Panel

- Kathy Zuback, Senior Acquisition Executive, NSA
- Margaret Augustine, Procurement Executive, CIA
- Nicole Pierce, Senior Procurement Executive, NGA
- Kevin Phillips, President & CEO, ManTech (moderator)

Topic Overview

Given the increasing pace at which U.S. competitors are developing cutting-edge technologies and growing their cyber-skilled workforces, the Federal Government must develop a more effective and efficient services acquisition process. Government and industry must work together to improve acquisition processes in order to generate higher quality work, reduce costs and delays, and meet requirements at the (increasing) speed of mission.

Panel Summary

Comprised of three Intelligence Community (IC) acquisition executives and moderated by a senior industry executive, this panel discussed IC agencies’ evolving acquisition strategies and priorities, innovative processes, acquisition workforce challenges, and use of technology as a procurement tool. Panelists also discussed how industry can assist government in making the acquisition process more efficient.
Key Insights:

- While government agencies support a move towards outcomes-based contracting, the challenge lies in developing and clearly stating what the desired outcome is; the most successful programs are those in which an agency is in "lock step" with the industry partner.
- For all IC agency acquisitions personnel, the most persistent and critical acquisition problem is how to meet requirements at the speed of mission.
- IC agencies are increasingly testing agile acquisition processes, including Broad Agency Announcements and rapid prototyping in multiple contract relationships at a time.
- Supply chain risk is a growing concern and may require adding more requirements to RFPs; however, such requirements can also speed up the reward selection process.
- IC acquisition executives are increasingly using smaller, more flexible contracts that allow agencies to "fail faster" and adapt more quickly to rapidly evolving requirements.

Recommendations:

- The acquisition community’s strategic imperative should be to set requirements that get ahead of what might happen, rather than address what has already happened.
- Industry can help make acquisitions more efficient by not "racing to the bottom" and overpromising on proposals.
- Organizations should emphasize intra-agency and government-industry exchanges (e.g. industry days, capability briefs, rotations of acquisition personnel to functional teams).
- With government acquisition workforces overburdened, agencies’ top priority vis-à-vis the acquisition workforce should be stability and retention; to that end, agencies are noticing that work environment and teaching tradecraft are equally or more important than financial incentives.
- IC agencies can move more quickly to outcome-based contracting by affording trusted industry partners more freedom in determining how they will reach outcomes.

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