Evaluation

FAR

Summary

No ratings assigned! Evaluators compare one offeror to another throughout the evaluation.

Description

No ratings are assigned! The evaluators compare one offeror to another, factor by factor and then overall at the end. Ideal for task/delivery orders under FAR subpart 8.4 and 16.505, but also for part 13 simplified acquisitions (incl. subpart 13.5 for commercial items up to \$7 Million). Not recommended for use under FAR part 15.






Problems Solved

- We don't get hung up on assigning and defending adjectival ratings
- Recommended text for solicitation: The Government may perform a comparative evaluation (comparing offers to each other) to select the contractor that is best suited and provides the best value, considering the evaluation factors in this solicitation

Benefits of Use

- Allows the source selection authority leeway in determining the method of evaluation
- Puts the needs of the government above simple FAR part 15 procedure
- This technique can be very powerful and very fast

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Solicitation: DHS SMT RFQ](#)
-  [Sample: DHS SMT Comparative Evaluation Award Decision](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS S&T Portal RFQ](#)
-  [GAO Decision: B-417126](#)
-  [DHS PIL Boot Camp Workbook Innovation Technique #5](#)
- [DHS PIL Technique 5 \(training video\)](#)

Related Cards

- [Self Scoring Model](#)
- [Confidence Rating](#)
- [Down-Selects](#)
- [Oral Presentations](#)

Confidence Rating

FAR



Summary

Evaluators assign holistic ratings rather than strengths, weaknesses, deficiencies, or risks.

Description

Confidence ratings are another form of adjectival rating that allow evaluators to assign ratings more holistically. May be used in acquisitions under FAR subparts 8.4 (orders/BPAs under schedules), 15.3 (source selections), and 16.505 (orders under multiple-award IDIQ contracts); as well as Part13 (Simplified Acquisitions). Only source selections under Subpart 15.3 require documentation of relative strengths, deficiencies, significant weaknesses, and risks; other acquisitions may use different approaches.






Problems Solved

Adjectival ratings that limit evaluators to a certain rating based on having a certain number of “strengths” or “weaknesses” are not flexible, and overly restrict the evaluators’ ability to assign appropriate ratings. They also cause far too much controversy and re-work in our internal review processes

Benefits of Use

- Confidence ratings provide evaluators the ability to look more holistically at the strong points and weak points of an offer
- Confidence ratings, supported by rationale, are often more helpful to a selecting official
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Evaluates offers holistically to capture raters’ overall confidence in the offeror’s likelihood to succeed, helping small businesses who may be stronger overall than some more seasoned larger businesses

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Solicitation: DHS S&T Portal RFQ](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS FLETC FOSS RFP](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS CISA NRMCTORFP](#)
-  [DHS PIL Boot Camp Workbook Innovation Technique #3](#)
-  [GAO decision: B-415575](#)
- [DHS PIL Technique 3 \(training video\)](#)

Related Cards

- [Self Scoring Model](#)
- [Comparative Evaluation](#)

- [Down-Selects](#)
- [Oral Presentations](#)

Down-Selects

FAR



Summary

Use multiple phases with smaller numbers of companies proceeding to the next phase.

Description

The solicitation is bifurcated into multiple phases (usually two), with a down-select in between the phases. The down-select can be firm or advisory, there are benefits to each. The goal is to make Phase 1 light, while saving the heavy technical submission and price to Phase 2 with a smaller number of offerors.











Problems Solved


- The offeror gets quick feedback on a light but meaningful Phase 1 Factor which can help inform their decision to move forward with a Phase 2 submission based on the instruction or recommendation from the Government
- The Government does not get as overwhelmed with bulky proposal submissions, resulting in a streamlined process and cleaner documentation at the very end

Benefits of Use

- More streamlined evaluations
- Reduced bid and proposal costs
- Cleaner/reduced documentation for the Government in evaluations
- Quicker feedback to offerors to help them make timely decisions with their bid and proposal costs
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Earlier feedback to offerors reduces bid and proposal costs for small businesses so they can focus their resources more effectively on acquisitions where they have the greatest likelihood of succeeding

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Solicitation: DHS USCG AUXDATA BPA RFQ \(all documents\)](#)
-  [Sample: Down Select Letter_Sample Out](#)
-  [Sample: Down Select Letter_Sample In](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS S&T Portal RFQ](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS FEMA NFIP TORP](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS CBP DCSS RFP](#)
-  [Solicitation: VA Veterans Platform RFQ](#)
-  [DHS PIL Boot Camp Workbook Innovation Technique #4](#)
-  [Solicitation: Pilot IRS Solicitation](#)
- [DHS PIL Technique 4 \(training video\)](#)
-  [Solicitation: USPTO PEDS Request for Quote](#)

-  [Solicitation: Department of Education's Advisory Down-Select, G5 RFQ and Instructions to Offerors \(pg. 21-38\)](#)

Related Cards

- [Comparative Evaluation](#)
- [Confidence Rating](#)
- [Modular Contracting](#)

Oral Presentations

FAR



Summary

Hear directly from vendors and their technical experts.

Description

Oral presentations (see FAR 15.102) allow the Government to hear directly from the vendor and their technical experts about their solutions and create a dialogue.







Problems Solved

Vendors get to showcase their true capabilities while not having to write onerous written proposals. Evaluators get to ask questions to the vendors technical experts and key personnel while also engaging in interactive dialogue to truly understand the proposed solution. Evaluators also save time in evaluations by not having to read lengthy written proposals.

Benefits of Use

- Get information directly from vendor's technical experts
- Allows Government and vendor to ask and answer questions
- Reduce the use of paper proposals where possible
- May reduce bid and proposal costs
- Streamlines the Government's evaluation process and timeline
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Allows small business teams to showcase their technical expertise, even engaging in a dialogue with Government evaluators, while avoiding the cost of having to submit a lengthy written technical proposal

Use Case and Documentation

-  [GAO Decision - Interactive Dialogue in Orals](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS S&T Portal RFQ](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS FEMA GMM RFQ](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS CISA NRMC TORFP](#)
-  [DHS PIL Boot Camp Workbook Innovation Technique #1](#)
-  [Workforce Guide: USDA Oral Presentations](#)
- [DHS PIL Technique 1 \(training video\)](#)

Related Cards

- [Comparative Evaluation](#)
- [Confidence Rating](#)

Technical Demonstrations

FAR



Summary

Buyers can see, feel, and test solutions before buying.

Description

Product or technical demonstrations let buyers see, feel, and test solutions before buying. True capabilities can be revealed. Can be a stand-alone factor or an element of the oral presentation.






Problems Solved

Seeing the solution in action provides more verifiable information than reading about it on paper. Vendors can more easily showcase their solutions

Benefits of Use

- Can streamline the selection process, lower bid and proposal costs, etc.
- Testing or inspection can be included as an independent evaluation factor
- Allows end-users to be part of the demonstration for useful feedback in the evaluation process
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Allows small business to showcase their product, system, or team directly with the Government evaluators rather than writing lengthy written technical proposals about it

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Solicitation: DHS USCG AUXDATA BPA with all attachments](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS ECFS RFQ](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS CBP Density Meter RFP and Test Plan](#)
-  [Solicitation: VA Appeals Modernization RTEP](#)
-  [DHS PIL Boot Camp Workbook Innovation Technique #2](#)
- [DHS PIL Technique 2 \(training video\)](#)

Related Cards

- [Challenge-Based Acquisitions \(ChBA\)](#)
- [Oral Presentations](#)

Award

Identifying the best industry solution given the evaluation criteria while shortening the time to award.

Brief Decision Documents

FAR

Summary

A concise award decision document focuses on the material elements of the award decision rather than an exhaustive history or duplication of other documents.

Description

Nowhere does the FAR require that a tradeoff analysis or decision document be exhaustive or be a certain prescribed length or page count. Lets focus on the actual decision to be made instead of incorporating an exhaustive history of other documents again into the decision document or duplicating findings that may merely be referenced by the selection official.




Problems Solved

- Selection documents that are too long are problematic in several ways
 - They take too long to write
 - They take too long in the review process
 - They have to be re-written too many times
 - They contain inconsistencies that cause problems later, such as in reviews or in protests
 - They distract from the real assignment of writing a concise decision document

Benefits of Use

- Is easier for the drafter to write, easier for the selecting official to read and understand, and easier for reviewers to review
- May be re-written fewer times
- Focuses on what is really important (the selection decision)
- May be easier to defend in a protest.

Use Case and Documentation

- [Sample: Decision Document Comparative Evaluation](#)
- [Sample Decision Document with Best Suited](#)
-  [Sample Decision Document](#)
- [XXXX Sample Decision Document](#)
-  [DHS PIL Innovation Technique #8](#)
-  [Pilot IRS DATA Act Improvements Basis for Award](#)
- [DHS PIL Technique 8 \(training video\)](#)

Related Cards: [Releasing the Selection Decision Document](#)

On-the-spot Consensus

FAR



Summary

Immediate consensus evaluation in conjunction with oral presentations or a reading of the proposal.

Description

The evaluation team reads the proposal (or attends the oral presentation) and then, as a group, evaluates the proposal and immediately documents the evaluation decision in real time before starting the evaluation of the next proposal.







Problems Solved

Individual evaluation reports, prior to consensus, can unnecessarily delay the evaluation timeline and increase the risk of including individual findings, not intended to be supported by the consensus team, in the consensus evaluation report

Benefits of Use

- Keeps documentation clear to support the decision and not deliberations
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Reduced evaluation time puts less burden on small businesses waiting for award results

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Phase 1 Experience OTS Consensus Worksheet - SOME](#)
-  [Phase 1 Experience OTS Consensus Worksheet - LOW](#)
-  [Phase 1 Experience OTS Consensus Worksheet - HIGH](#)
-  [DHS USCIS JETS Factor 4 TEC report samples](#)
-  [DHS PIL Boot Camp Workbook Worksheet Sample - Pg 26](#)
-  [DHS PIL Innovation Techniques #7](#)
- [DHS PIL Technique 7 \(training video\)](#)

Related Cards

- [Remote Acquisitions](#)
- [Oral Presentations](#)
- [Select Best-Suited, then Negotiate](#)

Oral Debriefings

FAR



Summary

An effective way to inform unsuccessful offerors of the award decision rationale.

Description

Contracting officers may hold misconceptions about the effectiveness and outcomes of in-person oral debriefings. When done properly, the oral debriefing to inform offerors of why an award decision was made can be an extremely effective tool.

Problems Solved

Clarity and trust in the award process

Benefits of Use

- Government can instill confidence in the acquisition decision and communicate adherence to its contracting process
- Offerors are motivated to better understand the process while gaining additional insight to improve future proposals
- Contracting Officers and Program Managers can apply a successful approach through dry runs in a learning environment which brings positive reinforcement
- Reduced protests
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** More clarity and understanding of the award decision helps small businesses compete more effectively for future work

Use Case and Documentation

-  [DHS USCIS JETS Group Oral Debriefing Script](#)
-  [OFPP -Further Improving Industry Communication with Effective Debriefings](#)
-  [DHS PIL Boot Camp Workbook Innovation Technique #10](#)

Related Cards: [Releasing the Selection Decision Document](#)

Select Best-Suited, then Negotiate

FAR



Summary

Interjecting negotiations with the prospective awardee following selection, yet prior to award.

Description

Once the Government has completed its entire evaluation in accordance with the process established in the solicitation, and has conducted its tradeoff analysis, the Government selects the apparently successful offeror/quoter. The Government then can communicate solely with that offeror/quoter to negotiate any remaining terms (technical and price) and finalize an award. Ideal for task/delivery orders under FAR subpart 8.4 and 16.505, but also for part 13 simplified acquisitions (incl. subpart 13.5 for commercial items up to \$7 Million). Not recommended for use under FAR part 15.












Problems Solved

Too often the Government makes an award still with questions on an offeror's technical or price submission but is afraid of negotiating with just that offeror. In the same light, Offeror's receive an award and go to the kickoff meeting with assumptions, etc., not yet clarified by the Government.

Benefits of Use

- Better understanding and expectations from the Government and Offeror after award
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** Pre-award negotiations help ensure alignment between the government and small businesses thereby reducing costly inefficiencies and avoiding suboptimal award decisions

Use Case and Documentation

- [Video: DHS PIL Technique 6 \(training video\)](#)
-  [DHS PIL Innovation Techniques #6](#)
-  [Workforce Guide: DHS Award Decision Document Redacted](#)
-  [Workforce Guide: Award Decision Document Redacted](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS S&T Request for Quote](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS OPO HART Request for Proposal \(RFP\) pg. 156](#)
-  [Solicitation: DHS USCG ISD Fair Opportunity Notice \(FON\), pg. 17](#)
-  [DHS USCG ISD Documentation](#)
-  [Solicitation: VA VA.gov Request for Quote \(RFQ\) pg. 53](#)
-  [GAO Decision: B-415514 \(DHS OPO HART\)](#)
-  [GAO Decision: DHS USCG ISD](#)
-  [GAO Decision: Treasury BFS TTB](#)

-  [GAO Decision: Department of Justice, BPA under GSA Federal Supply Schedule](#)

Related Cards

- [Brief Decision Documents](#)
- [On-the-spot Consensus](#)
- [Releasing the Selection Decision Document](#)

Post Award

Improving communication with offerors following contract award and improving better contractor performance.

Award Term Incentives

FAR

Summary

Motivate contractors with additional periods of performance.

Description

Agencies use additional periods of performance, known as award term incentives, to motivate vendors to deliver better performance, usually in service contracts with objective performance measures. Award Terms may be awarded using standardized scoring methodologies in performance evaluations and are most impactful when care is taken to guard against grade-inflation, relaxed rating standards and over reliance on subjective performance measures. When used, award terms should be administered separate and distinct from traditional option periods and award fees.

Problems Solved

This practice encourages superior, contractor performance in excess of minimum requirements --beyond what may typically be incentivized through the exercise of an option. Provides additional means of incentivizing performance on challenging programs or programs involving a heavy investment of capital. Reduces the administrative burden on high-performing contractors in securing additional work while allowing them to build a stronger track record for future competitions.

Benefits of Use

- Agencies and vendors alike suggest award term incentives may be more motivating than traditional fees
- Motivates higher levels of performance
- Fosters contractor capital investment
- Increases the desirability of the award, thus potentially increasing competition
- Can both reward superior performance and save the agency time and money by spreading out the cycle for re-competition

Use Case and Documentation

-  [Policy: Department of Energy](#)
- [Appraisal Process: Department of Energy](#)
- [Awards: Department of Energy](#)
- [Template: US Digital Service draft RFQ \(SalesForce BPA Call, see section 5 on p.3\)](#)
-  [FAR Supplement: NASA](#)
- [Statute: Department of Education Acquisition Regulation](#)
-  [Reference Document: Department of Energy Overview of Award Term](#)

Related Cards: [Modular Contracting](#)

Releasing the Selection Decision Document

FAR



Summary

Release of the government award rationale facilitates and enhances the debriefing process.

Description

Release of the selection decision document following contract award. This occurs after proprietary, and procurement sensitive information are redacted from the document. Release could also be made of the tradeoff analysis alone or of the consensus evaluation reports only. Release of the information can be made directly to the offerors involved in the procurement or more broadly on the agency's public website. This practice can occur as part of the debriefing process or following closure of the protest period. There are no regulatory prohibitions against this type of sharing after award.

Problems Solved

Eliminates or reduces guesswork as to the technical merit and trade-offs decisions made by the government in a competition.

Benefits of Use

- Increases transparency between industry and government
- Can reduce an unsuccessful offeror's inclination to protest solely out of a need for more information that the government has readily available
- Ensures the government is mindful about the documentation it produces
- Encourages the government to keep documentation reasonable, concise, and brief.
- **SMALL BUSINESS BENEFIT:** More clarity and understanding of the award decision, or the technical evaluation reports, helps small businesses compete more effectively for future work

Use Case and Documentation

- [NASA FAR Supplement 1815.308 sub paragraph \(3\)](#)
- [NASA COMETS Award](#)
- [NASA CLPS Award](#)
- [NASA NOIS2 Award](#)
- [NASA HLS BAA](#)
-  [Consolidated NASA Decision Documents](#)

Related Cards

- [Brief Decision Documents](#)
- [Oral Debriefings](#)
- [Select Best-Suited, then Negotiate](#)

Periodic Table Submission

This page is for **reference only** and is **not** an interactive submission page. This page represents the add innovations page that existed with the original PTAI website when it was hosted on the FAI.gov platform, but it is no longer accessible. The goal is for the new PTAI site to have a similar feature.

Welcome to the Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations submission page.

We are eager to receive your innovative practices. In this context, innovation is defined as a technique that brings value to the customer where it did not exist before. An innovation may be a new, modern, or reimagined business practice. Outcomes generally accelerate time to award, reduce delivery time, improve customer satisfaction, generate cost savings and/or reduce barriers to entry.

Please select an action* - Select -

Helpful Tip

For each entry you wish to submit (Add a new Innovation or Edit an existing Innovation), select the action from the drop-down box, complete the fields in the form, and submit your information.

- ☐ Add a new Innovation
- ☐ Edit an existing Innovation

Total Group* - Select -

Helpful Tip

Select the acquisition phase or authority in which the innovation should appear. Note: Alternative Authorities are strategies or statutory flexibilities and practices which are generally not frequently used and considered during the acquisition planning.

- ☐ Alternative Authorities
- ☐ Market Research
- ☐ Solicitation
- ☐ Evaluation
- ☐ Award
- ☐ Post Award

Innovation Title* [Content limited to 50 characters, remaining: 50]

Helpful Tip

Enter a short paragraph (2-4 sentences) describing the innovation. When editing the current description, please make the changes in bold.

Lorem Ipsum

Summary* [Content limited to 1,000 characters, remaining: 1,000]

Helpful Tip

Enter a short summary or synopsis of the innovative practice. This text is shown when users hover over the title on the Periodic Table home page. When editing the current summary text, please make the changes in bold.

Lorem Ipsum

Problems Solved* [Content limited to 1,000 characters, remaining: 1,000]

Helpful Tip

Enter in bullet point format problems solved by this innovation. When editing the current problems solved, please make the changes in bold.

Lorem Ipsum

Periodic Table Submission

Benefits of Use* [Content limited to 50 characters, remaining: 50]

Helpful Tip

Enter in bullet point format the benefits of using this innovation such as reduced time to award, improved customer satisfaction, and lowered barriers to entry and briefly describe the results. When editing the current benefits of use, please make the changes in bold.

Lorem Ipsum

What makes this innovative?* [Content limited to 1,000 characters, remaining: 1,000]

Lorem Ipsum

FAR or Non FAR

- ☐ FAR
- ☐ Non FAR
- ☐ FAR and Non FAR

Filters

- ☐ Small Business

Is there a website where your innovation can be linked?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you have any documentation to illustrate the innovation further?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you have any documentation to illustrate the innovation further?

Helpful Tip

If you would like the Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations team to consider additional information about your entry, please let us know. These comments are not intended to be displayed on the portal.

Lorem Ipsum

Role* - Select -

- ☐ Contracting Officer
- ☐ Project/Program Manager
- ☐ Policy Analyst
- ☐ Leadership
- ☐ Other

First Name*

Lorem Ipsum

Last Name*

Lorem Ipsum

Email*

Lorem Ipsum

Periodic Table Submission

Agency* - Select -

- ☐ Agency for International Development (USAID)
- ☐ Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- ☐ Department of Defense (DOD)
- ☐ Department of Education (Education)
- ☐ Department of Energy (DOE)
- ☐ Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
- ☐ Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
- ☐ Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- ☐ Department of Justice (DOJ)
- ☐ Department of Labor (DOL)
- ☐ Department of State (State)
- ☐ Department of the Interior (DOI)
- ☐ Department of the Treasury (Treasury)
- ☐ Department of Transportation (DOT)
- ☐ Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- ☐ Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- ☐ Executive Office of the President (EOP)
- ☐ General Services Administration (GSA)
- ☐ National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
- ☐ National Science Foundation (NSF)
- ☐ Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)
- ☐ Office of Personnel Management (OPM)
- ☐ Small Business Administration (SBA)
- ☐ Social Security Administration (SSA)
- ☐ Small Agency Council (SAC)
- ☐ Other

Organization* [Content limited to 50 characters, remaining: 50]

💡 Helpful Tip

Enter your agency bureau or component and office name.

Lorem Ipsum

Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations: An Introductory Tutorial



Citation

FAI, “**Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations: An Introductory Tutorial**,” FAI Media Library, accessed October 16, 2023 20:49, <https://fai.gov/media-library/item/periodic-table-acquisition-innovations-introductory-tutorial>.

Summary

This video guides users through existing features of the knowledge management portal, where members of the acquisition community share examples of their innovative techniques and automations. Users report the innovative practices on this site accelerated time to award, reduced delivery time, improved customer satisfaction, and/or reduced barriers to entry.

Description

The purpose of the Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations is to increase the use of innovative acquisition techniques and automations. The goal is to continually collect and share innovative practices tested and applied by acquisition teams. The intended primary users of the portal are contracting professionals and integrated project team members, creating a means to engage more effectively with stakeholders including prospective government contractors and improving acquisition outcomes.

Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations Feedback

This page is for **reference only** and is **not** an interactive feedback page. This page represents the feedback page that existed with the original PTAI website when it was hosted on the FAI.gov platform, but it is no longer accessible. The goal is for the new PTAI site to have a similar feature.

1. Which role best describes your position?*

1a. Please select

- ☐ Government
- ☐ Industry

2. Please indicate the degree to which you Strongly Disagree (1) or Strongly Agree (5) with each of the following statements regarding the Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations:*

2a. Table will be useful to me in my work

- ☐ Strongly Disagree (1)
- ☐ Disagree (2)
- ☐ Undecided (3)
- ☐ Agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly Agree (5)

2b. The Table will *help me learn* about innovative acquisition methods

- ☐ Strongly Disagree (1)
- ☐ Disagree (2)
- ☐ Undecided (3)
- ☐ Agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly Agree (5)

2c. The Table will *enable me to apply* innovative acquisition methods

- ☐ Strongly Disagree (1)
- ☐ Disagree (2)
- ☐ Undecided (3)
- ☐ Agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly Agree (5)

3. Please provide any additional feedback about the Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations.*

Lorem Ipsum

4. Please provide your contact information:

First Name

Last Name

Work Email