



OVERCOMING CHALLENGES WITH SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

DATE

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SPEAKERS

Mr. Chris Harrington, Moderator
Director, SOCOM OSBP

Mr. Robert Foster

Deputy Director, Information
Operations (J6), DLA

Mr. Richard Aldridge

Program Executive Officer for
Business and Enterprise Systems,
Maxwell Air Force Base

Mr. John Miller (pictured above)

Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Acquisition Integration, Air
Force

BACKGROUND

The Department of Defense (DoD) Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP) in partnership with the Small Business Administration sponsored Small Business Training Week (SBTW17) at the Sheraton Atlanta in Atlanta, Georgia. Answers to questions submitted through the OSBP SBTW mobile app are included below.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Small Business Professionals (SBPs) want to ensure you have a level of comfort in utilizing small business; what information can we provide to help overcome risk concerns?

SBPs play an important role as a member of the acquisition team, specifically in the acquisition-planning and market-research processes. SBPs must do their part to start market research early to help overcome risk concerns. SBPs are to be included early in the acquisition-planning process to advise and assist contracting, program-management and requirements personnel on all matters that affect small businesses throughout the acquisition processes, e.g., acquisition planning, source selection, other contract performance, etc. to ensure maximum participation by small businesses.

Insights on specific areas of new requirements being generated and how we may be able to compete and or participate in providing goods and or services are part of the selection decision that increase the likelihood of

TWEETS

"A good small business portfolio starts with the Small Business Professional." @MaxwellAFB's Richard Aldridge at #SBTW17

"The PEO's mindset is all about cost, schedule and performance." Air Force's John Miller at #SBTW17

"We expect a small business to deliver what they promise. We don't tolerate bad performance." @DLAMIL's Robert Foster at #SBTW17

In fiscal year 2016, 50% of @DLAMIL's IT prime-contract dollars were awarded to #smallbiz. #SBTW17

"We can't depend on one large vendor. We have to develop diversity in our supply chain." @DLAMIL's Robert Foster at #SBTW17

"As a senior leader, sometimes what you don't say is as important as what you do say." @MaxwellAFB's Richard Aldridge at #SBTW17

LEARN MORE

We are the Department of Defense (DoD) Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP). We maximize opportunities for small businesses to contribute to national security by providing combat power for our troops and economic power for our nation.

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awarding contracts to top-notch small businesses.

The Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) also provide broad discretion in deciding how a solicitation will consider firms' prior experience, which refers to whether the firms have done similar work before, and past performance, which describes how well they have done that work. The consideration of prior experience and past performance is not limited to work performed under prior contracts with the government. Instead, market research supported by SBPs needs to consider work performed on all contracts: federal, state, local and private sector. However, small firms seeking to win federal contracts face challenges in building up relevant work experience, financial resources and capacity to compete for large contracts.

Various resources are available from federal agencies to help firms without relevant experience or past performance gain entry to the federal marketplace, including outreach and education, subcontracting opportunities, mentor-protégé programs and Small Business Administration (SBA) programs specifically designed to assist small businesses.

We ask the SBP to get involved early in acquisitions; when do you believe that to be?

SBPs should be involved when requirements are generated so they can support market research to help guide contracts to small business. SBPs should be actively engaged early with the acquisition-requirement owners, contracting, legal, SBA, Procurement Center Representatives and Procurement Technical Assistance Centers.

What is the best strategy for small businesses to request meetings with Program Managers to present their innovative capabilities?

Small businesses should frequently and concisely communicate what value and specific operational success can be provided to the government.

Have any of you had success in encouraging or using small business reserves on multiple-award contracts (MACs)?

Due diligence in market research is key to encourage utilization of small businesses when you cannot find sufficient small business participation for a partial set-aside under a MAC.

For acquisitions at or below the simplified-acquisition threshold, the requirement to exclusively reserve acquisitions for small business concerns does not preclude a Contracting Officer from awarding a contract to a small business under the 8(a) Program, HUBZone Program, SDVOSB Program or WOSB Program IAW FAR 19.203 (b).

We always hear about small businesses that may not have been successful; however, have any of you experienced poor performance with other-than-small-business (OTSB) contractors? If so, what was the outcome and do you believe the same tolerance for lack of performance was given to the OTSB?

No, it is a stereotype that seems to be spread by fear and miscommunication. The fact is, small businesses are more versatile and responsive to the needs of the government. It's better to be a big fish in a small pond than a small fish in an ocean.

The likelihood that a small business will fail is no greater than that a large business would. Small businesses are selected based on their ability to meet the terms and agreements of the Government requirements, not as a charity.