



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Washington, DC 20240

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## **Department of the Interior Guidance (DIG) Release 2012-01**

**Subject:** Department of the Interior Vendor Communication Plan

**Reference:** Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) memorandum, "*Myth-Busting*": *Addressing Misconceptions to Improve Communication with Industry during the Acquisition Process*, dated February 2, 2011

### **1. Purpose:**

This guidance release is issued to provide guidance to Department of the Interior (DOI) contracting activities on appropriate criteria and techniques for obtaining vendor input during the acquisition process.

### **2. Effective Date:**

Effective upon issuance.

### **3. Expiration Date:**

This guidance will remain in effect unless cancelled or superseded.

### **4. Background and Explanation:**

The OFPP memorandum, "*Myth-Busting*": *Addressing Misconceptions to Improve Communication with Industry during the Acquisition Process*, dated February 2, 2011, directed agencies subject to the Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Act to submit to OFPP a high-level plan for encouraging more and improved communication with vendors, taking advantage of existing authorities, and educating our workforce on communication opportunities. The DOI Vendor Communication Plan was vetted through the DOI contracting community and approved by OFPP. Vendor communication guidance for contracting staff that was included in the final plan has been incorporated into this DIG.

Effective vendor communication is a priority at DOI. Building an appropriate relationship with industry ensures that our contracts are based on a true meeting of the minds - a mutual understanding of requirements, terms and conditions – that will help ensure a successful result. The following guidance is provided in order to ensure consistency in use of effective communication with vendors across the Department.

## **5. Action Required:**

Contracting Officers (CO) should consider obtaining vendor input on re-competitions of procurements in which:

- The prior procurement did not result in the solution needed or was otherwise not successful, either due to poorly-defined requirements, or contractor failure to perform.
- A competitive solicitation was issued, but only one offeror responded; and market research suggests that more than one vendor is available and capable to perform.

Acquisition plans for large-dollar value (\$10 million and over) acquisitions of services that are considered high-risk (high profile, or have substantial associated risks) or complex should include a comprehensive vendor engagement strategy that includes one or more of the following techniques:

- issuance of a Request for Information or posting of a draft solicitation, allowing time for vendor responses prior to solicitation release;
- a pre-solicitation or pre-proposal conference (may be done via teleconference or videoconference if not feasible to do in person);
- one-on-one interaction with vendors via a method determined appropriate by the contracting officer prior to solicitation release;
- discussions, as needed and in accordance with FAR Part 15, during the proposal evaluation process.

COs may apply any or all of the techniques listed above for acquisitions below the \$10 Million threshold if the CO determines that the acquisition may benefit from increased vendor engagement.

In addition, COs should include an acquisition milestone for discussions for new negotiated (FAR Part 15) procurements valued in excess of \$1 million, regardless of whether discussions are anticipated. By planning in advance for the possibility of discussions and incorporating them into acquisition milestone plans, the acquisition team will maintain the necessary flexibility to raise and resolve important issues and ensure that time constraints do not dissuade COs from engaging in discussions when discussions would otherwise be advantageous.

Contracting staff should review the following existing policies on communication with vendors:

Department of the Interior Acquisition Regulation

1415.201 Exchanges with industry before receipt of proposals.

Federal Acquisition Regulation

PART 10—MARKET RESEARCH

15.201 Exchanges with industry before receipt of proposals.

15.202 Advisory multi-step process.

15.306 Exchanges with offerors after receipt of proposals.

Subpart 24.2—Freedom of Information Act

**5. Additional Information:**

Please disseminate this guidance within your bureau. It will also be available on the web at <http://www.doi.gov/pam/doiacqguidance.html> . You may contact Tiffany Schermerhorn of the Office of Acquisition and Property Management at (202) 254-5517 or [Tiffany\\_Schermerhorn@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Tiffany_Schermerhorn@ios.doi.gov) with any questions about this guidance release.



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