Procurement Countdown

NASA MidRange Procurements on the Internet

by Thomas Deback, Headquarters Contract Management Division

A year ago, most of us probably didn't know what the Internet was. Today, we have established a procurement bulletin board and are collaborating with other federal agencies on the Federal Acquisition Jumpstation! The bulletin board and Jumpstation are outgrowths of the MidRange test we are conducting.

An Electronic Bulletin Board was an integral part of MidRange from its inception. Marshall Space Flight Center, where the MidRange test began, considered a number of methods of electronically transmitting procurement documents before choosing the Internet solution. The whole concept of MidRange is to reduce the time and resources expended for smaller dollar value contracts. The bulletin board specifically targets the 45 to 60 day requirement between the time a Commerce Business Daily synopsis is published and the receipt of proposals. With the bulletin board, we can get the synopsis and solicitation into the hands of potential offerors as soon as they are available and offerors can begin preparing a proposal immediately. Once the bulletin board is fully operational and we have enough industry interest to ensure adequate competition, we will utilize a minimum proposal period of 15 days in lieu of the 45 to 60 day current requirement.

General procurement information, along with information about upcoming and current acquisitions, can be viewed and downloaded from a World-Wide Web (WWW) server. The Uniform Resource Locator (URL), or Internet destination, for the MSFC Procurement Home Page is: http://procure.msfc.nasa.gov (with no closing punctuation). MSFC has been operating the BBS for about six months at this point and some other centers have joined. Over the next months, all of the NASA centers will be online and their solicitations will be available through the bulletin board.

The Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act provides NASA a waiver to synopsis requirements for the purpose of testing the use of the bulletin board. We have not implemented the waiver as yet and will not do so until industry use of the bulletin board becomes more widespread.

Jumpstation

Many other agencies currently provide procurement data electronically--either through the Internet or through bulletin boards. Regulations, forms, program information, and Small

Business Innovation Research Program information are examples of information currently available.

The Federal Aviation Administration has been most supportive of our efforts and has joined us in establishing a Federal Acquisition Jumpstation. The concept is to provide industry one stop shopping for all federal procurement information available through the Internet. The Office of Federal Procurement Policy has been very supportive of this approach and will encourage all agencies to make their electronic data available through the Jumpstation. The URL for the Jumpstation is http://procure.msfc.nasa.gov/fedproc/home.html.

We have a number of ideas for future applications. Obvious next steps include providing all synopses and solicitations (the synopses will also be published in the Commerce Business Daily), providing all federal procurement regulations and forms, providing Acquisition Forecast data, and providing as much program information as industry would find useful. The synergy of the agencies participating in the Jumpstation and vendor response are going to be the greatest impetuses for growth and change for all of us.

LeRC Procurement Division Reorganizes

by Paivi H. Tripp, LeRC

The Procurement Division at the Lewis Research Center has a new organizational structure in place as of February 1995. The new structure is a result of several months of effort by a team of managers and non-managers in the Division to identify a structure that would best serve our customers, be aligned with the National Performance Review guidelines, and contribute to a high performance organization. Before we came up with the final design, the team surveyed our customers and internal personnel, benchmarked both government and private organizations, and developed mission, value and goal statements for the organization. Based on all of the above, the team next identified criteria that the new organization at a minimum ought to meet.

The resulting structure is a customer-focused organization where each branch will service all purchasing needs of a Directorate with a few exceptions. These exceptions include computer acquisitions, construction, center-wide services and grants which are still centralized. The rationale for continuing the centralized approach for these types of purchases is to retain the efficiencies gained by being able to combine requirements across the center and leverage the expertise gained in FIP, laws governing service contracts, etc.

The most notable changes from the old organizational structure include increased span of control by reducing the number of branches from nine to six; the handling of small purchases, equipment and R&D buys in the same branch; and the establishment of an Administrative Support Team which will provide secretarial and clerical support to the entire organization. We have also ensured in the new design that the utilization of support service contracts is aligned with existing directives, guidelines and budgetary realities. In brief outline, our new organization includes the following components supervised by the following personnel: Brad Baker, Procurement Division Chief, (the Procurement Division includes the Small Business Office and Procurement Systems); Paivi Tripp, Deputy; Ron Sepesi, Policy and Pricing; Ron Everett, Space Systems; Paul Karla, Technology Support; Jim Bolander, Aeropropulsion; Ken DeLaat, Computer Technology and Grants; Karin Huth, Services and Construction.

If you would like to obtain more information about our organization, please call Brad Baker at (216) 433-2800 or Paivi Tripp at (216) 433-2812.

NASA Procurement Offices on the Internet

NASA's Procurement Offices are developing information for the Internet. Several of the Procurement Offices already have home pages and MidRange information available, while others are still being developed. The URLs (or addresses for the World Wide Web) for the home pages that are on-line are listed below:

NASA Procurement Home Page
http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/procurement/

Ames Procurement Home Page
http://128.102.85.90/acq/acq.html

Dryden Procurement Home Page
http://www.dfrc.nasa.gov/Procure/procure.html

Goddard Procurement Home Page
http://genesis.gsfc.nasa.gov/procure.htm

Langley Procurement Home Page
http://db-www.larc.nasa.gov/procurement/home-page.html

Johnson Procurement Home Page
http://procur.jsc.nasa.gov

Kennedy Procurement Home Page
http://www.ksc.nasa.gov/procurement/procurement.html

Marshall Procurement Home Page
http://procure.msfc.nasa.gov/home.html

NASA Headquarters Acquisition Home Page
http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/procurement/acquisition/

Stennis Procurement Home Page
http://www.ssc.nasa.gov/~procure/

People on the Move

Kennedy Space Center: KSC procurement lost a special friend when Center Director **Robert L. Crippen**, also known as Crip, retired after more than two years as Center Director.

Crip supported and oversaw the opening in March 1994, of the off-site Central Industry Assistance Office. This "one face to industry" location provides one stop shopping without badging for small and big business trying to learn how to do business at the center.

He was sensitive not only to the socioeconomic aspects of procurement, but also, the human aspect. He personally introduced himself to each of the KSC procurement personnel when he became Center Director, held yearly all-hands type meetings with them and even participated in their Thanksgiving luncheon last year.

He took an active interest in the KSC procurement metrics and helped the KSC Procurement Office transition smoothly from the Procurement System Criteria program to the current self-assessments.

Those who worked closely with him, whether presenting charts, hashing out personnel issues or negotiating and administering contracts will miss him. We wish you well and know you will have continuing success.

Jay Honeycutt is KSC's sixth Center Director, succeeding Bob Crippen who left the agency January 21.

Honeycutt began his career with the government at Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, Alabama in 1960; joined NASA in 1966; held various management positions at Johnson Space Center and NASA Headquarters; and was named the Director, Space Transportation System Management and Operations in 1989--the position he held before being appointed Center Director.

Johnson Space Center: **Scott Thompson**, formerly the director of the Headquarters Contract Management Division, is now the Procurement Officer at the Johnson Space Center. **Steve Miley**, formerly of the Headquarters Acquisition Division has relocated to the Johnson Space Center.

Kennedy Space Center: **Linda Rogers**, the Procurement Officer, retired on March 31. **Rob Kolb** and **Kellie Murray**, both formerly, of the Headquarters Acquisition Division, have relocated to the Kennedy Space Center.

Marshall Space Flight Center: **Bryan Williford**, formerly of the Headquarters Acquisition Division, has relocated to the Marshall Space Flight Center.

Stennis Space Center: **John Williams**, the Procurement Officer, and **Carl Marceron**, both retired from the Stennis Space Center on March 31. Headquarters: **Dennis Douvarjo**, of the Acquisition Liaison Division, **Ken Jeffries**, of the Program Operations Division, and **John Ourand**, of the Headquarters Acquisition Division, all retired on March 31.

Good-Bye!

All of us wish Good Luck to our NASA procurement co-workers who took the buyout and retired.

They will be missed.

Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act Implementation

by Chris Jedrey, HQ Acquisition Liaison Division

The Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act (Act) was signed by President Clinton on October 13, 1994. Instead of the conventional FAR Council approach to implement this law (see FAR 1.201-1), a new process was established in the hope that it would streamline the existing regulatory implementation process. In lieu of the Defense Acquisition Regulation and the Civilian Acquisition Regulation councils implementing the new regulations, a Project Office has been established to perform this role.

The Project Office reports to the FAR Council, which comprises the Procurement Executives from NASA, GSA, and DOD, as well as the Administrator of OFPP. The FAR Council established a very aggressive goal of implementing this new law within 220 days from its enactment date of October 13, 1994. The law requires full implementation within 330 days.

Drafting Teams

Before FAR Cases were published, the Project Office, with approval from the FAR Council, established eleven interagency groups to draft proposed rules, respond to public comments and prepare the final FAR rules for publication. These "drafting teams" were established in the following areas:

❒ Contract Award
❒ Special Contracting Methods
❒ Truth in Negotiations (TINA)
❒ Protests & Disputes
❒ Audit
❒ Cost Principles
❒ Contract Financing/Payment
❒ Small Business
❒ Ethics
❒ Commercial Contracting
❒ Simplified Acquisition Procedures/FACNET

The teams began work on October 4, 1994. Twenty-eight FAR cases were established to cover the implementation efforts. As of April 1, 1995, four and one-half months from enactment, 26 rules have been published for comment (four of which are interim rules) and two remain to be issued. The public comment period is sixty (60) days as established in the Act. It is expected that the remaining FAR Cases will be published as proposed rules by May 1, 1995.

The two newest FAR Cases, Commercial Items and Simplified Acquisition Procedures/ FACNET, are very significant. (Both of these have recently had rules published for comment.) Unlike most of the other cases, these cases affect the entire procurement process for certain types of acquisitions. The proposed regulations are very lengthy and cover a lot of changes. A brief synopsis of their intended impact is provided below.

The Commercial Items proposed rule establishes a cultural change in the way the federal government acquires commercial goods and services. The Streamlining Act greatly expanded the definition of what constitutes "a commercial item." This means that more acquisitions will be able to use new commercial contracting methods which are anticipated to reduce the time and expense of the acquisition process. Also, "commercial services" is a new concept that is embraced by the Act and the proposed regulations. The philosophy of contracting for commercial items will be that of using methods, procedures, contract terms and conditions that are similar to "standard commercial practices" within the industry of that product or service. It also exempts commercial contracts from a number of statutes and will provide for the exemption of statutory clauses which are currently required to flow-down to subcontractors. This proposed rule makes major changes to FAR parts, 2, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12 and 52.

Raising the Threshold

The Simplified Acquisition Procedures/FACNET proposed regulations will change the "small purchases" term of art to "simplified acquisition" and raise the dollar threshold for use of simplified acquisition procedures to $100,000. However, the $100,000 threshold is contingent upon an agency or a contracting activity conducting 75 percent of its acquisitions between $2,500 and $100,000 in the prior fiscal year via electronic commerce. Until this is achieved, the threshold is only raised to $50,000. All acquisitions between $2,500 and $100,000 are set-aside for small business. This rule also provides for procedures on simplified acquisitions. Another FAR Case, Electronic Contracting (FAR 91-104) was published on the same day as the Simplified Acquisition rule. It proposes changes throughout the FAR to provide for electronic commerce.

As the rules are received by NASA, the Procurement Officers are solicited for their views and

Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act

concerns for incorporation into our agency comments. The drafting teams will evaluate all comments received and prepare the final rule for publication. NASA, which is one-third of the approval (signatory) authority for FAR changes, will see these regulations again briefly prior to their publication. We can approve or withhold approval and attempt to change the final rules. Once the final rules are approved by DOD, NASA and GSA, they are published in the Federal Register and shortly thereafter a FAC is issued to update your loose leaf FAR. (See box below for listing of Streamlining Rules Published for Comment.)

Last November a Special *Procurement Express* was published that summarized the Streamlining Act. This document provided a comprehensive summary of the major impacts of the new law. Should you have any questions please contact Chris Jedrey at (202) 358-0483.

5th KSC Business Expo Opens Doors of Opportunity

About 1,000 attendees looking for procurement opportunities at KSC turned out for the 5th Annual KSC Business Opportunities Expo on November 1, 1994. The KSC Small Business Council opened the event at Port Canaveral Cruise Terminal #5 with a ribbon cutting ceremony attended by a number of special guests.

Congressman John Mica called the Expo an "open forum for free enterprise" and praised KSC for the efforts. Ralph Thomas, Associate Administrator for NASA's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization, credited then Center Director Bob Crippen and Small Business Specialist Ann Watson for their endeavors and KSC's achievements in socioeconomic procurement programs. Bob Crippen thanked the mission prime contractors for their support of

small and disadvantaged businesses.

Over 200 vendors exhibited their wares and networked throughout the day. NASA and KSC prime contractor technical and procurement representatives were on hand to counsel attendees on government procurement

procedures as well as contract opportunities for the current fiscal year. "I've received a number of very positive comments from both attendees and exhibitors. It's been another successful year for KSC's Business Opportunities Expo," said Ann Watson.

ACQUISITION STREAMLINING RULES PUBLISHED FOR COMMENT

FAR CASE NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	DATE ISSUED
94-802	Officials Not to Benefit	12/1/94
94-803	Whistleblower Protections	12/1/94
94-804	Procurement Integrity	12/1/94
94-720	TINA (interim)	12/5/94
94-754	Cost Principle Revisions	12/13/94
94-753	Travel Cost	12/14/94
94-700	Repeal D&F for Cost Contracts (int)	12/15/94
94-771	Micro-purchases (interim)	12/15/94
94-751	Penalties-Unallowable Costs	12/19/94
94-752	Overhead Certifications	12/19/94
94-801	Debarment/Suspension	12/20/94
94-740	Examination of Records	12/23/94
94-721	Truth In Negotiations	1/6/95
94-780	Small Business	1/6/95
94-701	Contract Award	1/9/95
94-730	Protests, Disputes & Appeals	1/10/95

FAR CASE NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	DATE ISSUED
94-750	Gifts & Entertainment (interim)	1/13/95
94-761	Assignment of Claims	1/19/95
94-762	Subcontractor Payments	2/2/95
94-790	Commercial Items	3/1/95
94-770	Simplified Acquisition Procedures/FACNET	3/6/95
94-710	Special Contracting Methods	3/16/95
94-711	Task & Delivery Order Contracts	3/16/95
94-731	Misc. Protest Provisions	3/23/95
94-764	Contract Financing	3/15/95
94-791	Subcontracts for Commercial Items	3/22/95

ACQUISITION STREAMLINING CASES REMAINING TO BE PUBLISHED

94-765	Fraud Remedies	
94-766	Service Contract Funding	

NASA Initiates Electronic Commerce and EC Training for Small Businesses

During the past 18 months, NASA has been involved in the Federal Initiative to develop Electronic Commerce (EC) programs within all federal agencies and departments. This initiative was chartered by President Clinton's Executive Memorandum of October 26, 1993. NASA's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) is actively supporting this EC Initiative by providing the small business community several opportunities to obtain EC information and training so that they may actively participate as our EC programs go "on-line."

The NASA OSDBU's annual small business conferences will incorporate EC training. The next NASA Small Business Conference will be on August 7-9, in Providence, Rhode Island. Information is available about this conference through the NASA Center for Technology Commercialization in New Hampshire at (603) 598-8800.

The NASA OSDBU and Small Business Specialists will also incorporate EC information to the fullest extent possible in the other small business conferences in which NASA participates throughout the United States.

The training courses sponsored by the NASA OSDBU will also incorporate EC training. One of these courses, offered several times each year, is "Training and Development of Small Disadvantaged Businesses in Advanced Technologies (TADSBAT)."

This course is provided free by NASA to certain high-tech small disadvantaged firms.

Additional information about this course is available by calling 1-800-933-8483 or (205) 883-4451. Inquiries may be faxed to (205) 880-2715. The course is being offered June 12-14, at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory; and September 12-14, at Marshall Space Flight Center.

The OSDBU will incorporate information on EC as it becomes available through the
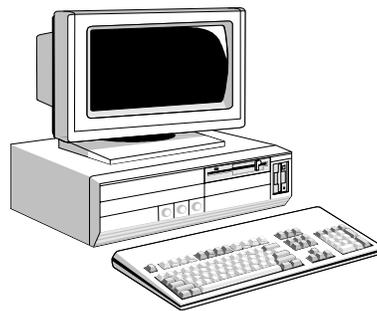
four bulletins which it distributes to the small business community. These include the OSDBU Newsletters, OSDBU Procurement Bulletins, the OSDBU Legislative Bulletins, and OSDBU Information Bulletins.

Requests for these bulletins may be made by calling (202) 358-2088 or by faxing requests to (202) 358-3261. The NASA OSDBU will also be working with the Minority Business Resource Advisory Committee and the Prime Contractors' Roundtable to develop EC training for the small business community.

The NASA Office of Procurement and OSDBU will be working through membership in the federal government's interagency Electronic Commerce Outreach Team, which is under the leadership of the Small Business Administration, to disseminate information on EC.

The federal EC program will provide greater opportunities to small businesses which want to participate in federal procurement. Without access to this new technology, small businesses will find limited opportunities to bid on the federal government's simplified acquisitions. NASA will make EC training available to these businesses to the fullest extent possible.

Finally, excellent information about federal EC is also available through the Department of Defense (DOD) EC Information Center. Personnel are available by telephone to answer questions and if asked will send information packages on federal EC. The telephone number is: 1 (800) EDI-3414. (Requesting periodic updates is recommended, as EC information is changing rapidly). Additional information is available through the Internet on a World Wide Web (WWW) server (http://www.acq.osd.mil), from which all public documents related to the federal EC program can be downloaded. Many of these documents are also available from the SBA-OnLine Bulletin Board System (BBS) at 1-800-697-4636.

The next issue of Procurement Countdown will feature an article about how the Office of Procurement is implementing Electronic Commerce solutions.

Contractor Metrics Program Expands

by Ken Sateriale, Headquarters Analysis Division

Entering its third year of successful operation, the Contractor Metrics program has expanded from 29 to 77 contracts covered and made several significant changes. First, beginning with performance data for FY 95, Contractor Metrics submissions will be maintained at the centers for cost contracts with an estimated final value greater than $50 million. (Next year we plan to lower that threshold to $25 million.) Second, Contractor Metrics will be forwarded to Headquarters only for those contracts that support programs under the review of the Program Management Council and have an estimated final value greater than $25 million. This data will be available for discussion at the NASA Headquarters Program Management Council quarterly reviews. Third, annually (versus previously biannually) Contrac-

tor Metrics Reports will be sent to selected CEO's by the Administrator, summarizing their performance over the year. The letters will be sent to CEO's whose NASA contracts are

funded, in aggregate, at more than $100 million per year or are of special interest to the Administrator. The Contractor Metrics data to support these reports will be gathered from both centers and Headquarters.

Additionally, the Contractor Metrics NMI 2340.3 and NHB

2340.4 are being revised to: include the tracking of Women-Owned Small Business awards against the subcontracting plan goal; and, subdivide the technical metric to track changes to the

technical content of the contract.

Other ongoing Contractor Metrics activities include a user survey to be completed this winter and the planned automation of metrics submissions in FY 95. If you have any questions, you may contact me at ksateria@proc.hq.nasa.gov.

NASA Selects Phase II Small Business Projects

Aerospace technology will reach another 166 small, high technology firms located in 31 states with the selection of Phase II contract awards in NASA's Small Business Innovation Research Program (SBIR).

SBIR goals are to stimulate technological innovation, increase the use of small business (including minority and disadvantaged firms) in meeting federal research and development needs, and increase private sector commercialization of results from federally funded research.

A total of 338 proposals were submitted by SBIR contractors completing Phase I projects that were initiated in 1993. The 166 selected Phase II projects have a total value of approximately $111 million.

Phase I project objectives are to determine feasibility of research innovations meeting agency needs. Phase II continues development of the most promising Phase I projects. Selection criteria include technical merit and innovation, Phase I results, value to NASA, commercial

potential, and company capabilities. Funding for Phase II contracts may be up to $600,000 for a two-year performance period.

The SBIR program is managed by NASA's Office of Space Access and Technology, NASA Headquarters, Washington, DC, with individual SBIR projects managed by nine NASA field centers and the NASA Management Office (NMO) at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

NASA Exceeds Its Small Disadvantaged Business Goal for Second Straight Year

by Deborah O'Neill, Headquarters Contract Management Division

Building upon the momentum begun in FY 93, NASA again exceeded the legislatively-mandated 8 percent small disadvantaged business (SDB) goal in FY 94 by achieving 9.9 percent. This means that NASA awarded over $550 million to small disadvantaged businesses directly. Over $636 million were awarded to SDB's as subcontractors.

What is the 8 percent goal and how was it established? The answer can be found in NASA's 1990 Appropriation Act. In the Department of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, for FY 90, (Public Law 101-144), NASA received a congressional mandate that stated, "The NASA Administrator shall annually establish a goal of at least 8 per centum of the total value of prime and subcontracts awarded in support of authorized programs, including the space station by the time operational status is obtained, which funds will be made available to small business concerns or other organizations owned or controlled by socially disadvantaged individuals...including Historically Black Colleges and Universities and minority educational institutions."

As part of the FY 91 VA-HUD-Independent Agencies Appropriations Act (Public Law 101-507), Congress clarified its intention with respect to women-owned small businesses. The modified provision was stated as follows, "The NASA Administrator shall, to the fullest extent possible, ensure that at least 8 per centum of federal funding for prime and subcontracts awarded in support of authorized programs, including the space station by the time operational status is obtained, be made available to business concerns or other organizations controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals...including Historically Black Colleges and Universities. For purposes of this section, economically and socially disadvantaged individuals shall be deemed to include women."

NASA selected the end of FY 94 as the target date for achieving the 8 percent goal. Not only did NASA meet the goal a year early, NASA exceeded it by reaching 8.5 percent by the end of FY 93. This was a significant accomplishment considering that by the end of FY 90, only 5.3 percent of NASA's prime and subcontract funding was being awarded to SDBs.

Surpassing the goal for two consecutive years reflects greatly on NASA's commitment to providing significant opportunities to SDBs. What is the basis for NASA's significant achievement?

One answer lies with the NASA Administrator himself. Daniel Goldin continues to be an advocate for SDB contracting. Another reason is a strong commitment from NASA's prime contractors. NASA continues to include in its contracts an SDB subcontracting goal. The exact SDB subcontracting goal is determined on a contract-by-contract basis; however, NASA pursues aggressive, yet, realistic goals from the prime contractor in this area. Continued use of the Small Business Administration's 8(a) program is a third reason for exceeding the goal.

Finally, exceeding the goal for the second consecutive year was the result of the NASA procurement community being committed to attaining the goal and striving for ways to achieve it. To reach a goal of this significance takes the dedication of many people. The Center Directors provided their organizations with the focus, and the technical community created programs that could take advantage of the expertise small businesses had to offer. It truly was a combined endeavor, but without the perseverance of procurement professionals, including small business specialists, this accomplishment would not have been possible.

NASA should be proud of this achievement. It represents a true team effort.

Kelman Visits KSC

Dr. Steven Kelman, Director of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, visited NASA/KSC in conjunction with his speaking engagement at the National Contract Management Association's February Educational Conference. Tom Luedtke, Deputy Associate Administrator for Procurement also attended the conference. Dr. Kelman spent some time with the KSC procurement professionals, talking and answering questions on February 17, after he spoke to the NCMA.

What's Happening with Contract Property

by Larry Pendleton, Headquarters Contract Management Division

The past year saw a great deal of activity on contract property management issues. The flurry of activity was prompted by several things: reports by GAO and the OIG, the need for audited annual NASA financial statements, and our own internal reviews and management concerns.

A major change was made last August with Procurement and Grants Notices revising the reporting period and due date for reports of Government-Owned/Contractor-Held Property on NASA Form 1018. As you probably know, the change was made to obtain property financial data on a fiscal year basis to coincide with other data reported in our financial statements. We had some concerns about making the change late in the fiscal year, because it required that many contracts be modified, and set new times and procedures for sending in reports. Some of our less optimistic colleagues forecasted a reporting disaster in October.

All of our centers, DCMC, and contractors, did an exceptional job of implementing these changes, and more importantly, getting the reports in on time. When calculated in December, only 21 of some 1880 property reports had not been received. That's a great score even if there had been no changes in the process. Given the changes we

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made, and the timing, it's outstanding.

As this goes to press, a small group here at Headquarters continues work on revising the 1018. The group has members from property, finance, and procurement. About the end of November, we asked for comments from the centers on the revisions we had drafted so far, and got many thoughtful and helpful suggestions. We are now at work on draft changes to the NASA FAR Supplement to accommodate the form revision. These changes will also come out for informal comment as soon as they are available.

Our objectives for this revision are to simplify the process and the form; to make reporting easier, and therefore better; and to move our reporting system closer (though not identical) to DOD's.

The reason we have our eye on DOD is twofold. First, they deal with most of the same contractors and administer many of our contracts, so there are obvious advantages to having similar reporting structures. Second, we see real opportunity in the near term for a common reporting structure for DOD and NASA. We need to be ready for that possibility.

A more uniform reporting system should produce more accurate data from all contractors, in a more timely way, at less overall cost.

Small Business Innovation Research Program
(continued from page 7)

NASA 93-1 Phase II Award Distributions by Field Center - November 1994

Center	Awards	Firms	Center	Awards	Firms
ARC	17	16	LeRC	27	27
DFRC	5	5	MSFC	25	23
GSFC	27	26	NASA HQ	3	3
JSC	26	26	NMO/JPL	20	20
KSC	7	7	SSC	6	6
LaRC	26	25			

Procurement Planning -- A Success Story

by Hasani N. Martin, GSFC

What is a perfect procurement? Is it a procurement that is completed quickly within its schedule and budget? Is it a procurement which has adequate price competition? Are all technical criteria met or exceeded? Are offerors considered responsive and responsible? Most importantly, will the end product consistently work as it was designed to? By taking all of the above questions into account, using creative planning early in the process, and trying some different strategies, we structured a procurement that was very successful.

Increasing Communication

This procurement was for the purchase of a Digital Matrix Switch (DMS) to be used by NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center's NASA Communications Division. One highlight of this procurement was the increased communication between the government and contractors. Early in the planning process, the government determined that the more input provided by industry during the planning stage for the specification, the better the quality of the solicitation and the subsequent proposal. We gave vendors an opportunity to comment on the draft specification prior to the release of the RFP, so competition could be maximized and improvements to the specification could be implemented.

The government issued a presolicitation synopsis, and we mailed vendors a copy of the draft specification. All interested firms were given an opportunity to submit written comments on the specification and attend one-on-one interviews with the government to discuss their experience and product availability. By allowing firms an opportunity to review and comment on the draft specification, on questions about the specification, or on inconsistencies and restrictions within the specification, it could be changed before the RFP was released. Industry's comments on the specification, and the one-on-one interviews, were very beneficial to the government.

Careful Planning

My acquisition for the purchase of the DMS resulted in a firm fixed price contract with a total price of $1.3 million. The requirement for this acquisition had an accelerated schedule, which meant that there was little opportunity to delay the contract award date. We tried to identify as many problems up front as possible.

One of the goals for the project was to encourage the use of commercial off the shelf products. However, the government had unique technical requirements. Because of that, the most vendors could do was propose modified commercial hardware. Not all firms were interested in modifying their products to meet NASA specific requirements, nor was it cost effective for all firms to modify their products.

Technical and procurement management along with staff personnel, jointly defined the project objectives, identified potential problems, and provided constructive input toward problem resolution. Maximization of competition, and obtaining the best price value trade off, became central issues addressed during the planning process.

By having the in-depth communications with industry, the government's minimum requirement could be balanced with available industry commercial standards. The government could then make informed decisions regarding technical and

price trade-offs, in an environment conducive to the free exchange of ideas.

Point scoring became a major issue, in that, factors and subfactors had to be clearly written, so vendors could design their equipment to maximize the price value trade-off. Although firms could not participate in reviewing specific factors, information provided during the interview process did help the government write the factors.

The business evaluation panel (BEP) and the technical evaluation panel (TEP) jointly prepared the point scoring plan. Input provided by the BEP and management, helped the TEP prepare a plan with greater precision. Firms had few, if any, problems matching their technical proposal to the specification and other evaluation factors.

We appointed a procurement manager to the TEP, to help evaluate proposals, and provide

Sharing Good Ideas:
Time Management Techniques for the Procurement Professional
by Robert A. Democh, JPL-NMO

Do you sometimes feel like a hamster on a wheel, constantly in motion but not really getting anywhere? It can be a frustrating and exhausting experience. Here are some time management techniques that can help you get "off the wheel."

Develop a sense of priorities. Make lists of important tasks and projects. Prioritize the top 5 or 6 to help you focus your efforts. Estimate the amount of time required for each task. Rank tasks 1, 2 or 3 depending on its importance or how stressful it is to you. Concentrate your time on the most profitable tasks. Cross off each task as you complete it and transfer unfinished items to the next day's list. Remember, saving just 10 minutes each day will give you 7 extra eight hour work days over a calendar year.

If possible, handle each piece of paper crossing your desk just once. Guard against falling into the trap of allowing the work to expand to fill the time available.

The important thing is not how much you do, but how much you get done.

Adopt the "Swiss cheese" approach. If you have a major assignment that is not due for several weeks, start with the date it is due and work backwards on your calendar. Block out the necessary amounts of time needed to complete it. Then gradually "poke holes" in it, instead of trying to do it all at the last minute. You'll do a better job and avoid unwanted stress.

I have found these techniques useful. You may have others that work for you. The important thing is to develop a system you can use to help you manage your time, effectively.

Do you have helpful ideas that could benefit others in Procurement? Send them in to Procurement Countdown, Code H, Washington, DC 20546. Or send it via e-mail to Smarucci@proc.hq.nasa.gov.

Procurement Planning -- A Success Story

guidance on procedural questions. This decision virtually eliminated the redundancy associated with preparing technical documentation. It also helped to shorten the review and approval process, since the procurement manager had direct input in preparing the documentation.

The benefits of proper planning have been substantial. In this case, proper planning helped to solve problems before they developed. More importantly, the effective use of teams with management input helped to create a flexible and proactive procurement strategy. The Digital Matrix Switch procurement was completed on time, and within budget, which proves once again, an ounce of prevention can be worth a pound of cure.

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