Department of Homeland Security
RFI-RFP Roundtable Discussion Event
May 26, 2015

The RFI-RFP Roundtable Discussion Event fostered a two-way discussion between industry and government centered on the pre-award phases of procurement. The following is a summarization of the general central themes expressed in all four sessions.

Acquisition Planning and Forecast System (APFS)

Overall in the sessions, industry participants felt that the APFS system was beneficial to them in the planning process. Areas of improvement include the timeliness and accuracy of the information within the postings. More specifically, it was expressed that the point-of-contact (POC) information was often not correct or not a person who was able to help with any questions regarding the upcoming procurement. Additionally, it was emphasized that set-aside information, cancellations, and data are not routinely updated or available. Concerns about consistent naming conventions were especially expressed in the Small Business session. Industry participants suggested using a blog, similar to GSA, for larger procurements.

Request for Information (RFI)

For RFIs overall, three areas of improvement included increased communication and consistency. Industry participants felt that RFIs are helpful and useful for them but are not used consistently across DHS and often result in an information "black hole". Industry partners gave kudos to the contracting activity at ICE for using RFIs well. It's noted across the sessions that DHS should increase the communication with vendors regarding the criteria and the problem that is trying to be solved, as well as being timely with responses to questions in regards to the RFI. DHS officials clarified that the Department uses RFIs to garner information on requirements that are new or unknown, including whether small businesses are able to fulfill the requirement. Industry pointed out that the time in which to adequately respond to RFIs is too short, and for better answers more time needs to be available.

Draft Request for Proposals/Request for Proposals (RFP)

Overall, Industry wants to DHS to use draft RFPs more often. Contractor concerns with RFPs include overly specific requirements (too narrow) especially in R&D, not enough time to respond especially when there are significant changes from the RFI and the RFP, and lack of communication during the evaluation phase. Industry hailed praise for OPO, NPPD, and OBIM for their transition processes from RFI to RFP posting. Industry would like to see more industry days for larger, more complicated procurements.

Other FedBizOpps Posting and Announcements

This section focused on how DHS conveys information to its business partners, outside of posting to FedBizOpps (FBO). Industry made suggestions on other outlets to use, including Twitter and utilizing hashtags (#), Reddit and holding Ask Me Anything (AMA) campaigns, Facebook, and blogs. Industry felt the Doing Business with DHS page on DHS.gov was useful but not very direct with information. Finally, very few participants had heard of the Acquisition Innovations in Motion (AIiM) initiative launched in April, which focuses on strategic industry engagement. The overall sentiment was better communication with the program office on their requirement will create a better end product.

<u>Other Areas of Discussion</u>
Discussions outside of the general perimeters included debriefings, communication in general, and the use of lowest price technically acceptable (LPTA) trade-off procedures. Industry expressed our debriefings could use improvement in areas of specifics and consistency in quality to better help the contractor understand why they did not win. Communication was a consistent theme across all the topic areas, but it is important to emphasize that communication in general is imperative for better contracting to occur. Finally, it was discussed how LPTA limits a contractors ability, especially small businesses, to competitively price their proposals, as it is perceived LPTA allows for vendors to "buy-in".