Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Supplier Relationship Management

Regional Forum – Chicago
October 20, 2011

Salon A – Medical Supplies

- Slowness – lack of forecast, lack of solicitations
- Increased VA contracting activity commitment to vets
- VA process seems to be steamlined – once you're in.
- VA is much harder to work with than GSA
  - Especially in regards to CSP requirements
- Some COs seem more inclined to say "No!" offhand

Salon A – Medical Supplies

- Lowest price does not equal best value
- Causes rework and off-schedule buying
- FedBid is a problem
- Requirements are often inconsistent or outdated
- VA is asking for cost of products; trying to manage company margins

Salon A – Medical Supplies

- Award notification and debrief doesn't happen
- General inconsistency
- Service versus product issues
- When only selling to the federal government, obtaining commercial pricing is not an option

Metro 2 - Healthcare/Drugs/IT Management

- What is the clear path to get into and work with the VA?
  - Information on how to play by the rules
  - VA 101 for how to do business with VA
- Like TAC and NAC Industry Days and approach to VETS Conference 2011 in New Orleans
  - 1 on 1 interaction with purchasers and COs/CSs
  - Networking with industry
- Time constraints
  - Why a 3 day RFP? ("Back door sole source")
- Get a handle on CO/CS staffing turnover
- Seeing impact of the VA Acquisition Academy (VAAA)

Metro 2 - Healthcare/Drugs/IT Management (continued)

- Need consistency with policies and how they are applied
  - Who do we report these problems too?
  - Issue at Med Centers, VISNs, COs, etc
- Communication is still an issue
  - Between COs and purchasers
  - Need to communicate all the way down to the lowest level of VA (Medical Centers and VISNs) to ensure changes to policy and procedures are known.
  - The end goal is serving Veterans, so a solution to this communication problem is a MUST.

Metro 3 - The Rainbow Room

- Things working well
  - Payment Process
  - Role distinction for PM, CO, and COTR
  - Contract modifications
- Trends
  - Limited number of contract vehicles
  - More set-asides
  - Shorter turnaround time for response to RFP's
  - Less certainty about where solicitations are being released

Metro 3 – The Rainbow Room

- Challenges
  - Lack of formal close out
  - Quality of RFP's
  - Actually awarding a contract based on best value
  - Advice from the NAC/National Offices is not consistent with field practices
  - Hard to sell to the VA
- Recommendations
  - Strive for adequate consistency (especially in solicitations) and flexibility (especially in delivery)
  - Utilize a formal close out process (use CPARS)

Metro 4 - Engineering & Security

- Communication
  - Not seeing improvement in this area
  - Essential to have communication between OAL and Supplier
  - Also need to communicate information within internal VA teams
  - Would like to see performance information communicated to Supplier
    - "report card" or NSIC PDRP
- Education for Contracting Staff
  - Help produce more clearly defined requirements, select appropriate contract type, understand pricing, improve proposal evaluation and award
  - Suppliers willing to work with VA to share their expertise with VA – through RFI process, industry days, demonstrations, etc.

Metro 4 - Engineering & Security

- Kickoff meetings are successful
  - VA is better at kicking off contracts than other Departments
- Consistency
  - "If you've seen one VA, you've seen one VA"
- Accountability
  - VA needs to take corrective actions when there is a lack of performance

Metro 1- Architecture/Engineers

- VA needs to take more responsibility for the delays they cause in the contracting process; the current approach places too much financial burden on Suppliers
- Not enough teaming mentality in design and construction, resulting in delays
- End user is not involved enough in the contracting process
- Bid schedules are too short; Suppliers don't have enough time to pull together competitive bid

Metro 1- Architecture/Engineers

- CVE process is arduous and long
- Some COTRs aren't competent, and bad ones cost us money
- Involve the end user earlier in the contracting process
- Improve CVE criteria and training for staff
- RFPs have become easier to understand and respond to
- VA has invested in facilities and staffing