



Building Effective Industry Engagement

GSA's Center of Excellence (CoE) Acquisitions practice created this guide to help prepare organizations across government develop and improve Industry Engagement (IE) in relation to IT modernization.

Although the guide doesn't represent or constitute official guidance, by using the assessment, solutions and methods within, organizations at starter levels of IE can use the resources in the guide to identify core challenges, and start to develop strategies for continual industry engagement and successful acquisitions. Tailor them to meet your agency's specific needs.



Centers of Excellence
Resources & Advisory Support

More Engagement

Better Procurement

Mission Achievement

Industry Engagement plays a significant role in procurements.

Procurement is vital to successful modernization. Early, frequent, and constructive communication with industry leads to better acquisition outcomes.

Building Effective Industry Engagement (IE)

Use this guide to assess your level of engagement and boost your strategy.

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Section 1

What is IE?

Industry + government engagement = successful modernization

In this section, learn about the importance of IE and the procurement lifecycle.

What are the objectives of IE?

Why is IE important?

What is procurement in IE?



What is IE?

Industry Engagement (IE) is the process of communication and building productive relationships between government and industry throughout the acquisition lifecycle.



What does it do?

IE builds better relationships between government and industry.

IE acts as a forum for open discussion and information exchange. It facilitates interaction between industry and government, provides industry partners with a voice and allows the government to produce better acquisition outcomes.

IE helps the government determine:

- What to buy
- How to buy
- Who to buy from

IE helps industry understand:

- What the government is asking for (requirements)
- Whether they have the ability to meet those needs
- The opportunity cost vs. return on investment
- The ability to compete, win, and execute the work



What is the objective?

Government and industry have different objectives when it comes to IE.

Government wants:

To provide clear requirements that attract and enable responsible firms to propose on work that can be accomplished:

- With high quality
- On time
- On budget

The government wants to **build a partnership with industry while upholding procurement integrity in accordance with FAR 3.104.**

Industry wants:

To receive clear requirements that enable the offeror to determine if:

- The project is the right fit
- The right firm is submitting a proposal
- A reasonable profit can be made

Knowing how to improve IE and align with procurement methods lays a foundation for success. With this guide, we aim to promote effective IE through all phases of the procurement lifecycle.





Why is it important?

IE provides a venue for:

- Collaboration, innovation and shared understanding to provide better acquisition and government outcomes
- Government understanding of new private sector emerging technologies and establishes collaborations across agency clients
- Opportunities to partner with vendors that emphasize Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility (DEIA) practices

IE is not only a best practice but stated in the Federal Acquisitions System (FAR)!

“The Government must not hesitate to communicate with the commercial sector as early as possible in the acquisition cycle to help the Government determine the capabilities available in the commercial marketplace.”

– [FAR 1.102-2\(4\)](#)

Who does IE benefit?

IE is a two-way street.

Federal procurement is a team sport!

- The federal government has an obligation to conduct procurements in the most effective, responsible, and efficient manner. Access to current market information is critical for the government in defining requirements and developing acquisition strategies. Our industry partners are often the best source of this information!
- Industry investment planning spans multiple years. Procurement forecasts and advance information about future requirements increases the likelihood that industry will devote time, money, and resources to the procurements.

IE is a win-win approach for government and industry.

- The government benefits from constructive communication with industry that helps the acquisition workforce understand changing market dynamics and innovations that impact procurement strategies.
- Industry benefits from clear communication on the government's current and future needs in order to produce effective and innovative solutions.



What is Procurement in relation to IE?

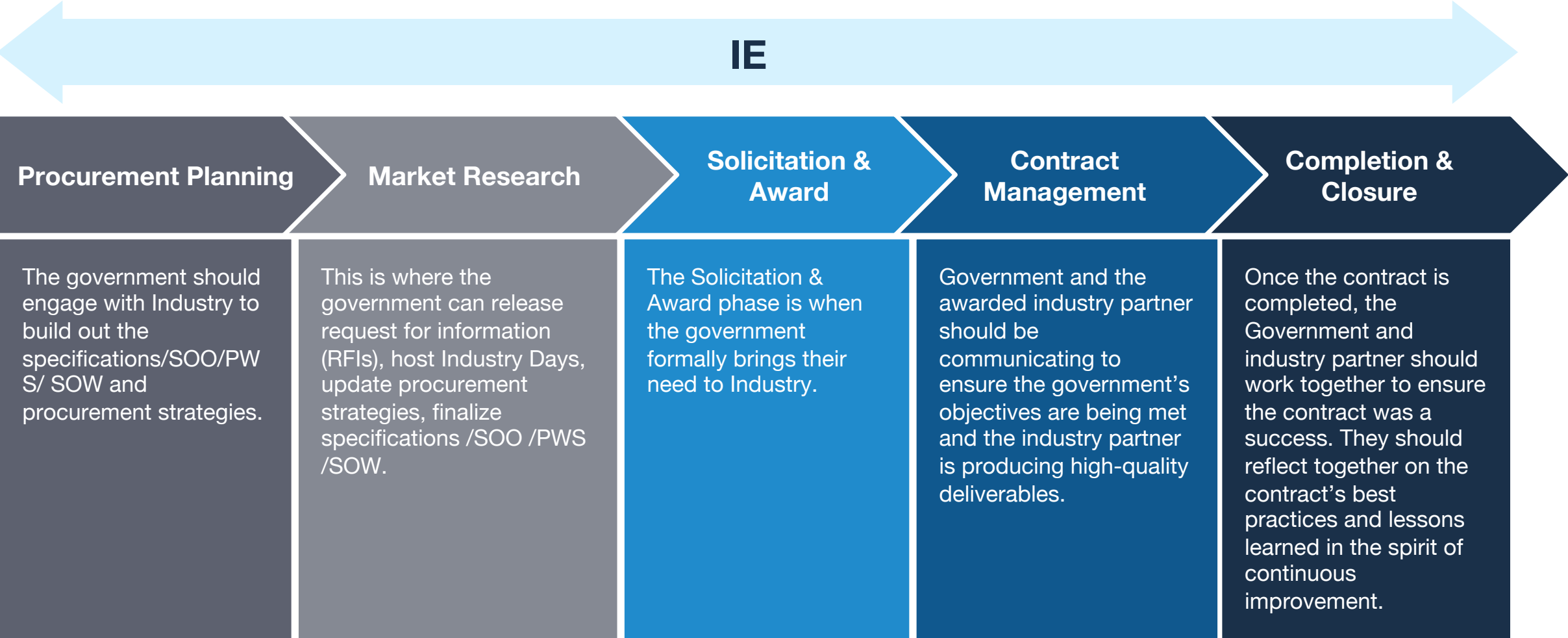
Federal procurement is the process of buying goods/services from industry for government.

IE runs across **all phases** of the procurement lifecycle.



Procurement Lifecycle

It starts with planning and ends with a good/service where continuous learning is throughout the cycle.



Section 1 Takeaways

In this section...

You learned...

- What IE is
- Why it is important
- How IE relates to the procurement lifecycle

You identified...

- IE objectives
 - Gov vs. Industry objectives
- Who benefits from IE

Next Steps...

- Assessing your IE knowledge and experience



Section 2

IE Assessments

Assessing your IE experience and knowledge

In this section you will evaluate your own approach to IE.

IE Assessment Checklist

IE Assessment Results

Tailored solutions to common challenges





Industry Engagement Assessment Checklist

Check all the methods your organization is currently using.

We use:

- RFIs
- 1:1 Meetings/Conversations
- Trade Groups
- Industry Days
- Reverse Industry Days
- Innovation in Procurements (e.g. Prize competitions, Sharing draft procurement documents)
- Pre Award/ Post Award Debriefings
- Contract Retrospectives
- SBA Contracting Assistance Programs
- Other: _____

Our outreach point of contact...

- Supports continuous IE throughout the procurement lifecycle.
- Uses our acquisition workforce for support
- Supports individual requirements
- Supports comprehensive agency-wide outreach
- We don't have an IE/ Outreach PoC

Total # of Checkmarks =





Assess your current level of IE

What methods are you working with now? Select all that apply:

Are metrics (examples: competition rates, one-bid rates, protests, # of quality offers, etc.) being captured to identify effectiveness of IE methods?

- Yes
- No
- Some

Do you set aside procurements for small disadvantaged groups such as [HUBZone or 8a](#)?

- Yes
- No
- Some

Do you have an open-door policy or a venue to meet with industry on a recurring basis?

- Yes
- No

Total # of Yes Checkmarks =



Are you engaging effectively?

In our organization, we have....

Increased interest in procurements

- Higher competition: Multiple bids/offers/quotes lead to government released solicitations.
- Higher competition leads to potential savings to the government.

High quality/ More innovative procurements

- Contracts are written with industry input, which leads to higher quality bids/offers/quotes: It is clear industry understands the government's needs and it enhances industry's ability to respond with non-traditional solutions.
- Fewer amendments/modifications are necessary.

Successful post-award management

- Engaging with industry through post-award helps ensure the government is getting what they paid for and what they need.
- There are better outcomes to the taxpayer.



Engagement doesn't end with the procurement!

Foster a partnership between industry and government not only for current procurements but future needs as well.

Total # of Checkmarks =





Assessment Results

To improve your IE, it's important to know where to start.

 **Beginner**

Total # of Checkmarks = _____
(0-3 checkmarks)

If you are here

Start with a few tactical methods of IE (listed in this guide):

- Post an RFI for next procurement.
- Have one-on-one meetings with industry partners.

 **Intermediate**

Total # of Checkmarks = _____
(4-7 checkmarks)

If you are here

Explore some new tactical methods:

- Share draft acquisition documents with industry.
- Conduct a reverse industry day.

 **Experienced**

Total # of Checkmarks = _____
(7+ checkmarks)

If you are here

Practice IE at the strategic level:

- Find and connect with necessary trade groups for your niche.
- Meet with industry on a regular basis, not only for specific procurements.



Tailored solutions for common challenges

IE isn't a one-size-fits-all solution.

Understand your environment and what you are trying to achieve. Below are few common challenges with IE and tailored solutions.

Challenge

Contracting Officers (COs) do not have the time to interact with industry.

The Acquisition team doesn't know who to engage with and doesn't have contacts.

The Acquisition team doesn't have the time or resources to properly engage with industry.

Solution

IE is not only for the COs! Involve multiple stakeholders and roles on the team for IE to help with resource management. Agencies should encourage project/product managers to engage with industry in addition to acquisition professionals such as Contracting Officers and Contract Specialists.

There isn't a one-stop shop solution for IE! You can go to your agency's IE PoC, or reach out to organizations that are familiar with your market (ACT/IAC, ATARC, etc.), or post an RFI on sam.gov.

Engaging with industry does not have to be complex. You can tailor the IE method that is best aligned with your procurement and/or needs. Depending on the procurement, a simple RFI can be released during the market research phase to better understand the market and industry's interest and potential involvement.



Section 2 Takeaways

In this section...

You assessed...

- Your current level of IE
- How your agency approaches IE

You identified...

- Opportunities for growth
- Challenges your agency is currently facing with IE

You learned...

- Solutions to common challenges



Section 3

Introduction to IE Methods

Overview of various IE methods

In this section you will learn about common IE methods used by industry and government.

Strategic and Tactical IE Methods

Deep dive into a few IE methods

Best Practices





IE Techniques & Methods

After assessing your agency's current level of IE, implementation of diverse methods improve communication and ensure better acquisition outcomes.

The most effective IE methods blend various types of strategic and tactical approaches to achieve better proposal responses and ultimately, better contract performance.

Strategic Methods



Strategic methods are used at an agency-wide level. These methods can be done through agency communication offices, program offices, or contracting offices.

Tactical Methods



Tactical methods of IE are completed on individual procurements for a specific outcome. They are more targeted to accomplish a given mission.

Strategic IE Methods



There are number of ways to improve your IE. The following are frequently used methods.

Request for Information (RFI): Gather information from potential suppliers for mission critical focus areas.

1:1 Meetings/Conversations: Engage directly between government and industry.

Trade Groups: Organizations fund businesses that operate in a specific industry and can provide valuable insight into new technologies, industry offerings and perspectives on new procurement legislation and implementation.

Industry Days: Industry hosts events to share plans for a current or future procurement to representatives of industry.

Reverse Industry Days: Industry hosts events to share their perspectives on various topics to the federal acquisition workforce (GSA issues a training to provide government officials with an opportunity to learn more about industry's processes related to pursuing, bidding and winning federal contracts, debriefs and protests – from industry's viewpoint).

Tactical IE Methods



There are number of ways to improve your IE. At CoE we use the following methods:

Innovation in Procurements: No one wants the government to be more innovative with our procurements than our industry partners! Industry partners are eager to engage and participate in innovative solutions.

Share Draft Procurement Documents (RFQs, PWS/SOO/SOW, etc.): Share draft procurement documents in order to gain industry's feedback prior to releasing final versions.

Pre-award/ Post-award Debriefings: Provide opportunities to industry to improve knowledge, skills, and performance while understanding their weaknesses and having clarity on the source selection outcome.

Contract Retrospectives: These forums allow government and industry partners to openly and freely share what is going well and what needs improvement.

SBA Contracting Assistance Programs: Use the SBA approved programs to help small businesses, especially those of certain socio-economic groups, to do business with the government.

Request for Information (RFI): The process of gathering information from potential suppliers on a specific procurement.



IE Methods Deep Dive

A closer look at two
methods:

- RFI Best Practices
- Innovation in Procurements



RFIs Best Practices

The following are best practices from industry’s perspective:

Critical RFI Elements	Implication to Industry	Recommendation
Clearly stated purpose or objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables Industry to assess the level of effort required and to identify the right resources needed for the response Ensures that industry adequately addresses the government’s true questions and prevents incorrect assumptions or mistaken no-bids 	Directly state the purpose or questions the RFI needs to answer and align the questions, structure and timeline to the intended purpose. (See examples in section 3.)
RFP timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables industry to determine how a new requirement fits within their existing resource planning schedule Useful even if the procurement timeline ultimately changes 	Clearly state the anticipated RFP timeframe and the anticipated date that work will start.
Identified risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables industry to understand, explain, and mitigate financial or performance risks Leads to fewer questions during the RFP stage, preventing possible schedule delays and potentially increasing the number of bids Prevents incorrect assumptions that lead to unhelpful RFI responses or mistaken no-bids 	<p>Share as much information as possible about the mission or environment that may help Industry identify risk that would otherwise be unknown (i.e. program milestones, staffing requirements, program data/metrics, SLAs).</p> <p>(Source: Alliant 2 Industry Partners)</p>



 Innovation =  Industry Engagement

At TTS and specifically CoE, we strive to produce innovative procurements, and in doing so, what we learned is that innovation drives IE.

- There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to innovation in procurements.
- Like many things, sometimes the smallest thing can lead to significant innovative impact.
- There are many innovative procurement methods across the government, and **we collected a few of them to share within this guide:**

Innovation in Procurement

The following are examples of methods we use to support innovative procurement.

They depict basic steps for IE throughout the acquisition lifecycle (pre award to post award).



Innovation in Procurements Best Practices

The following innovative acquisition best practices can be used throughout the acquisition lifecycle:*



Prize Competitions

- Collect ideas and solutions from the public.
- Encourage cross-sector collaboration to respond to ideation, design, and visualization problems.
- Successful at attracting individuals, small disadvantaged businesses and non-traditional contractors.



Share draft solicitation documents

- Release draft solicitation documents such as the SOO, PWS, SOW and RFQ to get early feedback.



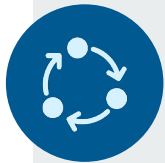
Comparative Evaluations

- Evaluators compare one offeror to another, factor by factor and then overall at the end.
- This is ideal for task/delivery orders under FAR subpart 8.4, 16.505, and FAR part 13.

* Found across the government like in the [FAI Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations](#) and DHS' [Procurement Innovation Lab \(PIL\)](#)

Innovation in Procurements Best Practices (cont.)

The following innovative acquisition best practices can be used throughout the acquisition lifecycle:*



Multi-Phased Evaluations

- Evaluation is split into multiple phases (usually two).
- The goal is to make phase 1 light, while saving the heavy technical submission and price to phase 2.
- Results for the government include a streamlined process and cleaner documentation at the very end.



Statement of Objectives (SOO)/ Performance Work Statement (PWS) instead of Statement of Work (SOW)

- A SOO provides basic, top-level objectives of an acquisition.
- The difference between a SOO and SOW is that a SOW is written to identify the job and direct the contractor specifically how to do it.
- A SOO or PWS, is written incorporating measurable standards that inform the contractor of the government's desired outcomes.

* Found across the government like in the [FAI Periodic Table of Acquisition Innovations](#) and DHS' [Procurement Innovation Lab \(PIL\)](#)

Section 4

IE Success Stories

Good communication between government and industry yields effective IE in the real world.

In this section, you will explore real examples of IE in GSA and TTS.

Procurement scenarios

Engagement examples

Resources





TTS TOTAL BPA comparative analysis

Prioritizing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA)

The Scenario

GSA Technology Transformation Services (TTS) procured agile software development services and in doing so used comparative analysis on the Technical Factor for Oral Presentations to help make the government's award decision.

“TTS will evaluate each quoter's unique and specific solutions, ideas, and methodologies, to determine how the proposed approaches will be advantageous to TTS, and where TTS can receive the most benefit.”

Outcomes

- The government was able to compare the offerors' oral presentations amongst each other in order to determine who will provide the most benefit to the government.
- In doing this, TTS was able to compare the offerors' approach to recruitment/retention and specific efforts to incorporate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility (DEIA) in its hiring, recruitment, retention, and business practices. DEIA is a priority for TTS and we want to capture it in all practices, especially procurements.

Engagement Starts with Communication

The following illustrates how government communicates with industry:



GSA'S Commercial Solutions Opening (CSO)

[The CSO](#) is available for all agencies to quickly access innovative commercial technologies. It also provides alternative procedures to those in the FAR, such as use of Broad Agency Announcements (otherwise reserved to R&D activities), for buying emerging commercial technologies. It offers simplified contract terms and fast-track vendor selection timelines to attract start-up companies and those new to the federal marketplace.



Publish Forecast Opportunities

GSA offers a [public-website forecasting agency](#) needs which enables industry to respond to future solicitations and propose innovative solutions.



RFIs & Industry Days

In its [RFI](#) for the government's Technology Business Management initiative, GSA hosted a virtual industry event where acquisition personnel responded to questions from interested parties. Following the event, vendors submitted proposals for individual virtual presentations and one-on-one demos of their solutions.



GWAC Interest Groups

GSA built a [Small Business GWAC Community of Interest](#) for updates and more information. GSA received feedback on evaluation strategy and consequently is updating their evaluation strategy and will extend the solicitation closing date.

The [Alliant 2 GWAC Shared Industry Group](#) provides a venue for collaboration, innovation and shared understanding to encourage the use and growth of the Alliant 2 contract.



Industry Day and Reverse Industry Day

The events were part of a phased procurement for IT Modernization with USDA. and posted information on [GitHub](#).



Building the Acquisition with Industry's feedback

Sharing draft acquisition documents with industry yields optimal results.

Scenario

The government was working on a procurement to support the agency with their IT modernization projects. The agency needed contractor support in the following focus areas:

- Infrastructure/Security/DevSecOps, Design/User
- Research/Content Strategy, Application
- Development/Product Delivery, and IT Program
- Support/Project/Program Management.

The government initially thinks a single-award contract, one contract for all focus areas with one contractor, for these services would be best for efficiency needs.

Outcomes

There were multiple outcomes in this scenario.

- The government hosted an industry day and shared a draft RFQ where vendors had an opportunity to provide feedback on the acquisition strategy and answer questions about the proposed requirements.
- Industry provided invaluable feedback around several key areas, specifically, a single-award would have limited industry participation, especially for small businesses. The evaluation factors were too restrictive and limiting, specifically the past performance requirement of having to provide four (4) projects performed within the past five (5) years that are similar in nature to the one described in the solicitation.
- In response, the government created a multiple-award vehicle, which gives the government the opportunity to receive competitive pricing at the call order level, and encourages industry to use new processes and develop, test, and offer more modern solutions through the lifecycle of the contract.



Collaboration between industry and government continues after contract award

IE produces a collaborative environment during post-award.

Scenario

The government recently awarded a multiple award vehicle for Lifecycle Agile Development services to four small businesses.

After the award, the government hosted a post-award conference to bring together the small business awardees and the government programs they will support to foster successful working relationships.

Outcomes

The post-award conference was a huge success! Attendees learned about the newly awarded procurements and the ordering procedures. The small business awardees shared their companies' capabilities and how they will support the government through this initiative.

The government shared an overview of their programs and highlighted projects and initiatives planned for the near term and long term future. It was a collaborative session where industry and government came together to discuss and plan for future success!



Artificial Intelligence (AI) CoE Prize Competition

Organizations can reach out for help with applying AI.

Scenario

The Artificial Intelligence Center of Excellence (AI CoE) wanted industry's help and input on how federal agencies can adopt AI and related technologies to better serve the American people.

Outcomes

The AI CoE hosted a prize competition to challenge industry to come up with solutions for the federal government to apply emerging AI and machine learning (ML) technologies and to be more resilient in the face of future crises and to better serve the public. The competition is still open here!

Engagement Activities

Improve your engagement with industry with the following activities:



Tools and Resources: GSA

GSA has developed the following internal and external IE tools and resources:

- **GSA Vendor Support Center**: One-stop resource to help GSA's commercial partners succeed in the federal government marketplace
- **GSA "Interact"**: Open, collaborative community for connecting, communicating, learning, and engaging across topics
- **The Acquisition Gateway**: Built by GSA, helps federal government buyers from all agencies act as one acquisition community
- **In-depth Feedback through Open Reporting Methods (INFORM)**: A pilot program launched by GSA to test the effect of conducting extended debrief sessions (INFORM added information and increased transparency by providing more information to offerors during post-award evaluations and went beyond what the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) currently requires)
- **Agency Specific Industry Communications Plan**: Plan developed by agencies to assist with reducing unnecessary barriers to IE and to publicize and prioritize outreach and learning opportunities for both existing industry partners and new vendors
- **Market Research As a Service (MRAS) Tool**: Utilizes the latest research techniques to help customer agencies visualize the competition and socioeconomic responses that customers can expect if they use GSA's acquisition vehicles
- Trade associations and industry interest groups connect organizations with thousands of industry partners.



Section 4 Takeaways

In this section:

You learned...

- IE Success Stories

You reviewed...

- Engagement Examples of IE
- Tools & Resources for IE



CoE Workshop Series: Building Better IE

Our interactive workshop series compliments this guide and offers peer support. **Learn more and register [on our website](#).**

Workshop 1

IE Overview & Make Connections

Take the first step to collecting and analyzing information about capabilities within the market to satisfy agency needs! In this session we will help you understand the foundation for more effective IE and assess your level of IE.

Workshop 1: July 12, 2022, 1 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Optional Office Hour: July 19, 2022, 1–1:30 p.m.
(Both times are in EST.)



Workshop 2

Techniques & Forums

In this session we will provide more information on IE techniques and based on your individual assessments learn which methods and path forward works best for you.

Workshop 2: July 21, 2022, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Optional Office Hour: July 26, 2022, 1–1:30 p.m.
(Both times are in EST.)

Thank you.

To learn more, or to find out about the CoE's Acquisitions practice, email us at connectcoe@gsa.gov.



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