Department of Homeland Security

Office of the Chief Procurement Officer and Office of the Chief Security Officer

PERSONNEL SECURITY ACQUISITION INNOVATION ROUNDTABLE KEY KNOWLEDGE GAPS

The below challenges and focus areas are the key takeaways from a DHS Acquisition Innovation Roundtable (AIR) on the personnel security and vetting process. AIRs bring together DHS and industry representatives for discussions that focus on obtaining feedback on our business processes, the tools we use, and learning about business practices used in industry and other government agencies to streamline acquisition processes and delivery capability to operators faster. The participants for this AIR included DHS and industry leaders with involvement and expertise in the personnel security field.

Challenge   **Perceived lack of reciprocity between DHS headquarters and DHS components**

There is a perception by industry that fitness, security clearance, or Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) eligibility, determinations are not reciprocally accepted by DHS headquarters or components, even when transferring between HQ or components. This increases the likelihood of industry submitting multiple candidates for single positions, increases the number of investigations for the DHS Personnel Security Division (PSD), and increases the amount of time between contract award and contractor employees beginning performance on the contract.

DHS participates in the National Industrial Security Program, and as such, reciprocally honors security clearances granted by the Department of Defense. Contractors must additionally be evaluated for fitness, which is based on the duties of the position. The need for a fitness determination may cause confusion over when reciprocity should apply. In many instances, when specific complaints are reviewed, it is determined the transfer did not meet reciprocity eligibility requirements.

Focus Area   **Define and ensure reciprocity within DHS**

Educate stakeholders on the different types of reciprocity (fitness, security clearance, and SCI eligibility) and why some may apply but not others.

Continuously assess the use of reciprocity across DHS to identify opportunities for improvement.

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Challenge   **Communication between DHS and industry**

There are communication gaps between industry and DHS representatives related to security requirements for contract personnel. Minimal communication can lead to increased personnel security processing time.

Focus Area   **Include appropriate stakeholders throughout the procurement and award process**

Consider describing and defining security risk levels more thoroughly in the Statement of Work (SOW) to help industry proactively recruit appropriate candidates.

Include all appropriate industry representatives and PSD, the Contracting Officer, the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR), and Program Manager(s) in the kick-off meeting to discuss and better understand personnel security requirements. The information discussed can then be considered for staffing plans and prioritizing the submissions of contractor employee security packages for processing.

Expand the number of DHS offices where CORs have access to PSD reports showing the status of candidates.

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Challenge   **Candidate security processing timelines vary**

Currently, the candidate personnel security process timeline varies in a way that can adversely impact the contractor's ability to quickly on-board employees. This directly impacts the capability of DHS and industry to fulfill critical mission requirements.

Focus area   **Reduce impediments to timeliness**

Consider vetting individuals prior to selecting them as candidates to work on a DHS contract.

Submit one candidate per position at a time, to reduce the burden on PSD resources.

Identify key personnel on security packages, to prioritize and expedite security processing.

Continue to refine metrics and assess points in the process where candidates are delayed, to identify areas within the respective stakeholder's control that can be improved.