

The Changing Face of Acquisition

INSA Symposium

Acquisition within the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) and national security realm relies on effective collaboration between the public, private, and academic sectors. To adopt innovative technologies, the IC must work with the private sector to improve the efficiency and speed of government acquisition practices. A more effective and efficient services acquisition process will generate higher-quality work, enhance mission capabilities, and reduce costs and delays.

To advance this goal, INSA hosted “Innovating, Integrating, Evolving: The Changing Face of Acquisition”, a full-day symposium that provided space for open discussion regarding the importance of acquisition within the IC. The event, which built on work undertaken by INSA’s Acquisition Management Council, identified ways in which the IC can procure and oversee high-end service contracts efficiently, promptly, and with agility.

The Event

On Tuesday, April 10, 2018, INSA hosted a full-day symposium to identify methods to enable service-based acquisition at speed and scale in support of national security.

Senior officials from government and industry addressed topics that are critical to effective acquisition, including:

- Existing authorities to acquire new technologies
- Ways to speed up the government procurement cycle
- How to recruit and retain competitive talent within the acquisition workforce.

Speakers from prominent government agencies and leading private firms provided insights on acquisition strategies, challenges, and opportunities.



The Honorable Katrina McFarland, Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, discusses tools needed to promote innovation and agility.



Speakers from (L-R) Accenture, NGA, IARPA and CIA address reforms that enable rapid acquisition of innovative technology.



Kevin Meiners, Assistant Director of National Intelligence for Acquisition, Technology and Facilities explains how speed, flexibility and a risk-taking culture contribute to acquisition agility.

Key Insights

- Shortening acquisition timelines facilitates the adoption of cutting-edge technologies.
- Cooperation between government and industry increases efficiency in the acquisition process.
- Acquisition agility consists of mission speed, procurement flexibility, innovation through new developments and repurposing existing items, and more informed risk-taking.
- Industry has innovative ideas, but rapidly integrating them into the public sector at scale requires more resources from both government and industry.
- Developing and retaining the acquisition workforce is a top priority of ODNI.
- Delays in granting security clearances inhibit innovation and prolong the acquisition process.

Recommendations

- Foster cultures of creativity and push decision-making down to lower levels to increase acquisition speed and keep pace with innovation.
- Increase emphasis on mission speed and encourage acquisition professionals to weigh the risks delays cause to agency missions.
- Foster connections between the acquisition workforce and IC program managers. To further develop the workforce, create personal connections with prospective employees. Proactively recruit entry-level acquisition professionals.
- Through public-private partnerships, develop an acquisition model that reflects the processes and goals of both industry and government. Continue to host acquisition forums to promote collaboration between the public, private, and academic sectors.
- Hold reverse industry days at which contractors can offer commercial perspectives on acquisition processes.
- Reform the clearance process to expedite contractors' ability to fulfill requirements.

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ABOUT INSA

The Intelligence and National Security Alliance's mission is to foster dialogue between public and private elements of the national security sector. INSA approaches this mission through a variety of means, including by organizing conferences, symposia, exercises, and other discussions. INSA also convenes government and industry experts in nine policy councils that address topics ranging from security clearance reform and insider threats to acquisition management and intelligence law.