

MYTH BUSTING

Improving Industry Engagement

FACT



Myths and Facts about Communication with Vendors

1

Myth: "We can't meet one-on-one with a potential offeror."

Fact: Government officials can generally meet one-on-one with potential offerors as long as no vendor receives preferential treatment.

2

Myth: "Since communication with contractors is like communication with registered lobbyists, and since contact with lobbyists must be disclosed, additional communication with contractors will involve a substantial additional burden, so we should avoid these meetings."

Fact: Disclosure is required only in certain circumstances, such as for meetings with registered lobbyists. Many contractors don't fall into this category, and even when disclosure is required, it's normally a minimal burden that shouldn't prevent a useful meeting from taking place.

3

Myth: "A protest should be avoided at all costs, even if it means the government limits conversation with industry."

Fact: Restricting communication won't prevent a protest, and limiting communication might actually increase the chance of a protest, in addition to depriving the government of potential useful information.



4

Myth: "Conducting discussions/negotiations after receipt of proposals will add too much time to schedule."

Fact: Whether discussions should be conducted is a key decision for contracting officers to make. Avoiding discussions solely because of schedule concerns may be counter-productive, and may cause delays and other problems during contract performance.

5

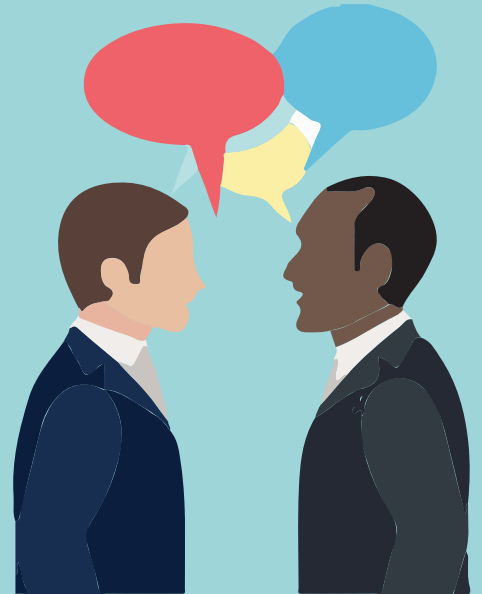
Myth: "If the government meets with vendors, that may cause them to submit an unsolicited proposal and that will delay the procurement process."

Fact: Submission of an unsolicited proposal should not affect the schedule. Generally, the unsolicited proposal process is separate from the process for a known agency requirement that can be acquired using competitive methods.

6

Myth: "When the government awards a task or delivery order using the Federal Supply Schedules, debriefing the offerors isn't required so it shouldn't be done."

Fact: Providing feedback is important, both for offerors and the government, so agencies should generally provide feedback whenever possible.



7

Myth: "Industry days and similar events attended by multiple vendors are of low value to industry and the government because industry won't provide useful information in front of competitors, and the government doesn't release new information."

Fact: Well-organized industry days, as well as pre-solicitation and pre-proposal conferences, are valuable opportunities for the government and for potential vendors -- both prime contractors and subcontractors, many of whom are small businesses.

8

Myth: "The program manager already talked to industry to develop the technical requirements, so the contracting officer doesn't need to do anything else before issuing the RFQ."

Fact: The technical requirements are only part of the acquisition; getting feedback on terms and conditions, pricing structure, performance metrics, evaluation criteria, and contract administration matters will improve the award and implementation process.

9

Myth: "Giving industry only a few days to respond to an RFP is okay since the government has been talking to industry about this procurement for over a year."

Fact: Providing only short response times may result in the government receiving fewer proposals and the ones received may not be as well-developed -- which can lead to a flawed contract. This approach signals that the government isn't really interested in competition.

10

Myth: "Getting broad participation by many different vendors is too difficult; we're better off dealing with the established companies we know."

Fact: The government loses when we limit ourselves to the companies we already work with. Instead, we need to look for opportunities to increase competition and ensure that all vendors, including small businesses, get fair consideration.



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Myths and Facts About Communication with the Federal Government

FACT

MYTH

1 **Myth:** "The best way to present my company's capabilities is by marketing direct to contracting officers and/or signing them up for my mailing list."

Fact: Contracting officers and program managers are often inundated with general marketing material that doesn't reach the right people at the right time. As an alternative, vendors can take advantage of the various outreach sessions that agencies hold for the purpose of connecting contracting officers and program managers with companies whose skills are needed.

2 **Myth:** "It is a good idea to bring only business development and marketing people to meetings with the agency's technical staff."

Fact: In meetings with government technical personnel, it's far more valuable for you to bring subject matter experts to the meeting rather than focusing on the sales pitch.

3 **Myth:** "Attending industry days and outreach events is not valuable because the agency doesn't provide new information."

Fact: Industry days and outreach events can be a valuable source of information for potential vendors and are increasingly being used to leverage scarce staff resources.

4 **Myth:** Agencies generally have already determined their requirements and acquisition approach so our impact during the pre-RFP phase is limited."

Fact: Early and specific industry input is valuable. Agencies generally spend a great deal of effort collecting and analyzing information about capabilities within the marketplace. The more specific you can be about what works, what doesn't and how it can be improved, the better.

5 **Myth:** "If I meet one-on-one with agency personnel, they may share my proprietary data with my competition."

Fact: Agency personnel have a responsibility to protect proprietary information from disclosure outside the Government and will not share it with other companies.

6 **Myth:** "Agencies have an obligation not to share information about their contracts, such as prices, with other agencies, similar to the obligation they have not to disclose proprietary information to the public."

Fact: There are no general limitations on the disclosure of information regarding existing contracts between agencies within the Government. In fact, agencies are encouraged to share pricing information to ensure that we are getting the best value for our taxpayers.

7 **Myth:** "To develop my new proposal, I don't really need to tailor my solution to the specific solicitation since the government won't read my proposal that closely anyway."

Fact: Offerors should tailor each proposal to the evaluation criteria, proposal instructions, and specific requirements of the solicitation in which they are responding. Contracting officers and evaluation team members read proposals closely for compliance with the proposal instructions and must evaluate them against the evaluation factors and the statement of work in the solicitation.

8 **Myth:** "If I lose the competition, I shouldn't bother to ask for a debriefing. The contracting Officer won't share any helpful information with me."

Fact: Unsuccessful offerors should ask for a debriefing to understand the award decision and to improve future proposals.

