



SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

Accelerating SOF Innovation

Communications with Industry
CONTRACTING OFFICERS & PROGRAM MANAGERS



Communications with Industry

SOF AT&L Contracting Officers and Program Managers will conduct roundtable exchanges with attendees on the different communication medium (e.g., FedBizOpps, Industry Days, etc.) used to forecast or discuss new requirements with industry and the limitations on communications during the formal source selection process. The intent of these exchanges is to provide industry with insight on the left and right limits of Government communication during the acquisition process and to gain insight from industry on areas where SOF AT&L can improve in its communication with industry. Specific emphasis will be given to the communications during the Market Research and Pre-Solicitation Phase, i.e. responding to Government Requests for Information (RFI's), sources sought, etc.

Pre-Solicitation

Requirements Identification/Users' Needs, Acquisition Planning and Developing the Request for Proposal (RFP)

How the Government Communicates with Industry-

- Congressional Briefings/Budget Publication
- Attend Technology and Industry Liason Office (TILO) briefings
- Attend Trade Shows; Brief requirements at SOFIC; SOFWIC
- www.socom.mil/SOF-ATL/
- Publish in FedBizOps: Sources Sought, Request for Information (RFI), Broad Agency Announcements (BAA), Draft requirements and Draft RFP
 - Questions and Answers
- SOFWERX; OSBP Director, Mr. Christopher Harrington (Weekly)
- Industry Days/Pre-Solicitation Conferences; one-on-one's

How Industry can Communicate with the Government-

- Attend Trade Shows; SOFIC; SOFWIC
- Respond to FedBizOps announcements, i.e. sources sought, Requests for Information (RFI), etc.
- Submit White Papers
- Submit questions
- Small Businesses should seek assistance from OSBP
- Participate in SOFWERX; OSBP Director, Mr. Christopher Harrington
- Submit capability brief to TILO, Ms. Shelvin Watts
- Attend Industry Days/Pre-Solicitation Conferences, participate in one-on-one's

Request for Information (RFI) Responses

**Understanding the reason for the information or Industry Response - Market Research (ref FAR part 10):
Size Standard, Commercial, Competition Potential, Existence of Capability,
Determining Thresholds or Objectives**

What to Include/How to Respond

- Follow instructions and respond to each element being requested in the order in which it was asked (or a logical order).
- Be specific and give details on capability level
- Be truthful (i.e. capability, prime vs subcontractor functions, past performance or experience, etc.)
- Ensure that company information (size standard, CAGE code, etc.) is included even if not specifically requested

What to Avoid

- Sending “pamphlet” routine company information
- “We can do this” statements without substantiation
- Giving false hope (capability, responding to RFP, etc.)
- Addressing other requirements

Misconceptions and Facts

- **Misconception:** “The best way to present my company’s capabilities is by marketing directly to the 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 does not 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.

Misconceptions and Facts

- **Misconception:** “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 is far more valuable for you to bring subject matter experts to the meeting rather than focusing on the sales pitch.

Misconceptions and Facts

- **Misconception:** “Attending industry days and outreach events is not valuable because the agency does not provide new information.”
- **Facts:** 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.

Misconceptions and Facts

- **Misconception:** “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.

Misconceptions and Facts

- **Misconception: “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.**

Solicitation Phase

Request for Proposal (RFP) → Proposal Receipt

- **Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF):** During this Phase, the Contracting Officer (KO) is the Government point of contact
- **Government communicates in writing and through FedBizOps**
- **RFP goal is to clearly articulate requirements in writing as well as explain to industry how the Government will evaluate proposals (Acquisition Team applies communication exchange/feedback from pre-solicitation phase)**
- **Industry Questions should be early and in writing**
 - Government answers could take over a week to answer (technical, contracting, legal, OPSEC coordination and reviews)
 - The Contracting Officer will not provide personal/individual advice on proposal approach and/or submission
 - Answers posted to FedBizOps
- **NOTE: Amendments to the RFP are possible at any time during this phase; set alert on FedBizOps**

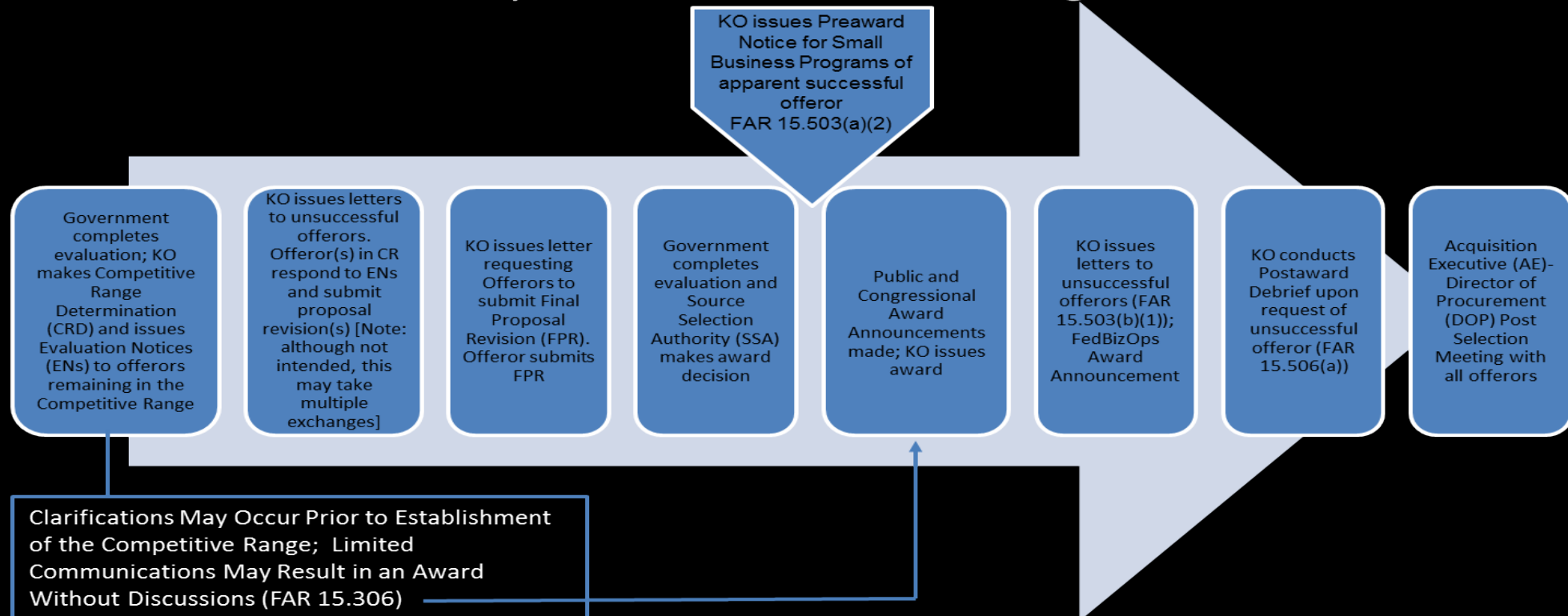
Misconceptions and Facts

- **Misconception:** “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 to 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.

Evaluation and Award Phase

Proposal Receipt → Award

- BLUF: During this Phase, the Contracting Officer (KO) is the Government point of contact
- Government mostly communicates in writing



Debriefs

- **Preadward Debriefing of Offerors (FAR 15.505)**
 - Offerors excluded from the competitive range may request a preaward debriefing by submitting a written request for debriefing to the contracting officer within 3 days after receipt of the notice of exclusion from the competition.
 - Offerors are entitled to no more than one debriefing for each proposal.
 - Debriefings may be done orally, in writing, or by any other method acceptable to the contracting officer.
 - The KO should normally chair any debriefing session held.

Debriefs (con't)

- **The Preaward Debriefings shall Include --**
 - The agency's evaluation of significant elements in the offeror's proposal;
 - A summary of the rationale for eliminating the offeror from the competition; and
 - Reasonable responses to relevant questions about whether source selection procedures contained in the solicitation, applicable regulations, and other applicable authorities were followed in the process of eliminating the offeror from the competition.

Debriefs (con't)

- **The Preaward Debriefings shall not Disclose --**
 - The number of offerors;
 - The identity of other offerors;
 - The content of other offerors proposals;
 - The ranking of other offerors;
 - The evaluation of other offerors; or
 - Point-by-point comparisons of the debriefed offeror's proposal with those of other offerors. Moreover, the debriefing shall not reveal any information prohibited from disclosure by FAR 24.202 or exempt from release under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552) including --(1) Trade secrets; (2) Privileged or confidential manufacturing processes and techniques; (3) Commercial and financial information that is privileged or confidential, including cost breakdowns, profit, indirect cost rates, and similar information; and (4) The names of individuals providing reference information about an offeror's past performance

Debriefs (con't)

- **Postaward Debriefing of Offerors (FAR 15.506) shall Include:**
 - The Government's evaluation of the significant weaknesses or deficiencies in the offeror's proposal, if applicable;
 - The overall evaluated cost or price (including unit prices), and technical rating, if applicable, of the successful offeror and the debriefed offeror, and past performance information on the debriefed offeror;
 - The overall ranking of all offerors, when any ranking was developed by the agency during the source selection;
 - A summary of the rationale for award;
 - For acquisitions of commercial items, the make and model of the item to be delivered by the successful offeror; and
 - Reasonable responses to relevant questions about whether source selection procedures contained in the solicitation, applicable regulations, and other applicable authorities were followed.

Debriefs (con't)

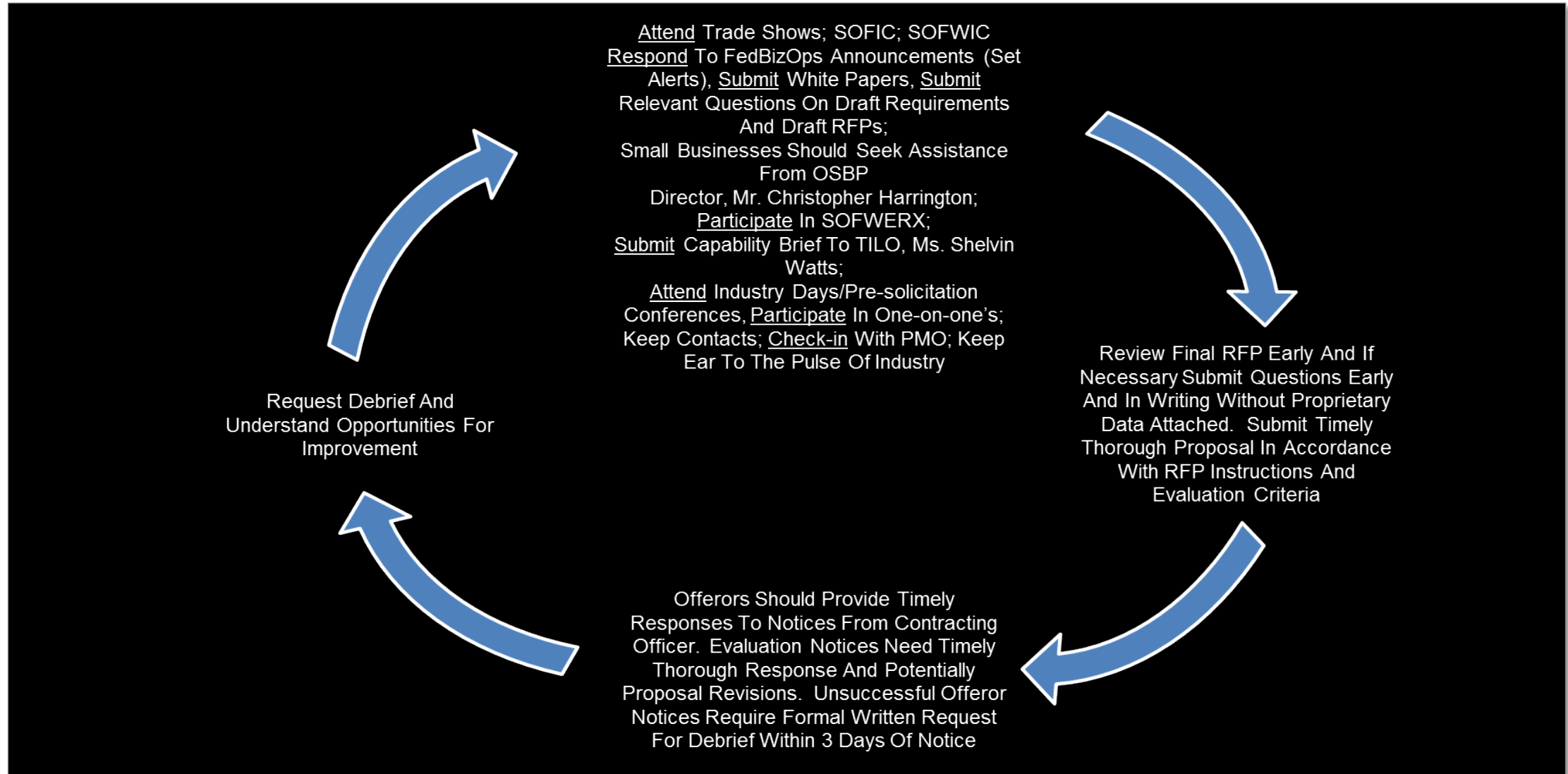
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 - Trade secrets;
 - Privileged or confidential manufacturing processes and techniques;
 - Commercial and financial information that is privileged or confidential, including cost breakdowns, profit, indirect cost rates, and similar information; and
 - The names of individuals providing reference information about an offeror's past performance

Misconceptions and Facts

- **Misconception:** “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.

Communicating Future Opportunities

Methodology 1 – Separate Ratings



Merit Based Solicitations

- **Concept:**

- Not a firm requirement but rather a problem statement or capability gap
- Looking for varied, diverse and creative ideas at solving the problem or capability gap which are reviewed independently of one another by the Program Office and User Reps (no apples to apples comparison)
- Traditionally only request a 2-5 page white paper and quad chart in order to understand the proposed idea/concept

- **Authorities:**

- Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) – FAR 35.016
- Other Transaction Authorities (OTA's) – Non-FAR Acquisitions
 - 10 U.S.C. 2371 – Research Projects
 - 10.U.S.C. 2371b –Prototype Projects
 - 10.U.S.C. 2373b(f) – Production OTs

Merit Based Solicitations

- **Both BAA's and OTA's have very open communications throughout the entire process**
 - No formal communication plan in which everything has to be routed through a Contracting Officer
 - Communications do not end after submittal date
 - No formal clarifications, discussions or competitive range determination
 - Feel free to contact points of contact at any time during the process
 - However, do not look for the Government to provide direction in how to respond to the solicitation.
- **Overall goal is to receive as many creative ideas that can help the warfighter overcome problems and capability gaps as possible.**

Merit Based Solicitations

- **BAA's are posted on FedBizOpps (www.fbo.gov)**
 - Current USSOCOM SOF AT&L S&T BAA can be found at:
 - <https://www.fbo.gov/spg/ODA/USSOCOM/SOAL-KB/USSOCOM-BAAST-2015/listing.html>
- **USSOCOM OTA's are generally posted on SOFWERX with additional postings on other sites with links to the SOFWERX posting**
 - <https://www.sofwerx.org/>
 - www.fbo.gov
 - Various social media sites
 - Goal is to get the largest audience seeing the posting