

Small Agencies Leverage to Make a Difference.

Good things come in small packages, as the saying goes. Although small Federal agencies have known this to be true, convincing the greater Federal community has been challenging. The Small Agency Council's Procurement Committee demonstrates how agencies' efforts can be leveraged for the benefit of not only the agencies involved, but all government agencies.

The Small Agency Council (Council) is the voluntary management association of sub-Cabinet Federal Agencies. Established in 1986, the Council represents 82 small agencies, each with less than 5,000 employees including two agencies with a staff of two. When a member of a small agency represents the Council, he or she is representing 50,000 Federal workers spread across the greater Washington area.

In order to leverage individual small agencies' influence on developing procurement issues, it has been clear that the small agencies needed to consolidate their limited resources. The Procurement Committee was chartered in 1989 and has been recognized as an active contributor to the procurement community field ever since. While the Council member agencies procure only a small percentage of the government's total purchases, their procurements include goods and services ranging not only in dollar value, but also in such wide ranging requirements as radiation embrittlement damage analysis and predications for nuclear power plant, technical oversight of this nation's defense nuclear facilities, and standard support services such as mail room, reproduction, and warehousing.

The Procurement Committee has been very successful in presenting new procurement related information in a timely fashion to small agency members. At recent quarterly meetings, the Federal Acquisition Institute, Small Business Administration, General Service Administration, and Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) have participated. These and other agencies have been very willing to

provide Procurement Committee members with their goals for the future as well as to help explain new requirements.

From a logistical standpoint, the existence of the Procurement Committee has provided mutual benefit to both the small agencies and organizations seeking the input of all Federal agencies. Federal-wide organizations such as the Office of Federal Procurement Policy and the Procurement Executive Council seek out the Procurement Committee to provide information and briefings on new procurement-related requirements. For these organizations, it is much easier to address one committee and to seek one representative from the small agencies than to try to reach each of the many small agencies. The small agencies also benefit by leveraging their limited resources, with one agency representative speaking for 82 small agencies. This limits a drain on the scarce resources which would result if each small agency should try to participate.

Further, through the Procurement Committee, small agencies are now participating on government-wide committees that previously would not have included any representation by a small agency. Prior to the Committee's establishment, small agency procurement officials often found that they were not invited to participate in these work groups and advisory bodies, despite their individual areas of expertise. Now, after ten years of active participation in committees, Procurement Committee members are sought and welcomed participants in such committees.

One example of the Procurement Committee's early success is the Federal-wide BankCard program. Although many small agencies had participated in the BankCard program dating back to its inception as a pilot at the Department of Commerce, only large departmental agencies were asked for their input when the first solicitation was prepared for the Federal-wide program. Small agencies were not asked to participate. Once the Procurement Committee was formed, however, the credit card committee was able to welcome a small agency representative. This ensured that all small agencies

would receive the same contractual support as the larger departments. A contractor could not refuse to provide services to a small agency. As a result, there has been a small agency representative from the Procurement Committee on all the committees reviewing new credit card requirements for the Federal Government in subsequent years.

Because small agency employees often carry multiple responsibilities, Procurement Committee members often bring multiple areas of expertise to the Federal-wide committees and workgroups which they represent. For example, the three current Co-Chairs of the Procurement Committee are responsible for and participate in agency procurement operations, procurement policy, property policy, budget formulation and execution, strategic plan development, a procurement reinvention laboratory, small business affairs, Offices of Small and Disadvantage Business Utilization, Javits Wagner O'Day issues, and Federal Procurement Advisory Committee for the Federal Procurement Data System. These many areas of expertise enable the Procurement Committee members to be extremely valuable participants in a broad range of Federal-wide initiatives. Currently, Procurement Committee members are participating in all four committees of the Procurement Executive Council (Electronic Commerce, Performance Measurements, Acquisition Workforce, and Socioeconomic), and the Procurement Committee has a member on the committee reviewing the Federal Procurement Data System.

Today, the Procurement Committee remains an excellent example of how limited resources can be combined to provide direct leveraging in the establishing of procurement policy having a direct impact on procurement offices of all sizes. As the Federal procurement community continues to streamline, the Procurement Committee's example of consolidating and leveraging of resources may also be useful for even the larger agencies.

For more information on the Council and Procurement Committee, please visit the Small Agency Council's web site at www.sac.gov, or contact one of the

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