Additional Viewer Submitted Questions and Answers

Important Note: The information provided below is meant as <u>guidance</u>, given that answers to any questions must be determined based on the unique circumstances surrounding the specifics of a given acquisition.

1. When an industry SME is talking to a government SME regarding a technical requirement, should the questions/answers be published after-the-fact to ensure every organization has the same data?

    If an industry conference is conducted "pre-solicitation" for the purpose of gaining insight from the vendor community as to their capabilities and/or for refining the Government's requirements, then it is not necessarily required that the Government release every Q&A. However, if the conference occurs "post-solicitation", any information disclosed to one vendor that would be needed by other vendors to compete on a "level playing field" must be released. In both cases, however, the Government should never release information that would disclose confidential information about a competing vendor's proposal strategy.

2. One of the issues with sharing even a range of costs from the IGCE is that there is no consistency in underlying assumptions, even within the same agency. Providing the range and not explaining the range of assumptions behind those costs is not helpful. How has GSA GC responded to sharing assumptions?

    If there are significant underlying assumptions driving the IGCE, it may be prudent for the Government to release those as part of the RFP, (regardless of whether or not a range of costs is released) if doing so will allow offerors a better understanding of the conditions underlying the requirement. Potential offerors should be cautious about including too many assumptions in their proposals as these "assumptions" have the potential to conflict with the Government's requirements and could result in a contractor's proposal be downgraded during the evaluation process.

3. The topic of sharing an IGCE was mentioned. Doesn't sharing this give the risk that you miss out on possible savings if a vendor was planning to propose a cost lower than this?

    While industry is generally in favor of sharing the actual "IGCE", this is not typically done from the Government's side. Rather, the Government may choose to release a budgetary "range", thus allowing the potential offerors to have some understanding of the Government's budgeting restraints without telling them the actual IGCE. That said, many contracting officers are not comfortable with releasing any dollar figures, but may be comfortable disclosing the Government's estimated level of effort (but then caveating that information with a statement indicating that it is solely an estimate, and the offeror's proposal should reflect the level of effort necessary to implement its unique solution).

4. Is there a minimum threshold dollar value for an Industry Day Conference to be worthwhile? If your total budget is $1 million for 5 projects at $200,000 each, is it worth it?

    It depends on the particular acquisition as the decision should not necessarily be made solely based on the dollar value of the procurement. There certainly could be complexities and unique aspects of a procurement that would warrant an Industry Day even at lesser dollar values. In such cases, however, it might make sense to hold the conferences "virtually" to lessen the cost of participation for all parties.

5. Please describe ideal logistics: Is government a panel at a podium and industry is calling up questions? Is government distributed in semi-private areas and industry approaches them separately and individually? Are all conversations reported? Is there a requirement to continue discussions in a public format or can there be one ID and then an RFQ?

    The ideal logistics depend on the acquisition as well as the resources available to support the Industry Day conference. Each part of this question suggests potential aspects of a successful industry day, but again, it is difficult to fully answer this question without knowing the specifics of the acquisition that would be the subject for the Industry Day.

6. Is this forum a good place for vendors to demonstrate their products and solicit feedback from the government?

    Not generally as that might become unwieldy in the midst of an Industry Day where the Government was attempting to foster greater understanding of its requirements. However, there is no reason a separate meeting with vendors couldn't be scheduled for this purpose during the Government's market research efforts.

7. For either an in-person or virtual industry day, is there a normal or expected length of time?

    The length of time is generally driven by the complexity of the requirement (and the information the Government wants to present about that requirement), as well as the number of industry participants and their level of engagement in the conference. For example, a large complex requirement with multiple Government stakeholder organizations would take longer to discuss than a less complex requirement with a single stakeholder.

8. For a virtual industry day, are there any specific do's and don'ts to get the maximum value out of the meeting?

    As discussed during the presentation, ensure that your technology works!! Test it out ahead of time. Ensure that it has adequate "bandwidth" so you don't have to limit the number of participants. If possible, use technology similar to GSA's Adobe Connect Meeting Space as it allows you to share your screen with participants, track who is

participating, permits vendors to submit questions during the meeting, etc. Finally, if all possible, have the Government team co-located as it is difficult to coordinate the presentation when Government stakeholders are located in various different places.

9. How important is it to have the contract's designated COR in the pre-solicitation conference?

   All significant Government stakeholders should participate in the conference.

10. Is it appropriate to target a socioeconomic program to encourage (for instance HubZone companies) to attend our Industry Days? Or should we target all programs equally?

    If your acquisition strategy targets a particular socioeconomic group, it would be appropriate.

11. What is your recommended period of notice/advertisement that there will be an Industry Day Conference? Are there particular platforms in addition to FedBizOps that should be used?

    As soon as possible, and provide updates to your notification along the way. For example, you may know that you intend to have an Industry Day Conference months in advance of when you are ready to do so. There is nothing wrong with putting that on industry's "radar" by issuing a notice that says something like "An Industry Day conference is anticipated in the April/May 2016 timeframe, further updates will be forthcoming." Use of FedBizOps or GSA e-Buy are good platforms, but there may be others as well depending on the pool of contractors you are trying to reach.

12. We held an "Industry Day" to provide small local businesses an opportunity to meet the owners. Is this a good reason to hold an "Industry Day?"

    Yes. Industry day conferences are ideal for new or complex requirements, changes in processes or programs, and spurring competition among targeted socio-economic groups.

13. Could you have an Industry Day type of conference for an established vehicle (e.g., using GSA OASIS and looking for areas for which we should consider in our Federal SOW/RFP from professional services vendors)?

    Absolutely.

14. Any suggestions on how to ensure that the information obtained in the industry day conference doesn't unduly slant the solicitation toward one vendor?

    Generally speaking, the Government is conducting market research during a pre-solicitation Industry Day conference. It is one of many market research tools the Government deploys, and none of them have the goal of "slanting" the requirement

toward a particular vendor. Rather, they seek to optimize the Government's requirements via the exchange of information. Should, by chance, the Government's requirements ultimately "slant" the requirement and/or appear overly restrictive in some manner, industry can challenge such aspects during the solicitation phase.

15. Can we conduct an Industry Day to find out what solutions vendors/contractors have to handle our requirements?

    You could. But you also could hold one-on-one meetings with vendors during your pre-solicitation market research. Vendors might be more open to sharing their unique capabilities in a one-on-one setting vice an open forum such as an Industry Day.

16. When you have an existing contract that you want to revise requirements for and do a new solicitation for, would a pre-solicitation conference be appropriate?

    Yes. This lets industry know that we have new requirements and from discussions, could prompt innovation or new approaches to the way we've done business in the past.

17. Do you have to have a one-on-one with each vendor or can it be selective?

    You aren't required to have one-on-one meetings with every vendor, however during the pre-solicitation phase, you would generally want to have a meeting with every vendor that requests one to afford the greatest opportunity to learn from industry. Also, remember the process is premised on fairness and objectivity, so we should steer away from selecting only certain vendors to meet with.