

**United States Department of Veterans Affairs  
Office of Acquisition and Logistics**



**Supplier Relationship Management  
Washington, DC Forum Report**

**September 2, 2009 Update**

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*Strategy. Execution. Results.*

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## Executive Summary

When: Thursday, August 13, 2009

Where: Ritz-Carlton Pentagon City, Arlington, VA

Number of Attendees: 119 attendees from 82 companies

### Industry Breakout Groups

- Engineering and Research and Technology Based Services
- Healthcare Service, Drugs and Pharmaceutical Products, and Medical Equipment Accessories and Supplies
- Information Technology (IT) Management (3 focus groups)
- Management, Other
- IT Broadcasting and Telecommunications
- Healthcare Management
- Building and Construction and Maintenance Services, Public Utilities and Public Sector Related Services, and Transportation and Storage and Mail Services

### Overall Findings from Breakout Groups

- Participants were alert, attentive, and pleased to be invited and participated fully.
  - Savvy about acquisitions process in Veterans Affairs (VA) and in other federal agencies.
  - Knowledgeable and articulate on the strategy, process, and mechanics of large scale change.
- Participants shared a common, recurring view:
  - Many are veterans.
  - All know and respect veterans, and all want to help improve the system so that VA can deliver economical, quality services and products.
  - Contractors want to be seen as advisors and partners, not the enemy.
- Participants were generally frustrated, but not angry, and were hopeful but skeptical that change will occur.
- Vendors perceive the acquisition process to be unclear, not applied in a standardized manner, and not communicated well.
- VA does a poor job of matching contract types and terms and conditions to the acquisition. Mismatched types/terms and conditions do not produce optimal product and service delivery to Veterans.
- Similar contracts are managed differently within and across programs: "If you've seen one VA contract you've seen one contract".
- Many contracts are not launched with kickoff meetings; none end with closeouts. Few contain a discovery period, but many require project plans, work breakdown structures, etc. within 5 and 10 days of award.
- VA is often unclear and unfamiliar with what it is procuring – unclear requirements, cut-and-paste solicitations, expired dates in solicitations, Questions & Answers (Q&As) that don't clarify, independent government cost estimates (IGCEs) that are very soft, etc.

- Contracting Officers (COs) and Contracting Officer Technical Representatives (COTRs) are often risk averse and say no to possible solutions without considering them.
- Contractors broker communication and problem solving between VA COs, COTRs, and Project Managers (PMs).
- Partnering means sharing risk, but VA puts all risk on the contractor.
- In reality, best value means lowest cost. VA wants contractor "A" teams but will only pay for "B" or "C" teams.
- Contract mods – even no-cost period of performance (POP) extensions – can take months to complete, putting contractors and projects at risk.

### VA Action Items

- Create Supplier Relationship Management Web site
  - Web site will include Idea Submission Tool that will enable businesses to provide possible solutions to VA's Greatest Challenges, as defined by VA
- Collect and define VA's Greatest Challenges
- Create Supplier Relationship Transition Governance structure
  - Includes an Acquisitions Governance Board of senior-level VA representatives from across the Department
  - Board will determine process for evaluating industry ideas submitted through the Idea Submission Tool
  - Board will participate in the evaluation of industry ideas submitted through the Idea Submission Tool
- Create a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy and Implementation Plan
  - Include target audiences such as:
    - Suppliers / Vendors
    - OAL
    - Contracting Workforce (COs and Contracting Specialists)
    - Contracting Officer Technical Representatives
    - Project and Program Managers
    - VA Service Providers (all business lines)
    - Veterans and their families
  - Collect data from target audiences (interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc.)
- Develop, distribute and evaluate results from Supplier Perception Survey multiple times in FY 2010.
- Conduct a Supplier / PEO Day in 2010
- Create a communications and marketing program to provide the vendor community with information and updates about the Management Program.
- Identify Key Performance Indicators for all target audiences

## Engineering and Research and Technology Based Services

### Key Themes

- VA needs to work on significantly upgrading the quality of Requests for Information (RFIs), Requests for Proposals (RFPs), and associated processes.
- Participants were in agreement that the “right people” don’t always get engaged in the development of RFIs and RFPs.
- Participants noted a recent trend in increasing RFIs and Industry Days.
- Participants reported that in terms of required formats for proposals, “If you’ve seen one VA proposal, then you’ve seen one VA proposal”.
- VA can do better with awards and kickoffs.
- Communications are difficult at best and in some cases virtually nonexistent.
- Participants were in strong agreement that VA forces the lion’s share of risk on the vendors.
- VA has a culture of indecision. It is difficult to find someone to make a decision.
- The undesirable number of contract modifications is directly related to earlier comments regarding RFIs and RFPs. Misunderstanding and misinterpretation of contract specifications can be traced in virtually every case back to a poorly written RFP/Statement of Work (SOW).
- Participants were in agreement that Close-Outs rarely occur, and when they do, it is because the vendor forced it to happen.
- Participants were in agreement that VA frequently selects an inappropriate contract type (e.g. firm fixed-price (FFP) versus time and materials (T&M)) and thereby places far too much risk on the vendor.
- There is a confrontational dynamic between contractors and COTRs.

### Recommendations

- Engage the “right VA people” in evaluating bids/proposals: they need to be knowledgeable in the subject matter.
- Develop more consistency across VA in terms of bid/proposal format/requirements.
- Increase RFIs and Industry Days.
- Enact what Deputy Secretary Gould described in his speech as a kickoff process including team building and meaningful dialogue, with everyone on the same page.
- “Fix” communications- up/down and across VA.
- Recognize that there is a distinct imbalance in the amount of risk VA expects vendors to take on.
- Re-engineer VA’s culture so employees are willing and able to make decisions at appropriate levels.
- Get the “right people” engaged in the development in the RFI/RFP, and “get it right” at this most critical stage to avoid the inevitable confusion/misunderstanding/misinterpretation and arguments/disagreements.
- Inject more rigor into the entire Acquisition Process to include formal Close-Outs as well as all of the other required meetings.
- Train COs effectively in contract type selection.
- Provide additional training for COTRs.

## Healthcare Services, Drugs and Pharmaceutical Products, and Medical Equipment Accessories and Supplies

### Key Themes

- RFP requirements sometimes appear to be developed in a vacuum. Users may not be involved; product specs are antiquated; end users don't want the product or service.
- Source selection sometimes appears to be done in a vacuum. Vendors don't get a chance to respond. Sometimes the evaluators don't understand the requirements or the structure of the products or pricing.
- Huge disconnects exist between Headquarters (HQ), National Acquisition Center (NAC), Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), and the VA Medical Centers (VAMCs). Suppliers often do better dealing at the VISN or medical center level. Enforcement of "national contracts" is problematic, especially for small suppliers without the resources to deal at the local level. VA is hung up between centralized and non-centralized. Without some sort of standardization it's hard to navigate through the process.
- A means for matching large and small suppliers does not exist and would be welcome. Just being on a federal supply schedule does not guarantee that the supplier is responsible and capable.
- Small and large suppliers sometimes have issues with each other: small suppliers as fronts; lack of enforcement of national contracts; lack of insight into broader view at VA. Developing a good relationship is incumbent on both parties.
- VA has a lack of an integrated acquisitions and logistics software system. There is no way for the chief financial officer (CFO) to know where the dollar goes at the end and what it's spent on.
- The pendulum is swinging between enterprise and local buys. MRIs are a good example. Ten years ago, things were like the Deputy Secretary wants them to be again.
- Vendors sat in a similar forum 5 years ago. All the same promises were heard, but nothing changed. Why will this one be any different?

### Recommendations

- Follow through on the Deputy Secretary's pledge to get everyone into the kick-off meeting. If leadership isn't involved in kick off things don't get done. Without executive sponsorship and presence the project will fail. This is an important step. Get leadership involved.
- Develop a structure or mechanism for matching large and small suppliers. If it worked well, it would be used frequently. Examine the Department of Defense (DoD) mentor-protégé program. Marry large and small businesses to go after opportunities. It's incumbent on large business to develop relationships with small.
- Get more help evaluating products. As an example, children's hospitals have great clinical teams, and vendors sometimes go through product teams at the VAMC level sometimes. The teams consult on the evidenced based data on any product. It would be good at VA to have a medium for people to talk about solutions from a clinical standpoint. The cost of the product is important, but the patient should be, too.
- Consider the acquisition problem from a systems perspective. Look what other agencies are doing with E-commerce solutions and how much this would support VA in solving the problem and transforming the agency.

- Get vendor community involved up front. Give vendors examples of how this is done or follow up on how VA might do this.
- Establish performance metrics that they will define for measuring customer relationship Management. Define what changes VA will make as a result of the vendor meeting, and put milestones behind that.
- Put performance metrics on procurements.
- Turn meetings like today's vendor meeting into a process rather than a one-time event.
- Distinguish between products and services that are conducive to centralization and those that are not.
- Do not repeat the horrible past: If acquisition goes back to minimum specifications, low bid, VA will go back to where it was 15 years ago.

## IT Management Group #1

### Key Themes

- Very frustrated and concerned with the lack of transparency, feedback, and consistent application of an acquisitions process.
- Great deal of frustration with RFIs and RFPs. They are poorly written, and requirements are poorly identified. There is no ability for industry to interact with VA to develop better requirements. Poorly defined RFPs lead to delivery delays, numerous contract modifications, and the risk that the veteran will not get the services he/she needs.
- Frustration with the use of FFP contracts when requirements and/or desired outcomes are unclear or not defined. This puts all risk on the vendor. Also, it leads to delivery delays and numerous contract modifications.
- VA solicitations appear to have greater focus on the method used to implement rather than the desired outcome or goal. This inhibits vendors from providing VA with new or more efficient and effective approaches to address VA's needs.
- Contract awards take much too long. It is unclear why they take as long as they do.
- Vendors are viewed as the enemy but want to be seen as partners and advisors to help VA better serve veterans.

### Recommendations

- Create an industry/government task group to identify and address acquisition process issues and concerns.
- Hold more industry days – encourage and use vendor feedback to develop more specific and well written RFPs.
- Standardize acquisitions process (including communications and using contract types), and enforce this standardization.
- Use a hybrid contract approach when requirements are unclear. Use a T&M contract to define requirements, stakeholder needs, and overall goals; shift contract to FFP during development, implementation, and maintenance.
- Learn from other Departments/Agencies that are known for effective acquisition processes.
- Offer a one-year industry internship for VA Contract Officers so that they experience Industry's side of the process.



## IT Management Group #2

### Key Themes

- There needs to be more visibility into VA's plans to assure competition.
- Better communication is needed within VA among the elements involved in the acquisition process (program people, Acquisition staff, and General Council).
- Feedback is almost non-existent; VA sometimes seems like a black hole.
- VA often seems to be going through a rote process with "one size fits all".
- Better competition and less advantage to incumbents should be a goal.
- Inconsistency is rampant:
  - Training of COs and COTRs,
  - Choice of contract types,
  - Amount of communication,
  - Linkage between Program and Acquisition people, and
  - Quality of COs and COTRs

### Recommendations

- Develop and enforce timelines which are reasonable and are adhered to.
  - Requirements are often "stale" by the time of award leading to many problems.
- Engage in early and open communication about planned solicitations.
- Develop and enforce formal pre-solicitation steps graduated to fit solicitations of different values and complexity (industry day, etc.).
- Hold well considered discussions internal to VA about contract type, etc.
- Develop interim solutions while "transforming".
  - Use General Services Administration (GSA), Federal Systems Integration and Management Center (FEDSIM), or outsource to a private entity or some combination, but keep strong mission-oriented VA program management.
  - Most of what was heard in the plenary sessions was long term; the problems exist today!

## IT Management Group #3

### Key Themes

- The acquisition processes are not working. This results in:
  - Time-consuming administrivia for everyone, a need to navigate requirement inconsistencies, confusing language, mis-alignments of scope through measures.
    - *“(Need) Alignment (and consistency) of Performance Work Statement (PWS), CLIN Structure, Past Performance, Key Personnel with Instructions and Evaluations.”* [frequently cited by majority]
- More costly responses (and implementations)—especially when the wrong vehicle is chosen for the service or product. “Don’t have confidence that the right vehicles/awards types are being picked.”
- The culture does not match the leadership ideals; VA’s true strategy is unclear.
- The suppliers genuinely want to be a part of the change process and believe they have the knowledge, desire, and commitment to do so.

### Recommendations

- Overhaul with a structured, facilitated change management plan and process.
- Build ways to involve & align everyone: leaders and personnel within VA, subject matter experts (SMEs), and the industry.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate: understanding and trust are at stake.
- Engage in industry conversation as early as possible and engage in a focused way. Pick a subject with certain industry partners. Look at ways to compete a product and keep a clear scope and be focused.
- Determine the best contract vehicle.
- Define and lead a ‘performance based’ way of thinking.
- Educate acquisition people across the board and from the top down.
- Make small changes, one at a time. Transition will be easier for suppliers if there is a gradual change over time.
- Use an A team to use best practices, and have a larger diversified group review and give feedback on practices. Plan, design, review, and then change the plan based on feedback.
- Promote collaboration and cooperative experiences with vendors.
- Know how projects fit into the bigger picture within VA and how personal companies are fitting into VA’s mission.
- Fix problems together with the supplier without blame.
- Be willing to share the risk of moving down the right path.
- Make communication a two-way street.
- Put out a procurement plan for the year and not just forecasting opportunities with random points of contact (POCs).

## Management, Other

### Key Themes

- The worst part of the system is everything that precedes awarding of the contract. Once a vendor wins a contract, it can be a good experience working with the project/technical staff.
- Vendors are frustrated by the lack of transparency and communication in the system. They generally get zero input in the crafting of RFPs and then zero feedback from the contract officers about what they liked/disliked in proposals.
- When vendors do get input (at the RFI stage), they fear having their best ideas stolen by VA and/or other contractors, and then the contracts given to someone else.
- Vendors believe there is no accountability within VA for failing to live up to its end of contracts (e.g., prompt payments for services). Chronically late payments are a huge burden for contractors to bear, and nobody in VA seems to care.
- VA (like other agencies) writes confusing contracts that focus far too much on methods rather than outcomes. Since technology and other fields change quickly, this sets projects up for cost-overruns and poor implementation and prevents VA from getting the benefit of contractor expertise.
- Vendors feel disrespected by VA. Rather than feeling like VA see them as partners, vendors feel treated like the bad guys.

### Recommendations

- Bring contractors in early to discuss outcomes and needs.
- Send ALL contract officers to Contracting University, not just the new ones.
- Insist upon accountability from contracting officers for communication and fairness, provide vendors with a feedback mechanism to comment, and provide vendors with a way to appeal or bypass COs who are obstacles.
- Rebuild trust with vendors by paying contractors the funds they are owed.

## Information Technology Broadcasting and Telecommunications

### Key Themes

- Problems in the delivery and contract management process started early.
- There is a long communication lag in RFIs and RFPs.
- Several participants shared stories of staffing up and staffing down.
- Participants believe that Industry Days are valuable exchanges.
- Solicitations are not clear. The dates on the contract are out of date. There are requirements asking about new products. There is a general lack of knowledge about what is being procured.
- Vendors are trying to manage their company's risk.
- Deliverables and deliverable schedules are not always clear.
- Vendors would like to be seen as partners.
- Some people in the group never had kick off meetings. It is critical to the success of the project to have a kickoff.
- The contract type is often mismatched with what VA is trying to accomplish.

### Recommendations

- Increase communication, even in the RFI stage to avoid more confusion down the road.
- Hold would like more Industry Days.
- Allow vendors a period of discovery with the team before a break down schedule is due. VA normally wants a schedule 5 days after award.

## Healthcare Management

### Key Themes

- Frequently changing organizational priorities -- which meant that RFPs might be modified several times and on occasion never finally issued.
- Contracting Officers and Project Managers/Contracting Officers' Technical Representatives themselves do not have a "big picture" of where the VA was going and, therefore, are unable to provide the guidance to suppliers which would result in goods and services better directed to meeting VA needs
- Vendors described the issuance of RFPs that went off in different directions, indeed contradicted other RFPs, leading to potential bidders' confusion and concern they would be at risk for conflicts of interest.
- One could argue that the lack of a strategic vision also contributed to communications difficulties between COs and VA suppliers. COs, lacking a sense of the "big picture" and overall direction of the agency, may well have felt constraints in communicating with suppliers, having only fragmentary and sometimes internally contradictory information.

### Recommendations

- Articulate a strategic vision in which the disparate elements of the agency's work are brought together into a cohesive whole.
- Develop a culture where the CO, Project Manager/COTR, and the Supplier are a well integrated team working together and view their relationship as a business partnership, sharing information and suggestions with the end of improving VA capabilities and performance.
- Explore good practices from other federal agencies such as DoD, the Census Bureau, and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
- Include as much detailed information as possible in RFPs to enable bidders to clearly understand the objectives of the proposed project and how it fits into broader agency plans.
- Ensure that VA staff members are cognizant of their responsibilities in working with contractors to respond in a timely fashion to review and feedback on deliverables.
- Develop a process for capturing lessons learned during project development and implementation.

## Building and Construction and Maintenance Services, Public Utilities and Public Sector Related Services, and Transportation and Storage and Mail Services

### Key Themes

- Participants were most frustrated with the beginning and end of the acquisition process. The process between award and closeout seems to work well, although there are still some areas for improvement.
- Contracting Officers, and sometimes COTRs, are not knowledgeable about the industry they are working with, the regulatory requirements, and different contract vehicles. This means that they are risk averse – unwilling to try new products/approaches and unwilling/unable to think outside the box; can select the wrong contract type; and have difficulty evaluating supplier performance.
- There is a lack of transparency and consistency in various aspects of the procurement process. There are different SOWs for the same work being issued by different facilities. There is inconsistency in the way that past performance is collected and used/valued in the proposal process. There are different evaluation and closeout approaches.
- There is a reluctance to engage early with the vendor community. This early engagement can help VA collect vital industry data and provide more clarity when it comes time to issue an RFP/RFI.
- The time frame for the RFI/RFP and bid/proposal process is too short, which has several implications: there is not enough time for VA to do the proper research on the topic and what services are needed, there is not enough time to engage the vendor community to ensure they understand the request, there is not enough time to have meaningful exchanges (clarifications/Q&A) about the bids, and there is not enough time to thoroughly evaluate responses.
- There is not a good definition of “best value to the government,” so COs are often inclined to equate this with lowest bid, which may not be the case.
- There seems to be little opportunity to reward outstanding performance and cost savings efforts.
- There is a need for balance across aspects of the process that have inherent tensions – the desire to expedite the procurement process and the need for adequate time to develop RFPs and to respond; the desire to promote more competition and the inherent efficiencies that go along with having a single vendor provide services over a long period of time or across related projects.

### Recommendations

- Develop more systematic and transparent evaluation criteria for contract awards, including a better definition for and explanation of “best value”.
- Increase the use of schedules – this could help speed awards.
- Make the evaluation of past performance an ongoing process where data is collected throughout the life of a project from all parties. That information should be retained centrally to ensure that VA has access to it and uses it to evaluate respondents.
- Consolidate services contracts: there is no need to have one for every VISN or facility.
- Continue holding Industry Days, and increase their frequency and the industry sectors involved in the program.
- Use the eBuy process instead of the IT Solutions process; it is much more efficient.

- Use the number of protests and the number of claims as metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposal process.
- Ensure that the VA team is ready to start a project after award, and ensure that all key team members are present at the kickoff.
- Speed up the modification process to ensure that paperwork is issued before work proceeds.
- Develop and implement more formal closeout procedures for all projects, and these procedures should include 360° evaluations.
- Make better use of resources and programs available at other government agencies.
- Make more use of pilots to evaluate different approaches for doing work and for developing metrics to evaluate success.
- Moved to more of a shared risk model by combining contract types (e.g., starting with T&M when a project is not well defined and then moving to a FFP when the parameters are clearer).

## Appendix A: Agenda

TIME	SESSION
8:30-9:30 am	<p>Welcome and Opening Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VA Management and Partnering with Industry The Honorable W. Scott Gould, Deputy Secretary</li> <li>• Veterans Business Programs and Goals Ms. Gail Wegner, Director, Center for Veterans Enterprise</li> <li>• Overview of the Forum Mr. Maurice C. Stewart, ADAS for Acquisition &amp; Logistics Programs &amp; Policy</li> </ul>
9:30-11:30 am	<p>Supplier Focus Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisition business processes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RFI / RFP</li> <li>• Bids / Proposals</li> <li>• Award and Kickoff</li> <li>• Delivery</li> <li>• Contract Modifications</li> <li>• Closeout</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
11:30 am - 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00-1:45 pm	<p>Afternoon Opening Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VA IT Challenges The Honorable Roger W. Baker Assistant Secretary for Information Technology</li> <li>• FY 2010 VA Budget Outlook Ms. Rita Reed Acting Assistant Secretary for Management</li> </ul>
1:45-3:45 pm	<p>Supplier Focus Sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Themes (not all inclusive)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contract type (FFP, T&amp;M, CP, etc.)</li> <li>• Challenges with unclear requirements</li> <li>• COTR concerns</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4:00-4:30 pm	<p>Closing Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Honorable W. Scott Gould Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs</li> <li>• Mr. Glenn D. Haggstrom Executive Director for Acquisition, Logistics, &amp; Construction</li> </ul> <p>Q&amp;A, Next Steps</p>
4:30-5:30 pm	No-Host Reception



## Appendix B: Attendees

Name of Attendee	Company
Mohamed Abuagla	Intelligent, LLC
Lisa Akers	Acquisition Solutions
Larry Albert	Agilex
Sean Allan	LMI
Olufunmi Ashamu	SAIC
Andy Bartalone	MicroTech
Stan Birkhead	Siemens Healthcare
Michele Bond	Data Networks Corporation
Mike Boyland	SRA
Geary Brummell	Microsoft
Fred Brunk	Siemens Building Technologies
Jeff Burney	Merlin International
Andrea Bushnell	Sourcecorp Deliverex
Joe Bycina	Valador, Inc.
Mark Byers	DSS, Inc.
Shobhik Chaudhuri	Grant Thornton
Karen Cinibulk	L-3 Communications
Jennifer Collins	The Event Planning Group, LLC.
Tim Comello	KPMG
Bill Connor	Verizon Wireless
Mike Cowan	Deloitte Consulting
Paul Curtin	ICU Medical
David Daining	C2AE
John Darrah	Jaco Management
Gustavo de Luca	Roughton, Nickelson, de Luca Architects
Jeff Denniston	Patriot Technologies
Mark Deyle	Ronco Communications & Electronics
Brenda Dixon	IBM
David Dougherty	RWD Technologies
Todd Edwards	GE
Michael Edwards	TurningPoint Global Solutions, LLC
Jeff Ferdock	CACI
Anthony J. Fiore	V2B Partners
Dax Gay	Sprint
Diana Gowen	Qwest
Audrey Hallett	Qwest
Ken Hatfield	Sensoft International

Name of Attendee	Company
Mindy Hatt	Vista Revenue Solutions. Partner to DSS Inc.
Tim Hays	Digital Management, Inc.
Eric Henderson	UPS
Bob Henry	ICU Medical
Matt Henry	LMI
Cindy Hielscher	Acenture
John Hrin	Pitney Bowes
W.A. Tony Jacobs	Metropolitan
Craig Jansen	C2AE
Nora Jeffcoat	Cisco
Ed Jesson	ObxTek
Tony Jimenez	MicroTech
Hosea Johnson	Johnson Associates Systems
Jim Jones	SRA
Sheree Jones	IBM
Aram Kailian	Leo A Daly
Tim Karp	Otis Elevator
Ron Kecman	Pitney Bowes
Loaina Kerner	NOVIS
Julie Kesterson	Sensoft International
Alison Kreager	AT&T
Bob Lam	Accenture
Tizoc S.Loza	Northrop Grumman
Sean M.Lynch	The Ventura Group
Bill Lytle	SNVC
Kevin T.Mabie	Valador Inc.
Charles Mann	Beacon Associates
Doug Martinez	NEC Unified
Tim McClain	Humana Veterans
Marc McDonald	Microsoft
Steve McManus	Booz Allen Hamilton
Norris Middleton	Management Support Technology Inc. (MSTI)
David Miller	RWD Technologies
John P. Moliere	Standard Communications
David Motherway	GE
Mike Mullen	INDUS Corporation
Kevin Mullins	Siemens Healthcare
Jean Murphy	Convergys
Jim Murton	Tecta America

Name of Attendee	Company
Rodney Neal	Document Storage Systems
John O'Daniel	Medline
Brian Olson	Acquisition Solutions
Mark Osterman	Covidien
Ginger Parker	PricewaterhouseCoopers
Kathi Patterson	Milliman
Slava Petatsky	TEK Express
John Peterson	SAIC
Gay Porter	CACI
Vartuhi Rankin	Acquisition Solutions
Gerry Reis	STERIS
Kirk Richardson	STERIS
David Rigazio	Health Management Systems
Tom Romeo	IBM
Steve Sellentin	Government Scientific Source
Steve Shane	Acenture
Bangalore Shivacharan	TurningPoint Global Solutions, LLC
Richard Solomon	MicroTech
Jody Sommers	Force 3
Amanda Sramek	ProSol
Steve Stapleton	EDS, an HP company
Bob Sullivan	PWC
Mike Thorp	iDox Solutions, Inc.
Guy Timberlake	The American Small Business Coalition
Kristine Titzer	Intelligent
Betsy Tolstoi	Federal Express
Shailesh Topiwala	Bosch Healthcare
Chris Townsend	Cisco
Roxanne Turner	Three Wire Systems
LaNae Twite	KPMG
Deb Varljen	Regenesis Biomedical
Mike Vogel	Digital Management, Inc.
Frank Washburn	Northrop Grumman
Harvey Watson	Southwest Research Institute
Ginny White	Ronco Communications & Electronics
Lori White	McKesson Corporation
Tom Wilde	KPMG
Ann Will	CACI
Susan Williams	CSC

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Name of Attendee	Company
Obie Wordlaw	Jero Medical Supplies
Gavin Wright	CDW-G
Jeffrey Zack	Catapult Technology
Mark Zalubas	Merlin International

## Appendix C: Focus Group Protocols

### Morning Session

Focus on the Acquisition business processes:

- RFI/RFP: When you look at the way VA considers bids and proposals, what would you say works and what doesn't work?
- Bids/Proposals: When you look at the way VA administers its awards and kickoffs, what would you say works and what doesn't work?
- Award and Kickoff: When you look at the way VA administers its awards and kickoffs, what would you say works and what doesn't work?
- Delivery: When you look at the way VA administers the delivery of its contracts, what would you say works and what doesn't work?
- Contract Modifications: When you look at the way VA administers its contract modifications, what would you say works and what doesn't work?
- Closeout: When you look at the way VA administers the closeout of its contracts, what would you say works and what doesn't work?

### Afternoon Session

Focus on other themes:

- Contract type (FFP, T&M, CP, etc.): What has your experience been working with the VA on various types of contracts?
- Challenges with unclear requirements: What has your experience been the clarity of VA contracts?
- CO/COTR concerns: What has your experience been in working with VA COs and COTRs?