



Get Engaged!

A Practical Guide for Program Managers/Requirements Owners When Engaging with Industry

BEST PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING WITH INDUSTRY

- ✓ Be ready with information that may help industry understand your needs (current contract vehicles used by your office, possible budgetary constraints, information about the end-user, deadline for follow-ups, etc.).
- ✓ Be open-minded. You may think you know what you need, but it's always best to see what else might be available to make your requirement more effective.
- ✓ Even if you are satisfied with the existing contractors supporting your office, you should stay engaged with industry so you can remain apprised of other available solutions, services, and technologies.

PRO-TIP

When talking to industry, you can ask them to refer you to other agencies with the same general requirements. By talking government-to-government, you can have open conversations and glean direct insights, lessons learned, and best practices.

It's never too early to engage with industry. Even if your requirement isn't fully defined, industry can help you. Program managers/requirements owners know the most about their work, requirements, and challenges, and therefore play a critical role in industry engagement. This document will provide you with useful information on how, when, and why to engage with industry.

Benefits to engaging with industry

Government wants to:



Know what industry products, services, and capabilities are available

Industry can help! Industry can provide expert knowledge in their field, help inform your market research to offer the best solutions, and discuss where the marketplace is headed in the future.



Establish clear requirements

Industry can help! Industry can provide detailed information about their capabilities, which allows the Government to better define its needs. Clear requirements streamline the process for both government and industry.



Enable the Mission with high-quality, timely solutions

Industry can help! Industry partners understand the high-demand, high-visibility needs of the Government. They appreciate early and meaningful engagement so they can best respond to the Government's needs, saving the Government and industry valuable time and resources.



Department of
Homeland Security

How and when should you engage with industry?

REQUIREMENTS DEVELOPMENT	AFTER REQUIREMENTS ARE DEFINED	FINAL REQUIREMENTS (Your requirement [e.g. Draft Solicitation, SOO, SOW, PWS etc.] is now on the street for vendors to respond to)
DOs		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industry is where you should start! Industry can inform market research, provide pricing insights, and offer out-of-the-box ideas.• You should provide equal opportunities to vendors. <p>HOW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• One-on-One Vendor Meetings• Presentations/Speaking Engagements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep engaging with industry on an equal basis as you put together the requirement with assistance from your Contracting Officer (CO)/Contract Specialist (CS), Component Industry Liaison, and Small Business Specialist.• Industry can tell you if your requirements are too complex, what innovations may be missing, and what solutions other agencies may currently be implementing.• It's best to confirm with industry that your requirements language is clear. This ensures you don't unintentionally drive up the cost due to lack of clarity. <p>HOW:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requests for Information (RFI)• Draft solicitations and/or requirements documents (SOO, SOW, PWS, etc.)• Acquisition Forecasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with your CO/CS prior to any engagement with industry, they will provide direction.• Once a formal request is out to industry, work with the CO to answer questions that come in from industry.• Review all questions to identify any gaps or trends that can help better respond to industry and tighten up your requirement. <p>HOW:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industry Days• Question and Answer Periods
DON'Ts		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't create any conflicts of interest or take actions that could be seen as endorsing or giving the appearance of preferential treatment. If you are unsure contact your CO or the Office of General Counsel (OGC).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't commit the Government to any work or buying any products/services (e.g. "free" use of contractor's products or space, "testing" outside of a structured demonstration process, etc.).• Don't accept or solicit gifts or free products/services.• Don't sign a contract.• Don't task the vendor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't discuss existing contracts with vendors — those inquiries should be forwarded to the CO on that contract.• Don't share procurement-sensitive information. When in doubt, check it out ...with your CO!• Don't engage with industry without the permission of your CO/CS during this time.

Why does industry engagement matter?

Awareness of the marketplace, vendor capabilities, industry ideas, perspectives, and upcoming marketplace innovations strengthen our procurements and our ability to obtain the right goods and services at the right time to achieve our missions.

- ✓ Enables the Government to thoroughly define their requirement
- ✓ Promotes and encourages competition
- ✓ Yields smoother processes and improved solutions
- ✓ Improves acquisition outcomes and value
- ✓ Promotes progress and innovation—not stagnation!
- ✓ Reduces barriers to doing business with the Government

We're here to help!

In addition to your [Component Industry Liaison](#), [Small Business Specialist](#), and [Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization](#), you can always reach out to the DHS Industry Liaison team at dhsindustryliason@hq.dhs.gov. We're happy to provide guidance, connections, or tailored materials to help you make the most out of your engagement with industry!

Key Takeaways



You don't know what you don't know — be open-minded and leverage industry to broaden your knowledge of the marketplace.



There are many ways to engage industry — each method and the timing of engagement can signal different things to industry. Be mindful of what signals you're sending and avoid any appearance of preferential treatment.



Partnership and collaboration with industry are key — we're all working toward achieving the same objectives, and we're stronger together. We need them just as much as they need us.