



## Closing the Procurement Gap Survey Report

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### *APMP Recommendations*

The charter of the Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP) Procurement Improvement Committee is to collaborate with government to help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of competitive procurements and to provide an industry voice to help government better understand the interactions with industry. Our goal is to develop actionable recommendations to increase standardization, reduce cycle time, decrease cost, and have fewer protests.





<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Recommended Actions for Industry.....	3
Recommended Actions for Government.....	4
Five Overarching Themes .....	7
<b>Response Demographics</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Government Respondents.....	8
Industry Respondents.....	8
<b>Survey “Hot Topics”</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Industry and Government Comparison Survey Results:</b> <b>Early Stages/Pre-RFP</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Industry and Government Comparison Survey Results:</b> <b>Draft DRFP/RFP Release</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Industry and Government Comparison Survey Results:</b> <b>Evaluation Phase</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>Industry and Government Comparison Survey Results:</b> <b>Debriefing and Protests</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Summary and Next Steps</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>Acronym List of Procurement Terms</b> .....	<b>35</b>



## Executive Summary

Welcome to the Government and Industry *Closing the Procurement Gap Survey Report* on procurement challenges and recommended improvements.

The Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP) is a strong community of industry experts who participate in all phases of the business development, capture, and proposal development lifecycle. As the leading industry association for proposals and procurements, we represent the voice of our members without company bias. As part of the APMP Procurement Improvement Committee (PIC) mission, we conducted a survey to work collaboratively with U.S. Government and industry to identify procurement challenges and to identify ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of federal procurement. The results of the survey provide focus on specific “calls to action” where rapid improvements can be made to enhance the procurement process.

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### Recommended Actions for Industry

- Ask good questions and point out issues in DRFPs and RFPs, but give the Government a solution that will work for all competitors.
- Industry should respond seriously to RFIs and market surveys to help the Government versus just throwing capabilities together.
- Stop protesting every deal. Identify issues, concerns, and worries, but stop protesting on a whim to get the Government to award to everybody on IDIQs, to drag out new contract starts to maintain revenue, or to attempt to thwart procurements. If you protest, make sure you have a good reason, and can defend that reason with certitude.
- Develop a checklist before filing a protest—force yourself to answer basic questions such as, “Did the agency violate any procurement integrity rules, and if so, which ones.” Force an internal pass/fail on frivolous protests to avoid knee-jerk reactions to losing.
- Require your CEO to approve filing protests to prevent excessive protesting from some business units.
- Be a partner to achieve a successful procurement instead of an impediment. Help with good analysis of risk, cost, probability of success, and paths to success.
- Talk to acquisition personnel (Program and Contracts) regularly and don’t go above their heads in the procurement process. Help the Government create a successful procurement.
- Read your clients’ strategic and annual planning documents and come to visits prepared so that you don’t waste their time. It’s their chance to learn from you as well as you to learn from them. It’s a two-way street.



- Make white papers address the issue of achieving a successful procurement not skewing the procurement to your favor.

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### Recommended Actions for Government

- Mandate that PCOs keep Government and industry communications open until the final RFP release.
- Flow-down direction to PCOs and Program Managers on the “Golden Rules of Communications and Early Industry Involvement.”
- Eliminate Lowest Price Technically Acceptable (LPTA) for services and only allow for commodity products. If LPTA is used, require a thorough Technically “Acceptable” review before opening the Cost Volume.
- Include Sections L&M in draft RFPs.
- Frequently publish and update DRFP and RFP projected release dates on a website.
- Seventy percent of Industry supported eliminating the “Alternate Proposal” language.
- Government should “murder board” their own RFPs. Better cross-checking between sections. The Government should carefully review RFPs to ensure that they are complete. Review boards should include experienced external support.
- Better Debriefings
  - Very seldom is there a beneficial exchange - due to the Government’s fear of a protest.
  - Don’t be so risk adverse at debriefings.
  - Government has gotten so scared of protests that debriefs are now typically short, rehearsed responses that don’t offer any guidance to bidders. Make this truly interactive, like a teacher sitting down with a student to provide guidance on how to improve.

This report is a compilation of our survey results from more than 500 responses (350 from industry and 157 from Government). The survey questions followed the procurement process from early stages through protests, and ran a parallel track for Government and industry respondents. Since this is a partnership, the report includes recommendations for both Government and Industry. At a macro view, APMP’s survey highlights the fundamental differences between Industry and Government viewpoints and the difference between stated Senior Acquisition policy (like the FAR and Myth-busters guidance) and practice down at the working level. We refer to this as the “Execution gap” and will collaborate to help “close the procurement gap”. A summary of survey identified issues and the corresponding “Top 3” recommendations by procurement phase appear on the following page.

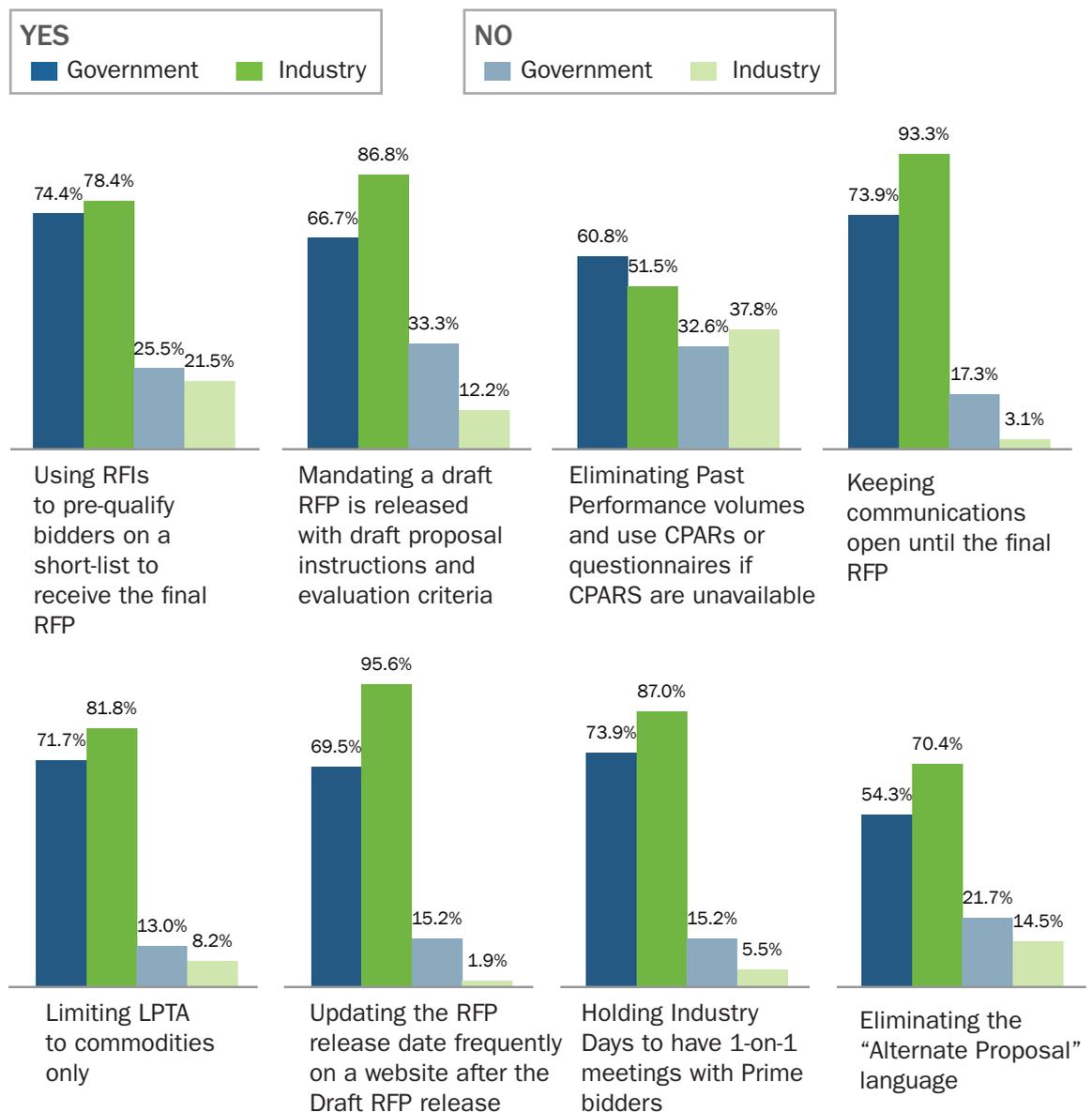


	Survey Identified Issues	Recommendations
<b>Early Stages Pre-RFP</b>	<p>Major perception gap in Government and Industry Communications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two thirds of industry view communications as problematic</li> <li>• More than 90% of Government believe they communicate for requirements development, technology/solutions, feasible acquisition strategies, and potential sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandate that PCOs keep Government and industry communications open until the final RFP release</li> <li>• Flow-down direction to PCOs and Program Managers on OMB Myth-Busters memos and the “Golden Rules of Communications and Early Industry Involvement”</li> <li>• Hold more Virtual Industry Sessions</li> </ul>
<b>Draft RFP/RFP Release</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not knowing RFP timelines creates significant uncertainty and waste. Little or no attempt to communicate with industry</li> <li>• Misaligned Sections L&amp;M make the proposal response and evaluation harder</li> <li>• RFPs need to be improved and not “cut and paste”. Multiple amendments tend to have contradictions, additional ambiguities, and problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequently publish and update DRFP and RFP projected release dates on a website.</li> <li>• More Draft RFPs and 1-on-1’s to improve the RFP</li> <li>• Include draft Section L&amp;M in draft RFPs</li> </ul>
<b>Proposal Evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appears to have simply discarded performance value as important</li> <li>• Predominance of stated and unstated LPTA awards yields no room for value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate Lowest Credible Price, Technically Sound (LPTA) for services and only allow for commodity products. More rigorous and comprehensive definitions of technical acceptability</li> <li>• Publish premium ranges (e.g., 5% services; 10% systems). Tell industry what carries the value.</li> <li>• Use more of the Objective/Threshold method for performance</li> </ul>
<b>Debriefings and Protests</b>	<p>Identify issues, concerns, and worries but stop protesting on a whim to get us to award to everybody on IDIQs, to drag out new contract starts to maintain revenue, or to attempt to thwart procurement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop protesting every deal</li> <li>• Require your CEO to approve filing protests</li> <li>• Develop a checklist before filing a protest, force yourself to answer, “Did the agency violate any procurement integrity rules, and if so, which ones?” Force an internal pass/fail on frivolous protests to avoid knee-jerk reactions to losing.</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many of our customers see industry as the “bad guys”</li> <li>• Understand that industry is not the enemy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be open, transparent and inclusive</li> <li>• The Government should universally treat industry as a partner and not a combatant</li> <li>• Outreach to Industry – at least annual briefings to industry on roadmaps and upcoming procurements</li> </ul>



A positive survey finding is there is strong agreement in the need to reduce cycle time, costs, and to improve the Draft RFP process. The survey posed the same questions to both industry and Government respondents on what they would be willing to do to improve the procurement process. The side-by-side comparison of responses shows powerful alignment of straightforward actions as shown below.

Nominally, about 60 percent of Government officials surveyed (shown in BLUE) were in favor of these eight specific actions. Industry answers (shown in GREEN) show overwhelming support mostly in the 70 – 90 percent range.





## Five Overarching Themes

The current environment tends to drive communication with industry away from the desired state: timely, frequent and constructive communications that improve the overall acquisition process.

1. **Improve Government/industry communications:** The OMB “Myth-Busting” series of memos have repeatedly emphasized the need for better communications. However, while the theory is sound, often the practice is not happening. The senior acquisition officials and “Commander’s intent” is clear about open dialog and improving communications. Yet, in practice this remains a severe challenge. While over 90% of industry members surveyed wanted communications open to the final RFP only 60% of Government participants saw this as a needed change. This is the largest execution gap (30%) that needs to be closed.
2. **Mend Government and industry relationships, so that they are more collaborative and less adversarial:** Both sides indicated they preferred more open and transparent relationships.
  - “Sometimes we can get meetings, but they are tight-lipped, and sometimes the Government avoids industry completely.”
  - “Industry continually oversells their products and underestimates risks. Procurement rules prevent real criticism of industry optimism and a professional evaluation of the contractor’s probability of success.”
3. **Use the appropriate Source Selection method:** Among the various contract mechanisms, LPTA drew the most attention.
  - LPTA is being used in ways it is not intended
  - Eliminate LPTA for services and only allow for commodity products
  - Best value defaulting to de facto LPTA
4. **Improve the RFP Quality and Release Process:** Improving the quality and consistency in RFPs would reduce costs and result in better solutions tendered.
  - 80 percent of respondents believe DRFPs are not complete and could be more helpful
  - Industry and Government believes complete DRFPs can help resolve quality issues
  - Include Sections L&M in draft RFPs (85% of industry felt this was important, just over 60% of Government. 25% gap.)
  - Frequently publish and update DRFP and RFP projected release dates on a website. (over 95% of industry sees this problem, less than 65% of Government folks did. 30% gap).



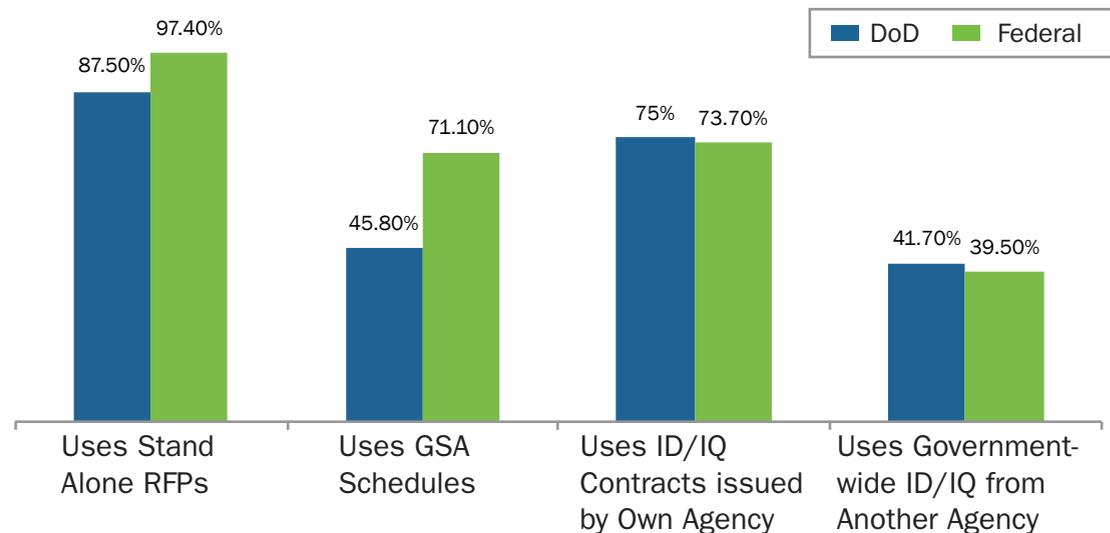
**5. Stop the protests: The increase in protests are bothersome to both sides.**

- Protests are a driving factor in LPTA acquisitions
- They give contractors a bad name: “I would like the Government to be more aware of the fact that certain companies, awfully large ones, are excessively litigious as a matter of win strategy. When the same company protests again (and again), some of that action should be recognized as excessive and negatively competitive and aggressive. Blatant unfairness should be corrected regardless of who is responsible, but there are specific companies that protest by design any time they lose.”

**Response Demographics**

**Government Respondents**

All Government respondents participate in active procurements for supplies and services. Forty percent of Government respondents work for a DoD agency, with 60 percent working for federal civilian agencies. Government respondents participate in the procurement lifecycle of services, products, and hardware and software. Both DoD and other federal agencies procure products and services through standalone RFPs, schedules, and multiple award vehicles almost equally, with Federal agencies using GSA Schedules more than DoD.





## Industry Respondents

Industry respondents to the survey serve in many capacities within the business development lifecycle. They respond to Government Requests for Proposals (RFPs), Request for Quotes (RFQs), Cooperative Agreements, Grant Solicitations, and Task Order Requests (TORs). The survey respondents work for large and small businesses, as well as independent consultants. Every small business socio-economic category was represented from respondents.



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### Survey “Hot Topics”

APMP’s survey wanted to know about procurement trends, such as LPTA awards and relationships and communications between Government and industry. Representative comments on relationships and communications, included:

- The Government should universally treat industry as a partner and not a combatant. The more open and honest the Government is in defining their need, presents more opportunity for their mission success.
- Many of our customers see industry as the “bad guys.”
- Provide industry feedback when it submits RFI Responses (if we’re willing to spend time and money to prepare – we should at least get a courtesy response beyond – “thanks, your response has been received”).
- Open, transparent, and inclusive.

The current environment tends to drive communication with industry away from the desired state: Timely, frequent and constructive communications that improve the overall acquisition process. While the OMB Myth-busters memos identified this as an important aspect, our survey indicates little progress, and in some cases, further reductions in achieving the open communications objective. Often the door has closed or the “cone of silence” has come down well before the RFP release. This ultra-conservative position results in qualified suppliers not bidding, unnecessary and unproductive churn during the proposal process, or industry making wrong assumptions potentially leading to future problems.



LPTA was a very “hot topic”, with many comments throughout the lifecycle. Some representative comments and suggestions include:

- Stop using LPTA. It does not promote the best product because it only considers the lowest price.
- More rigorous and comprehensive definitions of technical acceptability would help mitigate performance risk.
- The term “technically acceptable” is up for interpretation. What is rarely, (if ever, considered) is whether the proposed approach or timeline of a project is even feasible. The loophole is called “change orders.” LPTAs have contract modifications before the ink is dry on the first contract. You can submit a very low cost (undermining reputable competitors) knowing you will never be able to deliver the project for that cost. This is corrected during the project implementation through change orders and delays.

The propensity to protest, while a given right and at times appropriate, tends to result in longer acquisition cycles. It may also inadvertently skew the competitive landscape by making the procurement officials’ justification of a best value decision “too hard to defend,” thus driving the selection to a de facto LPTA while denying the end users the additional capability they deserve. We encourage the Government acquisition community to continue to fight for, and defend, their best value decisions.

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**Survey Results** The survey questions were grouped into the following phases: (1) Early Stages of Procurement, (2) DRFP/RFP Release, (3) Proposal Evaluation, and (4) Debriefings and Protests. At the beginning of each phase, a synopsis of results for that phase is followed by a comparison of industry and Government responses to each question. Recommendations from respondents are also included for each phase.



## Industry and Government Comparison Survey Results: Early Stages/Pre-RFP

Industry respondents said that they put their “best talent” on responses to RFIs, but the Government respondents believed they only received moderately useful feedback.

### Synopsis

While industry respondents overwhelmingly said the Government will sometimes meet with them (but it is hard to get those meetings), the Government respondents stated that they use communication with industry to provide them with critical information (requirements development, available solutions/technologies, and acquisition strategies).

Both parties want more, and relevant communication during the early stages of procurement. Government respondents expressed concern that industry “over promises” their capabilities and therefore they don’t have accurate requirements or cost estimates for the procurement. Industry on the other hand expressed concerns that the Government is too “tight lipped” about a procurement, and therefore industry can’t provide detailed enough information to be valuable.

The “cone of silence” is generally regarded as coming down at the time of RFP release, but many respondents noted that it was difficult to have exchanges with the Government at the time of draft RFP, or even after an industry day.

When asked if relationships between Government and industry are becoming more adversarial or negative in the past, 31% of industry participants responded in the positive. However, the same percentage of Government respondents (31%) stated that is the same as it has always been.

Industry respondents said that they put their “best talent” on responses to RFIs, but the Government respondents believed they only received moderately useful feedback. The Government has come to expect “marketing fluff” during the RFI phase, and not get the technical solution until proposals. Industry respondents noted that they believe some RFIs to be only a formality and not really used for procurement improvement.

Both Government and industry participants responded positively to Industry Days with one-on-one interaction. Both parties also agreed that Industry Days should be held early in the process to achieve success.

### Industry

### Government

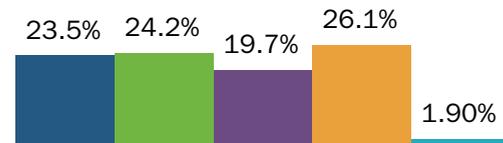
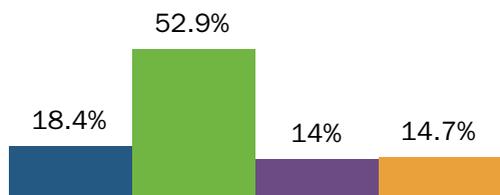
**Question**  
Learning about upcoming procurements

Which response best describes your situation about gaining access to Government in the early stages of procurement planning? Please select ONE. When my organization reaches out to Government to learn about upcoming procurements or to better understand Government needs, I find that Government:

Which response best describes your situation about communicating with industry in the early stages of procurement planning? Please select ALL that apply. My organization communicates with industry to:

- Almost always responds to my queries and is generally available to meet with me or my organization
- Will sometimes meet with us, but it is difficult to get meetings
- Generally avoids my requests, doesn't return calls/emails and does not want to meet with me or my organization
- I don't know

- Assist with requirements development
- Identify available solutions/technologies
- Determine feasible acquisition strategy
- Identify potential sources
- My organization does not communicate with industry in early procurement planning stages



**Select Responses**

“Sometimes we can get meetings, but they are tight-lipped, and sometimes the Government avoids industry completely. Would like the Government to realize that the more information they provide to Industry, the better proposals we can provide.”

“Emphasize from the top that there is no prohibition against meeting with industry. As a matter of fact, such communication will increase competition.”

“Be more willing to meet with solution providers.”

“The Government should consider allocating one day a week from PMs and COs to meet with interested contractors.”

“Industry continually oversells their products and underestimates risks. Procurement rules prevent real criticism of industry optimism and prevents a professional evaluation of the contractor’s probability of success. If they say they can do it, they are given the benefit of the doubt.”

“I would like to see both Industry and the Government do a better job in establishing a more realistic upfront cost estimate from the Government and more realistic cost proposals from industry. Most programs are set up for failure from the beginning because the Government is typically underfunded for the requirement and Industry isn’t realistic as to how much it will cost to do the required work.”

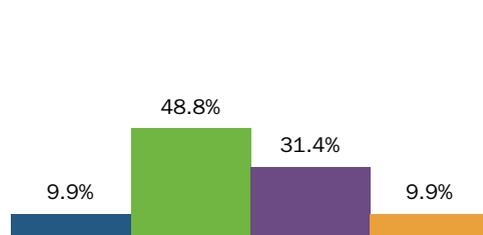
## Industry

### Question

Identifying upcoming procurement opportunities

Which response best describes your situation about identifying early stage procurement opportunities? Please select ONE. When I try to identify upcoming procurement opportunities well in advance of their RFP release date in order to add these to our new business pipeline, I find that the information about future procurement opportunities is:

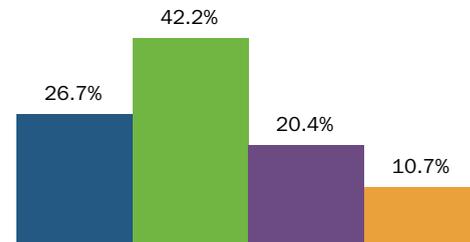
- Readily available and up to date
- Available, but not kept up to date
- Rarely available
- I don't know



## Government

Which response best describes your situation about communication of early stage procurement opportunities? Please select ONE. During the early stage of procurement process, my agency usually:

- Keeps industry informed well in advance of the RFP release date by updating Govt. websites frequently with progress
- Makes sure it is posted, but only updates it when releasing something for industry response (RFI, Sources Sought, DRFP, etc.)
- Only provides Draft RFP or RFP publicly
- My organization does not communicate with industry in early procurement planning stages



### Select Responses

“In the spirit of transparency, the Government should publish information about upcoming opportunities in stages and elicit bidder response in the same way, first being inclusive, then screening down to a short list for the final proposal and pricing drill.”

“Some information is available, but it is often scarce and timelines are very nebulous. It’s understandable that procurement processes sometimes move more slowly than expected, and if it’s due to more or better conversations with vendors, that can be good. More information about WHERE things stand behind the scenes or the types of issues that are causing dates to slip would be helpful in not only better predicting when an RFP will hit the street but also in understanding what the driving issues are for the customer.”

“Report regularly, even if there is no news.”

“Keep agency procurement forecasts and OMB 300 reports accurate and up-to-date.”

“When uncertainty exists the Government is reluctant to commit, but when they feel 100% confident it is too late.”

“Early notification is on a case-by-case basis and there should NOT be any blanket policy. Most requirements can be met in the timeline set forth in a RFP. For unusual requirements, early planning should be encouraged, but drafting policy for such is foolhardy.”

“I think both the Government and Industry could improve the amount/quality of the communication during the Pre-RFP stage. Both Industry and the Government are too cautious/guarded.”

“Post intended procurements at very early stages, then update as the timeframe becomes clear for the intended RFP”

## Industry

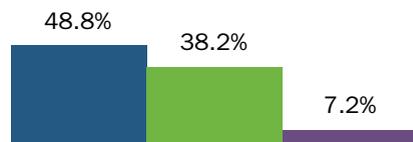
### Question

Responding to RFIs

As part of Government market research, industry is often asked to respond to Requests for Information (RFIs) about its capabilities or to comment on Government future procurement plans. Which response best describes your situation about responding to RFIs? Please select ONE. When we respond to these, my organization:

- Believes these are very important requests and we assign our best people to provide complete information
- Believes these requests are moderately important and while we do respond, we don't normally put our best team on this work
- Believes these requests are unimportant and we are concerned that our response may end up in the hands of a competitor, therefore we rarely respond or put much effort into these requests

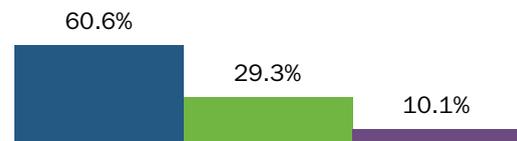
*Remaining responses answered "I don't know"*



## Government

As part of Government market research, industry is often asked to respond to Requests for Information (RFIs) about its capabilities or to comment on Government future procurement plans. Which response best describes your situation about responding to RFIs? Please select ONE. When we receive responses to these, my organization:

- Believes industry usually responds with complete information about their organization and capabilities, and provides useful ideas and feedback
- Believes responses are usually only moderately useful, but we sometimes get good feedback that validates our approach
- Believes these requests are usually just a formality, and industry only responds with generic information that doesn't help us drive decision-making



### Select Responses

"Make RFIs more specific in terms of what the Government will require."

"We respond to MANY RFIs that do not end up in a solicitation."

"Government spends too many cycles on collecting industry information using RFI and other methods and it is costly for the industry vendors. It would be better if the Government can minimize that and openly publish its challenges and work with industry to come up with solutions."

"RFIs are a good starting point only if you don't know the industry. Agencies need to build a stronger commodity based capability that understands and knows the marketplace."

"No changes needed. Government realizes that industry will provide a lot of "fluff" and marketing, and that the real "meat" will be in the actual proposal."

"More actual information from industry could focus Government expectations and allow concrete progress for acquisitions."

"The USG is always under time pressure to complete quickly, so we usually don't have time for much industry input."

## Industry

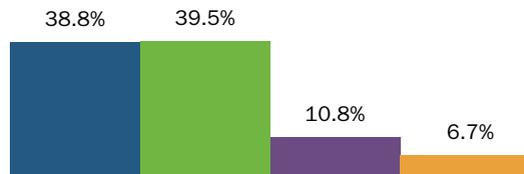
### Question

Industry day events

Frequently the Government will hold an industry day event to discuss upcoming procurement opportunities. Which response best describes your thoughts about industry day events? Please select ONE. I believe industry day events are:

- Very useful including one-on-one sessions between the prime bidder and Government
- Somewhat useful in helping understand the Government’s needs and procurement plans
- Rarely useful and everything the Government discusses is already available and known from other information that the Government has made available
- Not useful at all because the Government doesn’t provide meaningful answers to questions and no one wants to ask important questions in front of all their competitors

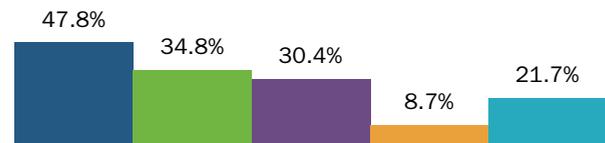
*Remaining responses answered “I don’t know”*



## Government

Frequently the Government will hold an industry day event to discuss upcoming procurement opportunities. Which response best describes your thoughts about industry day events? Please select ALL that apply. My agency holds industry days to:

- Gain useful feedback toward strengthening the requirements. We hold one-on-one sessions with the industry day.
- Address information on uncertainties that may drive up prices or other aspects of the requirement that may limit competition or affect pricing. We use one-on-one sessions in conjunction with the industry day.
- Provide industry with enough insight so they can relate their ideas and capabilities. Information is usually one-way with scheduled follow-up with interested vendors.
- Provide industry with as much information as possible at that point in time, and information is usually one-way
- My agency does not hold industry day events



### Select Responses

“Set up one-on-one meetings and release real information. Not the highly sanitized and legally stripped down public information everyone already has.”

“Many industry day events we have attended do not include one-on-one sessions. Therefore, we welcome opportunities for such so that we can better understand the requirements and present our capabilities to determine if we meet those requirements. Such will help us in making bid/no bid decisions.”

“Virtual Industry Days are great (reduces travel costs and increases attendance). Provide slides prior to meeting so industry can prepare questions and provide list of attendees after event for potential teaming discussions.”

“Spend more time in discussions with possible suppliers to improve each other’s understanding of requirements and focus on economic solutions with adequate affordability concern.”

“Industry days can be useful since most are prior to the “weight” of contracting rules.”

“When holding pre-solicitation conferences, contractors often attend to see who else is interested or to see if they can partner with other organizations. We seldom get much input from vendors to shape the requirements to make them clearer. No one seems to want to “tip their hand” in the meetings. “



## Early Stages/Pre-RFP

### **Additional Survey Comments and Recommendations**

“Share Government roadmaps with interested industry partners early and explain updates as they come. Provide early warning of upcoming RFPs. Setup FedBizOps to show upcoming opportunities – 12-18 months in advance. Provide accurate information, keep it up to date. Especially with regards to timeframes that are slipping to the right.”

“Outreach to Industry – At least annual briefings to industry on upcoming procurements (post slides on the website for those who could not attend). Industry days for procurements above a certain dollar threshold would be great.”

“The Government should consider allocating one day a week for PMs and COs to meet with interested contractors. Educate and/or convince Government employees that talking to industry is a good and desirable thing—even after a DRFP is published, up to when the RFP is published. The FAR not only allows this, but encourages it”.

“Establish formal mechanisms to meet with industry for discussions regarding the Government’s problems and needs. This could better facilitate availability and drive greater interaction. The importance of communication is to be able to better understand the Government’s situation (problems, experiences, needs, etc.) and result in identifying the less apparent issues they have, versus what is documented—possibly solving more underlying problems.”



## Industry and Government Comparison Survey Results: DRFP/RFP Release

There is a strong belief that better RFPs will also result in fewer questions.

### Synopsis

Communications is the key issue here. From the release of the DRFP through contract award communication is critical to ensuring that everything is established to have a successful procurement.

Clearly Industry wants more and more effective communication through DRFPs and questions and clarifications related to the DRFPs. Additionally, Industry believes they must be more complete and probably require multiple iterations to secure an RFP that will not generate excessive questions. The Government recognizes this. The challenge may be simply one of time and resources to create, respond to ideas, and modify RFPs.

RFPs are expected to be clean and clear. There is a strong Industry belief that better RFPs will yield better proposals and solutions and cost less. There is a strong belief that better RFPs will also result in fewer questions. Many believe questions could be answered much better and should be answered more definitively and that due dates should be extended when questions are answered late in the process. Government responses appear to indicate that there is a belief that answers to questions are currently adequate in many cases, but could be better in some.

Responding to Evaluations Notices also requires attention. The allowance of time for proper response, reducing requirements for change pages and excessive iterations remain critical to Industry. Changes in approach appear to be essential to developing a more reasonable process for dealing with clarifications and discussions.

Communication and dialogue can solve many of the issues cited. Perceptions currently indicate a gulf of understanding between Industry and Government that can be reconciled through dialogue and the development of joint approaches to achieve better procurements. The basis for understanding and improvement exists.

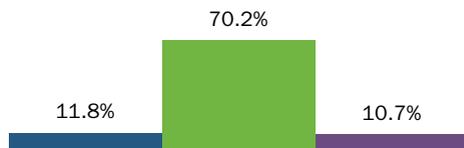
## Industry

**Question**  
Draft RFPs

The Government often releases draft RFPs to get comments from industry about their solicitation document and to give industry an early start in preparing a proposal response. Which response best describes your thoughts about the draft RFPs? Please select ONE. For the most part, the draft RFPs are:

- Always well written and include the proposal instructions and evaluation criteria so we can make an early bid decision, provide solid comments about the draft solicitation, and begin developing our proposal
- Typically incomplete and missing important proposal sections such as the proposal instructions or evaluation criteria, making the draft only partially useful
- Poorly done and rarely include the essential proposal instructions and evaluation criteria

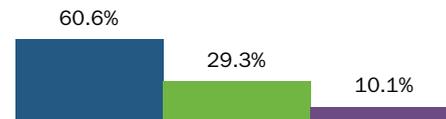
*Remaining responses answered "I don't know"*



## Government

The Government often releases draft RFPs to solicit comments from industry about their solicitation document. Please select ONE response which best describes your thoughts about the draft RFPs. For the most part, comments on draft RFPs are:

- Useful and substantive in nature and help us improve our solicitation
- Partially useful, as they are not substantive and usually just point out minor inconsistencies and typos
- Not useful to the government, and industry just uses it to "jump start" their proposal preparation



**Select Responses**

“Include Sections L and M in the DRFP.”

“The Government should do more of these to solicit input on the proposed SOW. Industry best practices are usually better known by the contractors and these best practices need to be requested and implemented by the Government to add value and save money.”

“Draft RFPs are helpful when they are well written and pre-vetted by Government legal. Often, though, sections are clearly cut and pasted from other RFPs, so potential respondents are left with conflicting requirements.”

“Particularly frustrating are draft RFPs where eligibility of applicants, personnel requirements and/or past performance requirements change when the final RFP is released, eliminating the ability of a company that had been working from the draft to complete and submit.”

“Take into consideration some of the industry specific guidance provided and use it to better shape your contract requirements.”

“Not always done – timing is usually the issue. Requires better planning on behalf of the Government to allow this to be part of the norm rather than the exception.”

“RFP responses are the beginning of industry posturing for a competitive edge. Performance estimates from industry are usually underestimated in common, non-competitive areas, and over estimated in key design areas in which they believe they have an advantage.”

“Be open and honest in comments.”

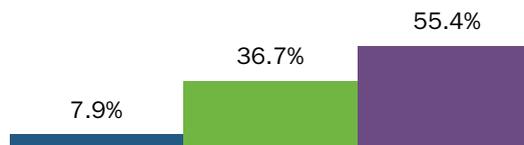
## Industry

### Question

RFP dates that slip

It is important to know when an RFP is going to be released to line up proposal resources and consultants to help respond to the RFP. When RFP dates slip, bid costs go up because staff wait on standby for the RFP to arrive and every day the RFP slips, it costs more B&P money to keep the team ready to respond. Which response best describes your thoughts about RFP releases dates? Please select ONE. When it comes to releasing RFPs on schedule, I believe the Government does:

- A good job of communicating procurement schedules and keeps industry informed of when an RFP will be released
- Does a mediocre job of keeping industry up to date on RFP release dates
- Does a poor job of keeping industry informed of RFP release dates and has no idea how expensive it is for industry when RFPs slip without a reliable release date



### Select Responses

“Contracting Officers should post expected dates for RFP release in a public area such as FedBizOpps. If the data slips, within one week, the CO should reset the forecast.”

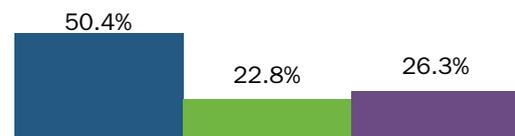
“In my experience, it is not uncommon for dates to slip by weeks or months, even as late as several days before the RFP was due to be released. It is very difficult to schedule a proposal team when the dates keep changing.”

“This is probably the most frustrating aspect of Government procurements. We have seen FBO notices issued that state that the RFPs will be released in two weeks and then RFPs are released months later. As stated in the note to the question, it costs industry more B&P money every time an RFP release date is delayed.”

## Government

Which response best describes your situation? Please select ONE. When a previously communicated expected RFP date slips, my agency:

- Communicates procurement schedules and keeps industry informed of the revised RFP release date
- Only provides updates when the expected date has past, since we don't always know how long a certain review or approval will actually take
- We don't provide estimates or updates



“Stick to procurement schedules and update industry when dates slide.”

“When a date slips, an update should be provided as to the anticipated release.”

“The Government needs to do a better job communicating schedules to Industry, however this is not as easy as it sounds due to the dynamic environment.”

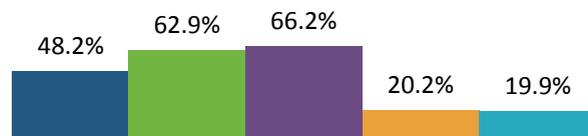
## Industry

### Question

Quality of final RFPs

Below is a list of major concerns expressed by people working in the procurement activities. Which responses best describe the quality of final RFPs that you respond to? Select ALL that apply:

- The proposal submission date does not give us adequate time to prepare a good proposal
- The RFP instructions are vague and/or the scope of work is not clearly written, making it difficult to know what to write about in the proposal
- The proposal instructions and the evaluation criteria don't match up one-for-one, so we don't know how to best organize the proposal sections and proposal content
- The Government requires us to submit too many draft CDRLs with the proposal – driving up our B&P costs
- The Government requires/desires us to release IP data rights or TDPs (Tech Data Packages), making it difficult to recoup our investments



### Select Responses

“Government needs to be trained on what contractors go through to respond. Educating them to the cost and mistakes contractors make due to poorly written requirements mean to both parties.”

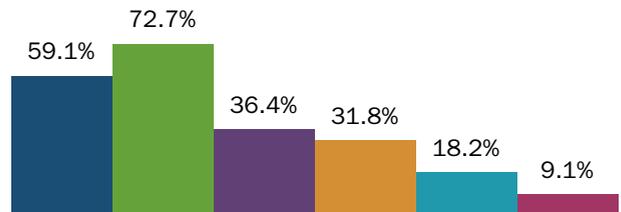
“I have proposed to Government agencies in the past that they hire, as employees or consultants, industry capture/proposal experts to assist in their understanding of what industry goes through. A bad RFP gets the issuer a bad proposal. A good RFP gets the issuer a good proposal.”

“RFPs often require that offerors address all statement of work elements. But the requirement is often nonsensical, especially in page limited proposals. Make it clear to industry whether each and every element of the SOW must be addressed, or whether the SOW can be addressed at a higher level of the WBS.”

## Government

Below is a list of major concerns expressed by people working in procurement activities. Which responses best describe the quality of proposals that you receive? Select ALL that apply:

- The proposal is generic and doesn't address specific aspects of the work
- The proposal does not address all of the requirements
- The proposal is difficult to evaluate against the criteria
- Draft plans are too generic at proposal submission
- There is a lack of innovation in approach
- There is a lack of competition



“When the proposal is difficult to evaluate against the criteria, it is often because the criteria do not sufficiently address the intended outcome. There is sometimes an internal disconnect between those who design the response and those who design the criteria for an evaluation. Second, rather than punish bidders for finding fault with an RFP (and faults are common), the bidders should be explicitly requested to identify any changes in underlying assumptions or design that could improve implementation. In other words, make criticism a criterion.”

“Somehow, the Government and industry need to figure out how to increase the competition. We want several bidders, but we usually end up having the same bidder over and over again. Others just will not bother with the process, and it seems like we need to change that somehow.”

“Industry must provide Government with innovative and unique ideas—not more of the same.”

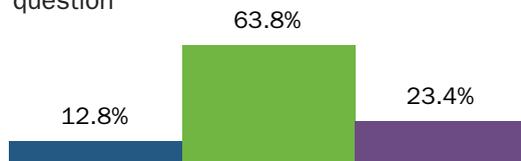
## Industry

### Question

Government's answers to questions

Because the RFP is such an important document, it is read closely and often generates questions that need to be resolved to make a bid decision and to write a responsive proposal. Which response best describe the Government's answers to questions related to the RFP? Please select ONE. I believe the Government does:

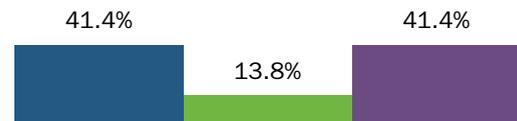
- A good job answering all our questions in a timely manner and always provides meaningful clarifications
- A mediocre job in responding to our questions but sometimes doesn't understand what we are asking or the importance of the answers, and generally gets the answers to us with not much time left to prepare our proposal
- The Government does a poor job of responding to our questions and doesn't understand that answering a question by saying "read the RFP" is not a meaningful response to an important question



## Government

Which responses best describe the questions related to the RFP? Please Select ALL that apply. When we receive questions on the final RFP:

- It seems industry did not spend time commenting on the Draft RFP, and questions could have been clarified prior to final RFP release
- We receive too many to answer in a timely manner, and it delays the procurement process
- It seems that industry did not read the RFP closely enough, since a lot of the questions we receive can be answered by referring to the RFP



### Select Responses

"Issuing an RFP draft enables many questions to be answered prior to the final RFP release. After questions have been received, designate a date when responses will be available and stick to it. If a lengthy response time is needed, extend the due date early-on rather than waiting for the responses."

"Answer the questions in a timely manner with consideration given to the RFP due date. Address each question instead of just pointing back to RFP language."

"The Q&A period of proposals is so broken that we no longer bother to ask questions. We load our bid with assumptions and have to perform costly and timely negotiations during the contracting phase. This is terribly inefficient."

"Some of the questions arise from confusion in the RFP. We have a description of the work to be one in one section, a description of what the RFP should address in yet another, and the criteria for grading the RFPs in yet another. Because they may not be harmonized they sometimes create confusion. A simplified, harmonized system would be better."

"Disagree with concerns raised above. I have found a lot of the questions very well researched and thought out."

"Industry will come in with questions only to delay the closing date. It buys them time."

"None of the above. It actually seems like industry sees flaws in the Draft RFP and does not mention these so they can be used to gain competitive advantage during source selection."



DRFP/RFP Release

## Additional Survey Comments and Recommendations

“Some Draft RFPs are well written, but some are incomplete. The instructions and evaluation criteria are important.”

“The Government should release more Draft RFPs to solicit input on the proposed SOW. Industry best practices are usually better known by the contractors and these best practices need to be requested and implemented by the Government to add value and save money.”

“Frequent communication with industry over the true release date is very important. If the Government knows it is going to miss a deadline, they should let industry know right away so that we can adjust our plans and budgets to accommodate the revised release date. Otherwise, industry ends up exceeding proposal costs unnecessarily.”

“The best way to improve Government’s chances of receiving a well-organized RFP response that proposes a solution to truly meet their needs is to provide an RFP that clearly outlines issues and needs, as well as what information is required and where. These make it easier for vendors to respond and for evaluators to compare proposals more equitably.”

“When considering response timeframes, the Government should consider how long it takes to pull an RFP together. The more complex the solution needed, the more time needs to be provided to provide the best, most thoughtful answer for the Government. This will end up saving time at the contract negotiation stage or on change management iterations.”



## Industry and Government Comparison Survey Results: Evaluation Phase

### Synopsis

Both Industry and Government believe there is room for improvement in the creation of evaluation criteria and debriefs. Approximately 50 percent of Industry respondents believe that the evaluation process is not rigorous enough, and that a winner is often chosen prior to submittal. Many Government respondents said they use source selection training for participants on evaluation panels, and use strict evaluation criteria and follow FAR guidance to avoid protests.

Industry also expressed a concern regarding the additional cost accrued by answering questions and resubmission.

Both Industry and Government expressed a need for more post submittal discussions or that more oral proposals would be beneficial. There are mixed feelings regarding the use of post submittal questions. The majority of Industry respondents believe the Government asks meaningful questions and uses the answers to help understand and score proposals. Others believed the opposite was true. Industry also expressed a concern regarding the additional cost accrued by answering questions and resubmission. Most Government respondents said that the use of questions helps clarify and understand the proposal for scoring.

Most Government respondents said that the use of questions helps clarify and understand the proposal for scoring.

Regarding the use of LPTA evaluation criteria, the majority of Industry and Government respondents believe that the award goes to firms that are marginally credible and have a high performance risk in order to save on cost. Most Industry respondents indicated that ineffective companies were awarded contracts, which forces Government to modify or cancel the contract. With that being said many Industry respondents commented that LPTA should be used, but strictly for a commodity contract not a service contract.

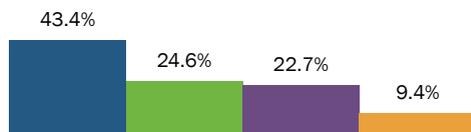
When asked about quality of submittals, the majority of Government respondents believe that the proposals are too general and do not address all of the requirements. Some believe that they are difficult to evaluate against criteria. A few more believe that there is a lack of innovation and competition. Several of the comments from Government respondents mentioned the need for clearer written requirements/criteria in the RFP and expressed an interest in working with Industry on how to solve the lack of competition.

## Industry

**Question**  
Proposal evaluation

Every Government organization follows a set of written policies and procedures in order to standardize the way they evaluate proposals. The procedures are often described in the RFP. Which response best describes your experience with proposal evaluation? Please select ONE. My experience is that most Government organizations:

- Do a good job evaluating proposals and they seem to follow the FAR and the evaluation criteria in the solicitation
- Are not all that rigorous in evaluating proposals and they seem to not follow the evaluation process. This leaves our organization feeling like they know who they want
- Can make the proposal evaluation come out the way they want to get to the company they want to award the work
- I don't know



**Select Responses**

“Create objective evaluation criteria and scoring. Provide complete and thorough debriefings based on evaluation criteria and scoring.”

“Outbriefs for losing proposals should be much more in depth, with specific discussion of proposal shortfalls or weaknesses.”

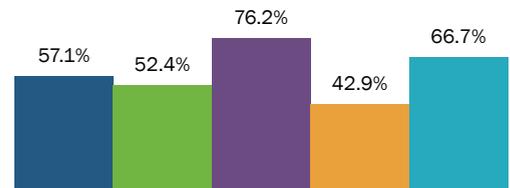
“Make sure the listed evaluation criteria are indeed how the proposals are evaluated. Do not include “incorporated by reference” FARs. If you want us to follow them, include the entire text in the proposal.”

“... Some shops are fair, some direct evaluations to their preferred bidder. How can the Government solve this? Evaluate ethically and fairly. If they want a particular bidder, sole source it. If they want competition, then actually allow competition.”

## Government

Every Government organization follows a set of written policies and procedures to standardize the way they evaluate proposals. The procedures are often described in the RFP. Which responses best describe your experience with proposal evaluation? Please select ALL that apply. My organization:

- First confirms proposal compliance with RFP Instructions and page limits to eliminate non-compliant proposals
- Uses an electronic evaluation tool to assist in evaluations
- Provides Source Selection Training for all participants
- Uses a “Quick Look” approach, where the evaluation team provides a quick top-level review to identify anything that could materially impact the award
- Evaluates proposals according to strict guidance to avoid potential for protests



“I don't believe they involve the SMEs enough in the process and often times we end up awarding something that is not sufficient for what we wanted.”

“I have seen delays caused by a failure to establish clear grading and writing instructions prior to analysis. This leads a multi-person technical panel to end up with different styles and standards, which then must be reanalyzed and rewritten. A well prepared panel can greatly reduce the time needed and improve the quality of analysis.”

“Not one of these helps build a better system. FAR requirements are designed to give the appearance of fairness at the cost of purchasing a useful product.”

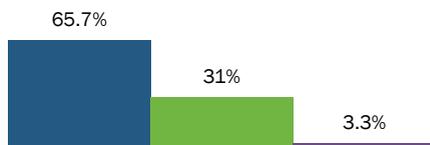
## Industry

### Question

Government questions and industry answers

During proposal evaluations, the Government may ask questions to clarify proposals or can open up discussions to ask questions that will require the offerer to submit a revised final proposal. Which response best describes your thoughts about Government questions and industry answers about your proposal during evaluation? Please select ONE. When they do this, I believe the Government generally asks:

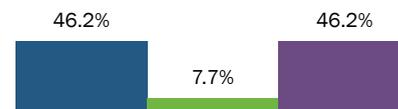
- Very meaningful questions and uses the answers to help understand and score our proposal
- Somewhat meaningful questions and/or they are not very interested in our response
- Not meaningful questions indicating that they didn't really read our proposal prior to asking the questions



## Government

During proposal evaluations, the Government may ask questions to clarify proposals or can open up discussions to ask questions that will require a revised final proposal. Which response best describes your thoughts about Government questions and industry answers during evaluation? Please select ONE. These evaluation questions generally:

- Are required to help understand and score the proposal
- Are sometimes used to bring up an offeror to an "acceptable" rating in an LPTA procurement
- Are used to clarify proposal content



### Select Responses

"Only ask questions of vendors who are in serious running for competitive award – otherwise it gives a false hope/impression."

"Make a post-proposal submission walk-through a standard practice. Doesn't have to be a formal Orals Proposal, but a volume-by-volume roadmap of the response. Cost should be left out of the discussion due to its sensitivity and typical impact on award outcome."

"The Government could expand upon their questions to ensure that industry understands what's being asked for. I believe the Government is usually asking for something essential, but communications are tricky. Without a bi-lateral conversation, it is easy to misunderstand the question."

"This is an opening for abuse. It is not fair to other bidders who submitted clear(er) proposals and thus established a higher level of professionalism at the outset. In addition, the questions can constitute an inappropriate use of the system to allow a favored bidder to make the competitive range even though that bidder failed to demonstrate sufficient responses in the initial proposal. Unless there is confusion caused by the Government, there should not be clarifying questions."

"Ensure meaningful discussions. Not every question needs to be asked. Government should NOT be asking for redlined final proposal revisions. Responses to questions are all that are needed."

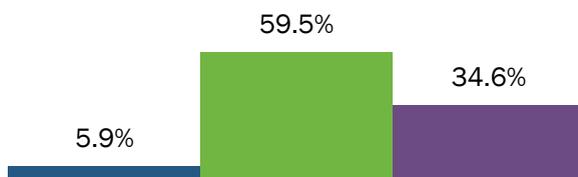
"Sometimes the best answers fail to come until after evaluation begins. The procurement processes are so long that the Government does itself a favor by enabling them to complete a procurement cycle that previously might have been in jeopardy of an unsuccessful end."

### Industry

**Question**  
Evaluation criteria of LPTA

Negotiated procurements are conducted using best value evaluation criteria, where non-cost factors (technical approach, management plan, etc.) are traded off against cost. Sometimes the Government uses a form of best value procurements known as Lowest Price, Technically Acceptable (LPTA), where the evaluation criteria provides that the award will be made to the lowest priced offeror whose proposal is technically acceptable. Which response best describes your opinion about this type of procurement evaluation criteria? Please select ONE. In my opinion, this LPTA approach results in:

- Good contract awards to solid companies that can perform the work at lower prices, resulting in a long-term savings to the Government
- Awards going to firms that are marginally credible and are willing to accept high performance risk in order to get the award. However, these risks generally undermine the expected long-term cost savings
- Awards to companies that should never have received the award. The Government is forced to modify the contract to give the bidder price relief, terminate the contract early, and re-compete or just cancel it for poor performance



**Select Responses**

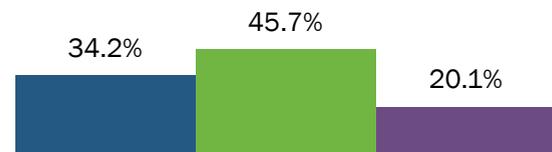
“LPTA procurements have valid uses, but primarily in commodities or lowest-common-denominator goods. Not appropriate for many or most services, IT contracts, etc.”

“LPTA encourages bidders to provide the most scaled down solutions possible with the expectation that the full solution will be provided through change management processes. The Government should be looking for the best solution, not the cheapest, because what appears to be the cheapest never is.”

### Government

Negotiated procurements are conducted using best value evaluation criteria where non-cost factors (technical approach, management plan, etc.) are traded off against cost. Sometimes the Government uses a form of best value procurements known as Lowest Price, Technically Acceptable (LPTA), where the evaluation criteria provides that the award will be made to the lowest priced offeror whose proposal is technically acceptable. Which response best describes your opinion about this type of procurement evaluation criteria? Please select ONE. In my opinion, this LPTA approach results in:

- Good contract awards to solid companies that can perform the work at lower prices, resulting in a long-term savings to the Government
- Awards going to firms that are marginally credible and are willing to accept high performance risk in order to get the award. However, these risks generally undermine the expected long-term cost savings.
- Awards to companies that should never have received the award. These force the Government to modify the contract to give the bidder price relief, terminate the contract early and re-compete it, or just cancel it for poor performance.



*Government participants did not provide additional responses.*



## Evaluation Phase

### **Additional Survey Comments and Recommendations**

“Collaboration between Industry and Government to develop objective evaluation criteria.”

“Identify members of the SEB/SSEB and the source selection official publicly. Don’t be misled by a claim that they are “not allowed” to identify these personnel. While I believe that these people should be off limits for contact by industry post-blackout, identifying the individuals serves two purposes. First, it tends to hold members of the source board more accountable. It also allows industry to seek recusals of individuals who may have an appearance of COI. Secondly, it allows bidder and opportunity to write a better proposal by knowing the customer and his/her preferences.”

“Mandatory debriefs with clear, constructive feedback will improve the quality of future proposals.”

“Vet Government post-submittal questions to ensure clarity and alignment with understanding the proposed the solution thereby improving the effectiveness of the evaluation process.”

“LPTA is often misused. LPTA is a wise choice for commodity solutions (e.g., specific hardware and software) and Best Value is most appropriate for all others. LPTA often results poor solutions and contract cancelation. The total cost associated with a misaligned LPTA procurement exceeds the money that might have been saved and delivers inferior results.”



## Industry and Government Comparison Survey Results: Debriefing and Protests

### Synopsis

There is a “chicken and egg” issue going on with debriefings and protests, as evidenced by many of the responses provided by both Industry and Government. On the one hand, Industry craves more open dialogue and transparency into the evaluation process and decisions through debriefings. On the other side, Government is fearful that by doing so, the likelihood of a protest increases exponentially with the amount of information released.

Both Industry and Government respondents want fewer protests—they are costly, time-consuming, and uncomfortable to initiate and process.

Industry clearly wants more information during the debriefing process. A few good recommendations that were cited was for industry to better understand what the FAR does allow by procurement type, to ask questions in advance of the debriefing call (or letter), and to in fact request a debriefing in the first place.

Both Industry and Government respondents want fewer protests—they are costly, time-consuming, and uncomfortable to initiate and process. It appears that the procurement industry needs a severe injection of trust to occur so that the cycle of scripted debriefs leading to more and more protests can be broken. Some thoughtful and innovative ideas to halt the onslaught of protests included asking for fees that are only refundable if the protest is successful.

And both sides agree that they are tired of frivolous protests (and repeat protesters). Protest as a win strategy is not supported by the majority of the survey respondents.

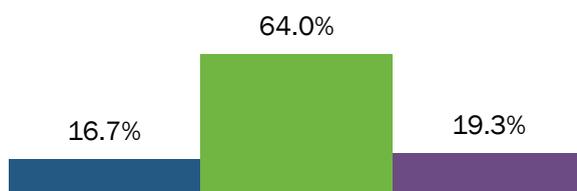
### Industry

**Question**

Government FAR-required debrief

The FAR requires that the Government provide a debrief and a basis for award to all offerors who request this information in writing within three days of receiving notification of award. My experience with debriefs are:

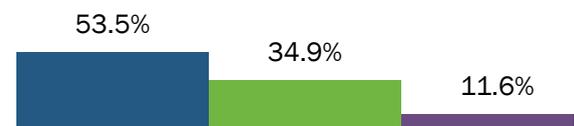
- Good exchanges of information that help us understand why we lost and how to improve our bid next time we submit a proposal
- Guarded exchanges of information where the Government reads from an approved script and doesn't deviate to answer questions that we ask
- A waste of time because either the Government generally refuses to give us a debrief, or the information is so superficial that it is useless in helping us improve our proposal or understanding why we lost



### Government

The FAR requires that the Government provide a debrief and a basis for award to all offerors who request this information in writing within three days of receiving notification of award. Which response best describes your experience with debriefs? Please select ONE. My experience is that my Agency's debriefs are:

- Good exchanges of information that help industry understand the rationale for award and provide guidance to improve future bids
- Guarded exchanges of information where there is little deviation from an approved briefing, to mitigate risk of protest
- A waste of our time because industry is too intent on asking questions about why they lost, instead of focusing on what they can learn for future bids



**Select Responses**

“More in-person debriefings in comparison to letters, providing Industry the opportunity to ask questions and hopefully have meaningful exchange of information.”

“Stop lawyering up. Let us have a verbal dialogue and be forthcoming.”

“Provide the debrief presentation in advance so that we can review it in advance and then (have) a meaningful dialogue.”

“Government has gotten so scared of protests that debriefs are now typically short, rehearsed responses that don't offer any guidance to bidders. The only way bidders can learn and grow from a loss is to understand why they lost.”

“When these exchanges are honest and open, Industry gains insight into outcomes, which reduces protests. When these exchanges fail to be requested by Industry, fail to occur, or are excessively guarded, I believe more protests occur.”

“I would like to see debriefs without lawyers.”

“It's probably best to stick to written responses – the oral debrief can be a waste of time.”

“Face-to-face or telephone debriefings (are better). Written debriefings letters are too guarded and usually only state that the losing offeror's proposal did not represent “best value.” That response almost always begs a protest.”

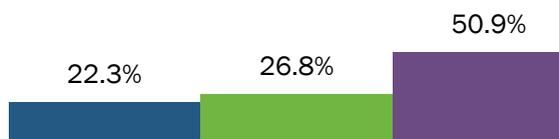
## Industry

### Question

Problems with protests

We want the Government to run an effective procurement process and select the best company to perform the work. When this does not happen, companies often protest the award, which causes delayed contract performance and greatly increases the cost for industry to participate in these protests. Which response best describes your experience with protests? Please select only ONE. My experience is that the number of protests could be reduced if:

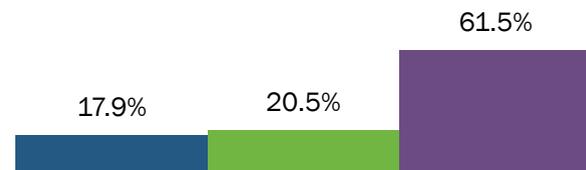
- The Government did a more effective job of debriefing so the losing bidders would understand why they lost
- The Government put more rigor into the proposal evaluation process and made sure they carefully evaluated each proposal
- The Government had better communication with industry to explain their requirements and communicated the problems with our proposals



## Government

Protests have increased over the past few years and are causing delays in contract awards. Which response best describes your experience with protests? Please select ONE. Government has worked diligently to mitigate the risk of protests by:

- Providing less free exchanges during debriefings, and providing only FAR-required feedback
- Providing more communication to explain our requirements
- Putting more rigor into the proposal evaluation process and making sure we carefully evaluate each proposal against stated criteria



### Select Responses

“Government and industry need to do a more thorough job in debriefing. It is not until a protest that better clarity is learned as to why the contractor lost.”

“A clear RFP is the first defense against protests.”

“The Government should have better communication with industry throughout the procurement process and in debriefings to lessen the number of protests.”

“This isn’t an either/or. Each of the things listed above are issues and all need to be addressed.”

“Nothing, the evaluations should be accomplished in accordance with detailed source selection plans, not in fear of a protest action.”

“I highly recommend a statute requiring payment of costs for protests that are not supported by the adjudicator.”

“My agency actually decided to make the evaluation less objective by moving from a detailed point system to “adjectival ratings” in an effort to avoid protests, which seems bizarre.”

“Eliminate COFC/CAFC jurisdiction of bid protests and leave it solely up to GAO, and then have Congress severely chastise the GAO for overreaching its mandate. The GAO should enforce existing law and regulation, not create its own using its decisions.”



## Debriefing and Protests

### **Additional Recommendations and Comments**

“Include more information during debriefings and trust that a more open dialogue about why an offeror lost will ultimately lead to fewer protests.”

“As with most procurement issues, the best way to help debriefings and reduce protests is to have a clean, clear RFP—especially one that has understandable and defensible evaluation criteria that easily maps to the proposal instructions.”

“Get tough on frivolous protests. Why isn’t there a penalty for frivolous protests? There ought to be a fee to file that is refundable if you win the protest.”

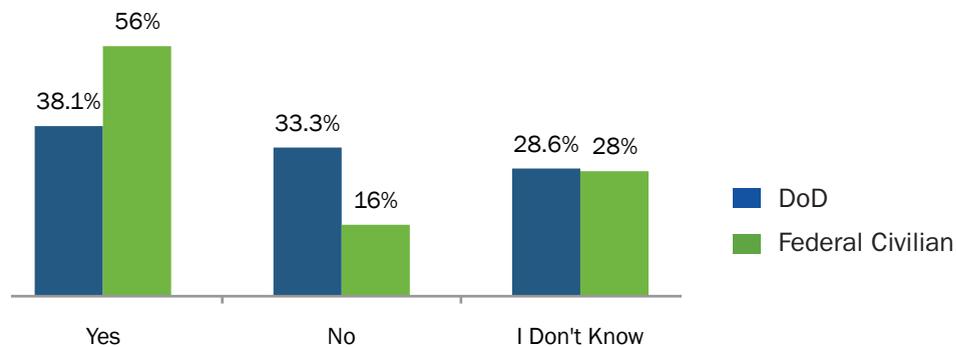
“Which side is willing to put the “us” back in “Trust”? The vicious cycle of protests leading to less information shared at debriefings leading to more protests has to end.”



## Summary and Next Steps

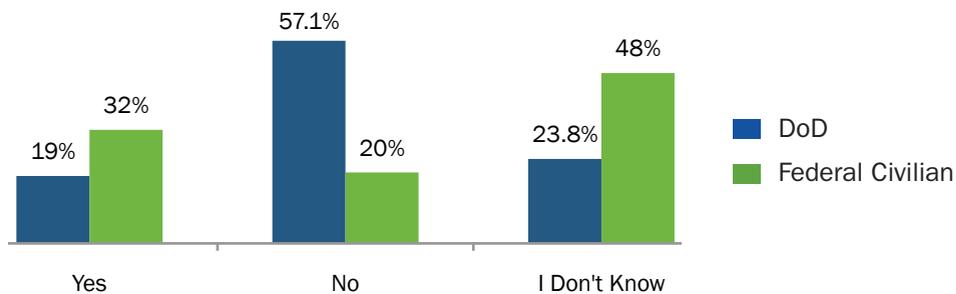
The survey asked the Government respondents to answer two additional questions:

**Question** GAO studies indicate typical “Best Value” average premiums are around 5%. My organization would support larger premiums of 10 – 15% for a superior solution.



The responses indicate that Federal Civilian agencies are more in favor of paying a larger premium than their DoD counterparts, but a significant number of both DoD and Federal Civilian respondents just “didn’t know”.

**Question** GAO studies indicate typical “Best Value” average premiums are around 5%. My organization would support larger premiums of 10 – 15% for a superior solution.



The responses indicate that Federal Civilian agencies believe more often than DoD that Government contractors make higher profits than their commercial counterparts. When comparing these responses to those above, Federal Civilian agencies are more apt to pay a higher premium, but they also know that comes at a higher profit margin.

Again, there are several responses in the “I Don’t Know” category, so this is another opportunity to open dialogue with the Government.



## Summary and Next Steps

In summary, let's revisit the five overarching challenges/themes from the survey results.

### 1. **Improve government/industry communications**

There is frustration about lack of communication, inaccurate information, and failure to reasonably update procurement schedules. Government-industry interaction is a good and desirable thing— even after a DRFP is published, up to when the RFP is released. The FAR not only allows this, but encourages it.

### 2. **Mend government and industry relationships, so that they are more collaborative and less adversarial**

Open communication between Government and Industry is not always occurring. Draft RFPs are ignored because Industry fears releasing their solutions to competitors. Procurement officials don't respond to questions that could lead to better bids for fear of advantaging one contractor, and thus laying groundwork for protests.

### 3. **Use the appropriate Source Selection method**

Too often LPTA is being incorrectly applied. Per FAR 15.101, best value continuum, LPTA should only apply in acquisitions where the requirement is clearly definable and the risk of unsuccessful contract performance is minimal. We have seen LPTA being applied to procurements that present significant risk to the government meeting its mission if the contractor fails.

### 4. **Improve the RFP Quality and Release Process**

Both Government and Industry believe draft RFPs can help resolve quality issues, and industry feels strongly that Sections L and M are critical to include in all drafts. Discrepancies in the final RFP among Sections C, L, and M prolongs the procurement process through questions and, at times, protests. Like any deliverable, taking the time up front to “get it right” will reduce ambiguity, decrease costs, shorten acquisition timelines, and improve the quality of solutions tendered.

### 5. **Stop the protests**

Protests are almost pro forma responses to a major competitive award. If they haven't already, the government often anticipates protests in their procurement timeline. Justified protests benefit the taxpayer. Unjustified protests do not.



## Summary and Next Steps

APMP's PIC has developed white papers clearly laying out Procurement Issues, Challenges, and Recommendations. Please visit [www.apmp.org](http://www.apmp.org) for the following white papers addressing many of the issues revealed in this survey:

- Keep the Communications Open
- Helping PCOs Breakthrough the Work Overload
- Revamping Industry Days
- Stop Misusing LPTA
- Improving RFP Release Dates
- Limit RFP "Cut & Paste"
- A Twist to Get Real Debriefings
- Can Protests Be Reduced?



### Acronym List of Procurement Terms

ACAT	Acquisition Category
AoA	Analysis of Alternatives
APB	Acquisition Program Baseline
APMP	Association of Proposal Management Professionals
ASP	Acquisition Strategy Panel
B&P	Bid and Proposal
BBP	Better Buying Power
BV	Best Value
CAFC	Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit
CDD	Capability Development Document
CPARs	Contractor Performance Assessment Reports
CO	Contracting Officer
COFC	Court of Federal Claims
COI	Conflict of Interest
CR	Clarification Request
DAU	Defense Acquisition University
DCAA	Defense Contract Audit Agency
DFAR	Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation
DR	Deficiency Report
DRFP	Draft Request for Proposal
DRFP	Draft RFP
DTIC	Defense Technical Information Center
ECP	Engineering Change Proposal
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EN	Evaluation Notice



Acronym List of Procurement Terms	
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FPR	Final Proposal Revision
GAO	Government Accountability Office
ICD	Initial Capabilities Document
IDIQ	Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity
IPT	Integrated Product Team
IR&D	Internal Research and Development
LPTA	Lowest Price Technically Acceptable
MDA	Milestone Decision Authority
MOU	Memoranda of Understanding
NCMA	National Contract Management Association
NDA	Non-Disclosure Agreement
NTE	Not-To-Exceed
OCI	Organizational Conflict of Interest
OFCCP	Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PCO	Procuring Contracting Officer
PEC	Proposal Evaluation Criteria
PEO	Program Executive Office
PIC	Procurement Improvement Committee
PM	Program Manager
POA&M	Plan of Action and Milestones
PPBES	Planning, Programming, and Budgeting Evaluation System
PPC	Procurement Planning Conference



### Acronym List of Procurement Terms

PPI	Proposal Preparation Instructions
PPR	Past Performance Records
Q&A	Questions and Answers
RFI	Request for Information
RFP	Request for Proposals
ROM	Rough Order of Magnitude
Section L	Proposal Preparation Instructions within an RFP
Section M	Evaluation criteria within an RFP
SME	Subject Matter Expert
SOO	Statement of Objectives
SOW	Statement of Work
SRD	System Requirements Document
SSA	Source Selection Authority
SSAC	Source Selection Advisory Council
SSEB	Source Selection Evaluation Board
SSP	Source Selection Plan
TA	Teaming Agreement
TRD	Technical Requirements Document