

Aligning Business and Government Acquisition Process to Improve Win Probability

Prepare to win on the business development battlefield by understanding the organizational terrain and timing.

By: Mitch Reed CPP.APMP

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To improve an organization's overall proposal-win probability, business development and proposal professionals need a clear understanding of the Government's procurement process, how it aligns with industries' business acquisition process; and the steps professionals perform during each phase to prepare to win. This understanding is paramount to the performance of a sound business development strategy that can be translated into an executable capture program leading to the development of a proposed solution targeted to customers' mission requirements. This understanding is critical for the following reasons:

- **Customer Mission Requirements:** Identify critical mission technical and schedule requirements and other conditions driving the customer's procurement request.
- **Customer Knowledge of Products and Services:** Inform customer of products or services available and how they meet the customer mission technical and schedule requirements.
- **Customer Trust of Company and Performance Ability:** Inform customer of company's past successes solving similar customer mission requirements.

Understanding the Government procurement process is critical for another reason; the end users that have the mission requirements do not directly conduct the purchasing. Purchasing is accomplished through a separate Government contracting agency or an inter-agency designated contracting office. This is important to understand because the procuring agency that awards and manages the contract is most often NOT the end customer for the products or services procured. While most proposal professionals understand this, few ever take the procurement organizational structure or special conditions of the purchasing office into account when planning business development efforts.

Who Influenced your Customers?

When receiving an RFP, the first question that needs to be asked is: *Who helped the Government develop the Solicitation requirements?* Too often, this is the only question asked ignoring two additional, but highly critical questions: *Who helped them plan their initial budget independent from the contracting agency? And finally, what other contracting agencies may be more advantageous to manage the procurement process?*

Directly or indirectly, you or your competitor influenced the RFP development, budget, contract vehicle therefore influencing the contracting agency. A detailed reading of the SOW/PWS often makes this clear based on the products or services used to define the requirements. Your Business Development Team's goal is to always ensure your company was the most highly influential on the final RFP, thus significantly increasing win probability.

Program opportunities begin long before contracting agencies become involved offering contractors the opportunity to work with program managers and help guide the foundational requirements, budgets, and potential contract vehicles to maximize the program's success. It is with a clear understanding of the key aspects of the procurement process and its alignment to the acquisition process which offers your company the ability to better impact the following:

1. **Present mission requirement solutions to issues that directly influence Statement of Work (SOW) or Performance Work Statement (PWS) development:** Much of this effort occurs prior to the program management offices engaging the contracting agency. This offers contractors a golden opportunity to help customers more clearly identify potential and alternate solutions to meet mission requirements and support the next critical area--budget.
2. **Develop a realistic budget based on mission requirements to execute the SOW/PWS:** With better defined SOW's/PWS's, companies can assist program managers to establish realistic budgets and explore options to meet the programs financial constraints and maximize program value.

3. **Identify other potential contracting agencies/contract vehicles that are more advantageous to procure, manage, and execute awarded contract:** Keep in mind government contracting agencies charge customers a percent of their program funds to manage contracts to cover their operations cost. Agency program offices can often leverage other contracting agencies and contracting vehicles to maximize program funds and better control program execution.

Collaborative approaches to work with program offices to effectively achieve the above objectives will be presented in future whitepapers to be presented over the next few months.

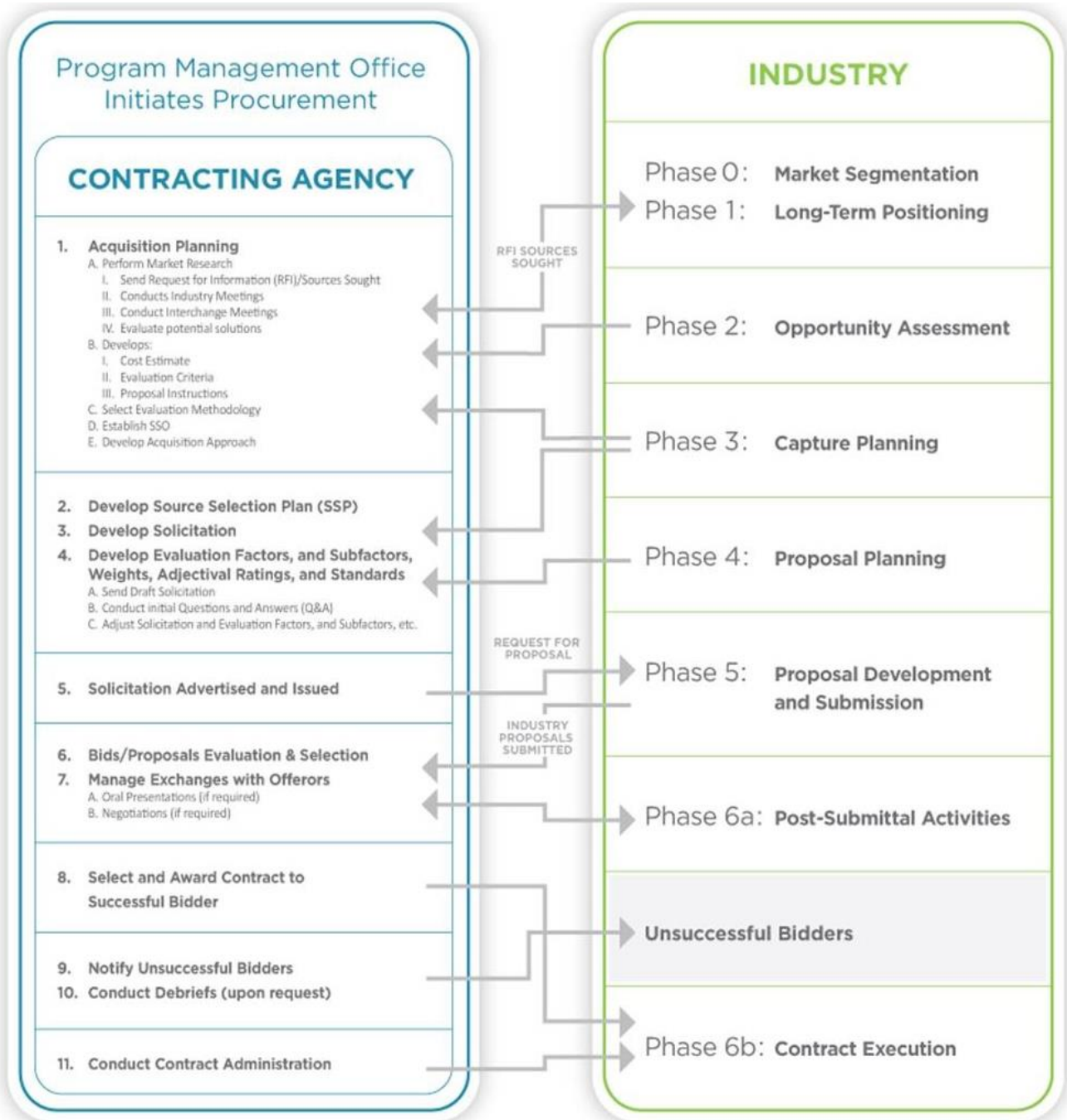


Figure 1: High-level Federal Government Procurement Process. The broad Federal procurement process steps presented above, while not comprehensive, demonstrate how industry interacts with the government customer and contracting agency. Sources: http://www.acq.osd.mil/osbp/docs/government_contracting_the_basics.pdf, Army Source Selection Manual (February 26, 2009), and Shipley Capture Guide, page vii, 2008.

When the program office engages the contracting office, they continue to be involved throughout all the phases of the procurement process. It is your company's early involvement as a trusted partner that provides both the program office and the contracting agency the confidence that your company will deliver.

How should this understanding impact business development and proposal planning when pursuing government business? As shown in Figure 1, the procurement process offers multiple opportunities for contractors to work directly with the program offices and contracting agencies.

This ensures mission requirements are met at the greatest value to the Government and still allow contractors to prosper. This is accomplished through:

1. Internal corporate planning and coordination by sales professionals which aligns efforts at each level of the Government procurement and business acquisition process.
2. Directly interfacing with key program and contract personnel to directly influence the overall programs to ensure its success and the success of the winning contractor.

In conclusion, the first process step of the Government Procurement process, Acquisition Planning, is specifically designed for this purpose. Leveraging key opportunities to work with the program office and the contract agency, ethically and consistently, will increase your winning potential.

Source:

1. http://www.acq.osd.mil/osbp/docs/government_contracting_the_basics.pdf, Downloaded August 2017.
2. Army Source Selection Manual, February 26, 2009, Page 3
3. Shipley Capture Guide, page vii, 2008

Industry Phase	Customer Interaction: Strategy and Goals
Phase 0: Market Segmentation	<p>Strategy: Identify short/long-term opportunities to support target market growth.</p> <p>Goal(s)/Action Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct internal capabilities assessment and relevant experience alignment to government market. 2. Define company mission, market goals, and Government market targets. 3. Identify key program offices and contracting agency partner requiring company's products/services. 4. Meet one-on-one in person with Program Management and Contracting Agency personnel to identify current needs and upcoming requirements. 5. Identify key contract vehicles (Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity) to ensure customers can access your company's products or services.
Phase 1: Long-Term Positioning	<p>Strategy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure Program Office and Contracting Agency personnel are fully aware of your company's products, services, experience, capabilities, and competencies delivering on previous similar contracts. 2. Use whitepapers, RFIs, and one-on-one meetings to influence program requirements. <p>Goal(s)/Action Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attend customer sponsored industry days and other meetings or trade shows they frequently attend. 2. Identify key personnel with direct influence over the source selection process. 3. Develop initial solutions/concepts to program requirements to validate ability to perform. Meet one-on-one in person with Program Office and Contracting Agency personnel to present possible solutions and gather intelligence. 4. Submit Industry Inputs (RFI, Sources Sought, Whitepapers, Data, etc.). 5. Develop price-to-win based on budget and competitive research.
Phase 2: Opportunity Assessment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Develop initial solutions/concepts to program requirements to validate ability to perform. Meet one-on-one in person with Program Office and Contracting Agency personnel to present possible solutions and gather intelligence. 4. Submit Industry Inputs (RFI, Sources Sought, Whitepapers, Data, etc.). 5. Develop price-to-win based on budget and competitive research.
Phase 3: Capture Planning	<p>Strategy: Influence final requirements, evaluation factors, and sub factors, weights, adjectival ratings, and standards development.</p> <p>Goal(s)/Action Items:</p>
Phase 4: Proposal Planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue one-on-one face-to-face meetings with Program Office and Contracting Agency personnel to present solutions/concepts to requirements to gain feedback and validate approach. 2. Develop Capture Strategy. 3. Conduct Customer Analysis. 4. Develop Technical/Operational Solution. 5. Conduct Competitive Analysis. 6. Attend Industry Day Events. 7. Develop Price-to-Win. 8. Use Draft RFP to initiate full proposal development efforts. 9. Use Q&A's to submit questions designed to influence the Draft RFP to better position your solutions and ghost competitors. <p>NOTE: Following Draft RFP release, many Program Office/Contacting Agency personnel will no longer meet potential contractors.</p>
Phase 5: Proposal Development	<p>Strategy: Use Q&A's to submit questions designed to influence the Draft RFP to better position your solutions and ghost competitors.</p> <p>Goal(s)/Action Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Convince Contracting Agency to modify Solicitation requirements not favorable to your solution and highlight your competitors' potential solutions risks favorable to your solution. 2. Contact Past Performance References prior to responding to Past Performance Questionnaires to ensure their willingness to present your performance in the best possible way. 3. Follow a proven proposal process based on best practices and well-trained proposal professionals. <p>NOTE: Following Final RFP release, contact with Contracting Agencies is limited to official correspondence only such as the Q&A process.</p>

Industry Phase	Customer Interaction: Strategy and Goals
Phase 6: Post-Submittal and Execution	<p>Strategy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Use the Evaluation Notice process to better position your company’s solution and address deficiencies.2. Use debrief to develop lessons learned (win or lose) to support future business development efforts and gather intelligence on the Program Office, Contract Agency, and its personnel. <p>Goal(s)/Action Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Answer Evaluation Questions.2. Develop and Conduct Oral Presentation (if required).3. Support Negotiations (if required).