EVENT SUMMARY

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) sixth annual Strategic Industry Conversation (SIC VI) was held Tuesday, November 17, through Thursday, November 19, 2020, via Adobe Connect. The event focused on providing program and policy updates to industry through individual presentations, panels, roundtable discussions, and keynotes. Question and answer sessions, along with ongoing chat and poll questions, were designed to facilitate meaningful engagement. Attendance was collected each day, and totals are estimated at 569, 435, and 284, respectively. This is an increase of more than 250 attendees from SIC V.

A total of 122 attendees provided responses to the 14-question web-based survey disseminated after the event. Survey respondents reported they were pleased overall with their choice to attend and valued the content of the presentations as well as the opportunities to ask questions and provide comment (93% ranked very satisfied or satisfied).

The most important sessions, as reported by survey respondents, were ranked as follows:

1. DHS Heads of Contracting Activities Spotlight
2. Conversation with Chief Information Officers from DHS Headquarters and Components
3. How DHS Is Doing Business with Vendors
4. Cybersecurity: What You Need to Know

Respondents reported that the discussion points they valued most were CIO needs, pain points, small business initiatives, hearing from the HCAs, and cybersecurity updates. Attendee feedback included:

- The responses to Q&A from the participants were most valuable in ALL cases. This was great ... I think you brought what was needed to the table and we understand the adjustments to the new normal in your environment.
- The CIO session was by far the greatest. This helps industry to effectively estimate and position resources to support the government’s needs.
- Keep up the good work. Anytime I can get more insight to the real challenges and priorities not listed in strategic plans, and existing opportunities, it’s beneficial to introducing innovative solutions that impact the mission most.
- I felt as though the panel members were being honest with their updates.
- To me there are no absolutes. Of the sessions I attended, all had value. I do not think any of them had little or no value.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2020

Opening Remarks

Speaker: Soraya Correa, Chief Procurement Officer, DHS

Chief Procurement Officer Soraya Correa welcomed all to the sixth Strategic Industry Conversation and spoke to DHS’s commitment to promoting an open working relationship with industry. Ms. Correa then remarked on the success of DHS’s Reverse Industry Days and Micro-Reverse Industry Days as opportunities for industry partners to present topics to DHS, allowing the agency to improve its processes. Lastly, Ms. Correa highlighted the
Procurement Innovation Lab and their work to find ways to make the procurement business practices and processes more efficient and productive.

**Keynote Address**

**Speaker:** The Honorable Ken Cuccinelli, Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Deputy Secretary, DHS

The Honorable Ken Cuccinelli opened his address by expressing his gratitude to the hosts of the event and his appreciation of their commitment. He reiterated the importance of teamwork between the Department and industry, stating that the strengthening of all the partnerships makes it possible for DHS to protect the United States.

Mr. Cuccinelli addressed DHS’s efforts to counter the COVID-19 pandemic while carrying out the ongoing missions of various Components and discussed the increasing importance of cybersecurity. In closing, Mr. Cuccinelli explained that innovation provides advances but also presents risks, and that mitigating those risks is critical and takes partnership between government and industry.

**DHS Heads of Contracting Activities Spotlight**

**Moderator:** Jaclyn Rubino, Executive Director, Strategic Programs Division, DHS

**Panelists:** Polly Hall, Director, Procurement Innovation Lab, DHS; Salvatore Saraceno, Head of Contracting Activity, U.S. Secret Service; Bobby McCane, Head of Contracting Activity, Federal Emergency Management Agency; Amanda Duquette, Head of Contracting Activity, U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services

In this session, the Heads of Contracting Activities (HCAs) for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Secret Service (USSS), and U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) joined the Procurement Innovation Lab (PIL) to discuss current and upcoming initiatives.

- Mr. McCane described FEMA’s role in the COVID-19 pandemic response and noted that more than one billion dollars was awarded for pandemic response activities. New initiatives at FEMA include revised closeout requirements such as robotic processing and automation as well as Artificial Intelligence.
- Ms. Duquette addressed the significant budgetary challenges facing USCIS that required a hiring freeze and a spending freeze to avoid the planned administrative furlough. Ms. Duquette explained that strategic spending would allow USCIS to remain financially solvent and asked for industry’s partnership and support in adapting to the “new normal.” She also addressed USCIS’s focus on long-term mission and goals involving increased efficiency and capabilities through e-processing and remote interviews as well as office automation.
- Mr. Saraceno explained that as the new HCA for USSS, he is committed to maintaining open communication with industry. Additionally, Mr. Saraceno discussed his plan to reorganize the staff into teams, focused on specific customers.
- Ms. Hall shared that PIL coaches supported many different teams on pandemic response awards and will offer training on tech demos, oral presentations, and collaborative approaches to procurement. PIL’s focus for FY21 is to leverage information that has been collected over the past five years to support the goals of the HCAs.

To close out the session, HCAs announced upcoming requirements and industry days:

- USSS – RFI for body cameras for uniformed division
- USCIS – Quarterly industry engagement conference calls listed at beta.sam.gov. Calls are typically scheduled for the last Tuesday of the first month of every quarter from 1:00–3:00 p.m.
- FEMA – Information is on APFS and the FEMA website.
**Buy American: Roadmap**

**Moderator:** Sarah Todd, Executive Director, Acquisition, Policy and Legislation, DHS

**Panelists:** Pearse McDade, Supervisory Contracting Officer, U.S. Coast Guard; Ross Dembling, Deputy Chief Counsel, Transportation Security Administration; Shaundra Ford, Procurement Analyst, Acquisition, Policy and Legislation, DHS; Binita Sharma, Procurement Analyst, Acquisition, Policy and Legislation, DHS

The Buy American Act (BAA), implemented by FAR Part 25 Foreign Acquisition, restricts foreign access to U.S. Government procurements by giving preference to domestically produced products for two main scenarios: 1) supplies for use within the United States and 2), construction materials under contracts for construction, alteration, or repair for any building or public work in the United States. The Act applies to the procurement of supplies by any small business set-asides if the procurement exceeds the micro-purchase threshold (currently $10,000). It also covers two categories of domestic end products: unmanufactured and manufactured. This does not apply to commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) items. There are five exceptions to the BAA:

1. Public interest – if preference is inconsistent with public interest.
2. Non-availability – applies to articles, materials or supplies of end items.
3. Cost is unreasonable – implemented through evaluation factors.
4. Resale – foreign end products can be purchased for resale specifically for commissary. Does not apply to construction materials.
5. Information Technology – the restriction does not apply to end products that are commercial items.

The Trade Agreement Act (TAA) allows the President to waive the restrictions for the BAA Statutes for eligible products from countries that signed an International Trade Agreement with the United States or that meet certain other criteria, such as being an underdeveloped country. Country of origin determination is slightly different under the BAA than the TAA. There are five exceptions to the TAA:

1. Acquisition set-aside for small business.
2. Acquisition of arms, ammunition, or war materials.
3. Acquisition of end products for resale.
5. Acquisition for non-profit agencies.

When exceptions to the TAA apply, then BAA is applicable. Also discussed was the Kissell Amendment and USMCA’s replacement of NAFTA. An attendee asked the panel, “Given the number of exceptions to BAA and TAA, what requirements meet them?”. The panel explained that the dollar thresholds will be the determining factor. Above the micro purchase, the BAA will be most applicable, and the exception of non-availability is the most frequent.

**How DHS Is Doing Business with Vendors**

**Moderator:** Carla Thomas, Communications and Industry Liaison, DHS

**Panelists:** Trevor Wagner, Testing and Sharing Lead, Procurement Innovation Lab, DHS; Lee Thompson, Director (Acting), Strategic Solutions Office, DHS; Sharon Phillips, 8(a), SDB, and WOSB Program Manager, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU), DHS

Panelists highlighted important activities and resources for attendees:

- Mr. Wagner discussed how the Procurement Innovation Lab (PIL) collaborates with industry. He emphasized the value of hearing feedback from industry through participation in PIL Boot Camp
sessions. During Boot Camp sessions, industry and government receive the same training that focuses on best practices and includes idea sharing.

- Upcoming industry engagement efforts for the PIL Boot camp include working at changing the culture within agencies from one that is risk-averse to one that is more progressive and focused on risk mitigation. This may look different for industry, and we really want industry input.

- Mr. Thompson provided an overview of category management and how it is used at DHS as well as Department-Wide Contract Vehicles.
  - Mr. Thomson encouraged industry to take time to understand a Component’s core mission to align capabilities with needs. He encouraged industry to find out about strategically sourced vehicles on the DHS website and beta.sam.gov.

- Ms. Phillips spoke about virtual Vendor Outreach Sessions. Several prime contractors attend these sessions, allowing small business to explore sub-contracting opportunities. Some sessions are geared toward small business socioeconomic groups. Vendors may attend up to three sessions per fiscal year.
  - OSDBU encourages a collaborative method for pursuing contracts, whether it be a team of prime and sub or a joint venture. Small businesses may not have experience in teaming with another more seasoned firm or with a large contractor. This type of collaboration can enhance a small company’s expertise and their ability to pursue more government opportunities.

**Adaptive Leadership From the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer**

**Speaker:** Celisa Stephens, Executive Director, Cybersecurity and Intelligence Talent Experience, DHS

This session introduced the Cyber Talent Management System (CTMS), an innovative personnel system that updates civil service for the 21st century field of cybersecurity. The CTMS team within the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer ensures DHS follows cybersecurity workforce planning requirements in the Cybersecurity Workforce Assessment Act and the Federal Cybersecurity Workforce Assessment Act of 2015.

Ms. Stephens discussed the program’s goals of streamlining hiring and improving the quality of candidates for cybersecurity positions. She explained that the system is expected to launch in the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2021. When the system is launched, there will be a team to lead the implementation. This team will manage the hiring of the individuals in the cybersecurity service.

Key points about the system include:

- The CTMS serves as an indicator that DHS is rethinking talent management and plans to partner with industry to develop some aspects of the system.
- The hope is for CTMS to be a model for how industry can manage talent, as well as a model for civil service reform.

All DHS Components are eligible to participate without opting in or out. Individual leadership will make the determination on level of utilization.

**Closing Remarks**

**Speaker:** Nina Ferraro, Senior Advisor to the Chief Procurement Officer, DHS

Ms. Nina Ferraro closed the day by thanking everyone who was involved and who worked to make it happen. She reiterated the importance of collaboration with industry and provided a brief review of the day’s event.
Welcome Remarks

Speaker: Sherry Frank, Director, Communications & Industry Liaison, DHS

Ms. Frank welcomed new and returning attendees for the second day of the virtual conference. She stated the critical importance of meaningful engagement with industry and provided an overview of the day’s agenda.

Rising to Meet the Challenges of Unprecedented Times

Moderators: Soraya Correa, Chief Procurement Officer, DHS; Troy Edgar, Chief Financial Officer, DHS

Panelists: Tom Chaleki, Chief Readiness Support Officer, DHS; Angela Bailey, Chief Human Capital Officer, DHS; Richard McComb, Chief Security Officer, DHS; Karen Evans, Chief Information Officer, DHS

DHS management executives discussed the challenges and obstacles they have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as how they came together to meet the critical needs of the Department.

- Ms. Evans noted that before COVID-19, approximately 5,000 employees were on the VPN; currently there are more than 55,000. They were able to support the large number of staff working from home by accelerating cloud capabilities and implementing resources like Microsoft Teams for virtual meetings.
- Mr. McComb shared how the onboarding process was able to continue operations by adapting virtual identity proofing, delaying fingerprinting requirements, and using the drive alternate credential in a virtual environment.
- Ms. Bailey stated that to meet the new demand created by COVID-19, they set up a command center that brought everyone together in order to measure our current status and determine what to do next. The Command Center made it possible for them to quickly pivot and make changes as needed, as 80% of workers are on the front lines. They produced a COVID-specific website that was user friendly and gave visual guidance and information. This effort quickly grew into how we take care of the mind, body, and spirit, not just the threats posed by COVID. CHCO’s priorities are to continue to improve systems and the human experience (self-service).
- Mr. Chaleki discussed how industry can better support DHS. DHS needs to be a better customer; we need to establish better and precise objectives and requirements; doing so would promote a stronger partnership with industry. He noted that massive realignment of the real property footprint is critical as well as maintaining dialogue and supply chains with industry.

Get Smart on Section 889

Moderator: Paul Courtney, Deputy Chief Procurement Officer, DHS

Panelists: Beth Cappello, Deputy Chief Information Officer, DHS; Jeremy McCrary, Procurement Analyst, Office of Federal Procurement Policy; Sarah Todd, Executive Director, Acquisition, Policy, and Legislation, DHS

In August 2019, Section 889 (a)(1)(A) went into effect. It prohibits Federal Government agencies from the procurement of “covered telecommunications equipment or services,” defined to include telecommunications equipment produced by Huawei Technologies Company and ZTE Corporation and video surveillance and telecommunications equipment produced by Hytera Communications Corporation, Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company, or Dahua Technology Company (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities), as well as telecommunications or video surveillance services provided by such entities or using such equipment. Part A:

- Prohibits the government from procuring directly or contracting services from the vendors listed above;
- Pertains to subcontracts as well; and
- Waivers can be coordinated through DHS (but there is a time waiver that must end August 2021).

On August 13, 2020, Section 889 (a)(1)(B) went into effect. It prohibits Federal Government agencies from entering into or extending or renewing, a contract with an entity that uses any equipment, system, or service that uses covered telecommunications equipment or services as a substantial or essential component of any system, or as critical technology as part of any system. The statute covers certain telecommunications equipment and services produced or provided by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation (or any subsidiary or affiliate of those entities) and certain video surveillance products or telecommunications equipment and services produced or provided by Hytera Communications Corporation, Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company, or Dahua Technology Company (or any subsidiary or affiliate of those entities). Part B:

- Prohibits the government from contracting with an organization that uses the services as part of their internal operations even if those services do not affect the impacts of the contract;
- Part B does not flow down to subcontracts; and
- Waivers can be requested but must end by August 2022.

Waivers may be granted based on a risk management analysis and needs assessment. The Director of National Intelligence can refer a blanket waiver to both Part A and Part B and must be tied to National Security. The Office of Federal Procurement Policy is reviewing public comments to identify pain points between and within Part A and Part B.

Conversations with Chief Information Officers from DHS Headquarters and Components

Moderator: Karen Evans, Chief Information Officer, DHS

Panelists: Brian Burns, Deputy Chief Information Officer, U.S. Coast Guard; Russell Roberts, Chief Information Officer and Assistant Administrator, Transportation Safety Administration; Monica Langley, Acting Deputy Chief Information Officer, Federal Emergency Management Agency; Sonny Bhagowalia, Acting Assistant Commissioner and Chief Information Officer, U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Department Chief Information Officers (CIOs) discussed their priorities and how they can collaborate with industry partners.

- Mr. Burns stated that the Coast Guard’s information technology priorities are to maximize readiness (people are the most important assets), information infrastructure, and address maritime protection. Additionally, they are looking at productivity and doubling bandwidth through satellite. Information management services, software security, artificial intelligence, and machine learning are important areas of focus where support will be needed.
  - Microsoft 365 is rolling out now. There are many technical components of the roll-out and we need to have our cloud presence organized and secure. The Coast Guard is also interested in staffing. Help us be mobile.
- Mr. Roberts stated that TSA is looking to improve information technology resources and infrastructure to ensure mission readiness. TSA is facing funding challenges and wants to work with vendors that can help them be stable, secure, and automated to ensure mission success.
  - We would like to have a tool to help us staff more effectively at the airports. Ideally, we need a tool to determine where officers need to be, accommodate circumstances, and manage human capital arrangements. We are really looking for our partners to help the automation at TSA.
• Ms. Langley stated that FEMA’s top information technology priorities include establishing cloud service, enhanced collaboration tools, and modernization. We will be evaluating small business opportunities and those posted on the FEMA sites.
  o What FEMA is really looking at is establishing the cloud presence. After the presence is established, we can look at the security component within the ecosystem. We also want to mature our APO process, where we can look at 24/7 monitoring.
• Mr. Bhagowalia stated that CBP’s information technology priorities include establishing a cloud connection that is stable and available 24/7.
  o CBP will release a vendor portal and looks forward to working with industry partners to support cloud migration and cloud security operations.

Closing Remarks – Day 2

Speaker: Decemma “Dee” Parker, Industry Liaison for Science & Technology Directorate, DHS

Ms. Parker thanked the moderators and speakers that made the day’s sessions engaging and enlightening. She described the Science & Technology Directorate (S&T), noting that there are many ways for industry to partner with S&T. In closing, Ms. Parker recapped the topics covered and introduced the topics for the third and final day of the conference.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2020

Welcome Remarks – Day 3

Speaker: Lauren Edwards, Communications & Industry Liaison, DHS

Ms. Edwards welcomed new and returning attendees for the last day of the virtual conference and provided an overview of the day’s agenda.

Cybersecurity: What You Need to Know

Speaker: Brian Gattoni, Chief Technology Officer, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)

Mr. Gattoni opened his presentation with a review of CISA’s immediate operational priorities: election security, supply chain risk management, soft target security, critical infrastructure protection, and protecting our federal government (.gov) networks. Industry help is needed with cloud security and applying best practices in data management. CISA is taking a hybrid approach to cloud services, virtual onsite, commercial government, mobile vendors software, platform, etc. In order to protect the .gov networks, we are also helping federal agencies to accelerate their adoption of cloud services.

CISA is providing tools to better assist and safeguard the civilian executive networks through the continuous diagnostic mitigation program and through the national cybersecurity protection system. CISA will be conducting market research and will need agency feedback from industry on how to better secure our networks. CISA has multiple initiatives to better collaborate with the private and public sectors on vulnerabilities and threats.

Attendees posed questions about cloud services, standards, and guidance as well as market research activities.

Fireside Chat on Small Business Initiatives

Speakers: Darlene Bullock, Executive Director, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU), DHS; Nina Ferraro, Senior Advisor to the Chief Procurement Officer, DHS
Ms. Ferraro began the session by introducing the 11 consecutive “A’s” received by the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) on the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) Annual Small Business Procurement Scorecard. She asked Ms. Bullock, “What are the strategies for building and sustaining past successes?” Before responding, Ms. Bullock explained that SBA conducts a metric assessment to show how well an agency is doing in meeting small business contracting goals.

- To maximize small business goals and satisfy the mission of DHS, we have a best practice of building in set-asides, protégé programs, and sometimes new training.
- DHS has adopted best-in-class contracts as a part of its category management strategy. Upon assessment, if a best-in-class contract does not fit small business and socioeconomic groups first, then DHS will not use it. At DHS, on-ramps are being built for small businesses to be a part of the process and become a prime contract.

Attendee questions addressed where requirements are advertised, modular contracts, how small business is advocated in acquisition strategy, and new rules by the Small Business Administration.

**Closing Remarks**

**Speaker: Jaclyn Rubino, Executive Director, Strategic Programs Division, DHS**

Ms. Rubino expressed gratitude to those who participated from the audience and to those that provided leadership during the Strategic Industry Conversation. She also emphasized that DHS needs innovative solutions and industry partnership to continue the mission. In closing, Ms. Rubino encouraged participants to complete the feedback survey and respond with ideas for future Strategic Industry Conversation conferences.