

**United States Transportation Command
(USTRANSCOM) Directorate of Acquisition (TCAQ)**

Vendor Communication Plan

August 2015



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Introduction

The United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) is one of nine U. S. military unified combatant commands. Established in 1987, it is the single manager of America's global defense transportation system. USTRANSCOM's mission is to develop and direct the Joint Deployment and Distribution Enterprise to globally project strategic national security capabilities; accurately sense the operating environment; provide end-to-end distribution process visibility; and provide responsive support of joint U. S. Government and Secretary of Defense-approved multinational and non-governmental logistical requirements.

USTRANSCOM, located at Scott Air Force Base (AFB), IL is composed of three component commands and two subordinate commands. Its components are:

- Air Mobility Command (AMC) is the air component of USTRANSCOM, also located at Scott AFB. The AMC fleet provides aerial refueling capability, aero-medical evacuations, and delivers people and cargo anywhere around the globe. In addition to military aircraft assets, additional commercial airlift aircraft are available during national emergencies through the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF), committed to supporting the transportation of military forces and material in times of crisis.
- The Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC), headquartered at Scott AFB, is the overland lift component and primary surface distribution manager for USTRANSCOM. SDDC's mission is to provide global surface deployment command and control and distribution operations to meet national security objectives in peace and war.
- The Military Sealift Command (MSC) provides sea transportation worldwide for Department of Defense (DOD) in peace and war. Headquartered in Washington, DC, MSC uses a mixture of Government-owned and commercial ships for three primary functions for USTRANSCOM:
 - o Surge sealift, principally used to move unit equipment from the United States to theaters of operations all over the world for contingencies
 - o Prepositioned sealift, some of which comes under USTRANSCOM's command once the ships have been released into the common-user fleet, and
 - o Sustainment sealift, the life line to keep deployed forces continuously supplied.

Its subordinate commands are:

- Joint Enabling Capabilities Command (JECC), located at Naval Station Norfolk, VA, provides mission-tailored, ready joint capability packages to combatant commanders in order to facilitate rapid establishment of joint force headquarters, fulfill global response force execution and bridge joint operational requirements.
- Joint Transportation Reserve Unit (JTRU) mission is to augment the USTRANSCOM in providing air, land and sea transportation for the DOD, both in times of peace and war.

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USTRANSCOM TCAQ communicates and collaborates with industry to acquire transportation and technology capabilities for customers. TCAQ provides procurement and worldwide administration of international and domestic commercial charter and less than planeload airlift services for DOD customers. The directorate executes DOD's international Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) program and scheduled service air cargo contracts. TCAQ also provides responsive, flexible contracting support for USTRANSCOM Distribution Process Owner (DPO) initiatives, and Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC) National Level Transportation System requirements. Support includes, but is not limited to, commercial and non-commercial software development and related support services, Advisory and Assistance Services (A&AS), management support services, ancillary support services, classified and unclassified network support, and research & development (R&D). Procures sealift inter-modal ocean transportation services through DOD's Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA) program in support of DOD's peace and wartime movement of cargo worldwide. Provides a center of excellence for specialized transportation and support programs; serves as Command focal point for Regional/Domestic Transportation Services and contracting issues.

In February 2011, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) issued a memorandum, "Myth-Busting": Addressing Misconceptions to Improve Communication with Industry during the Acquisition Process,¹ which includes objectives for reducing barriers and encouraging vendor engagement throughout the acquisition process. The OFPP guidance requires Federal agencies to develop a high-level vendor communication plan outlining efforts to reduce unnecessary barriers, publicize communication opportunities, and prioritize engagement opportunities for high-risk, complex programs or those that fail to attract new vendors during re-competitions. Proper communication exchanges with vendors can add significant value to and create efficiencies in solicitation development, proposal preparation, proposal evaluation, discussions and contract award processes.

1. TCAQ Commitment

Communicating with potential vendors early and often during the acquisition process can help the Government gain useful information and improve the quality of market research efforts. The Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 15.201² encourages exchanges between the Government and interested parties, from the earliest identification of a requirement through receipt of proposals, and they should take place in a fair and transparent manner. Such exchanges may include industry or small business conferences, and one-on-one meetings with potential offerors. Agency officials are urged to engage with vendors, particularly during the pre-solicitation phase and for high-dollar, more complex procurements, so long as sensitive or proprietary information is protected on behalf of the Government and vendors alike. Exchanges with the interested parties can be very beneficial and result in:

- Greater clarity of agency requirements;
- Increased awareness of industry products and services;

¹ "Myth-Busting": Addressing Misconceptions to Improve Communication with Industry during the Acquisition Process" Office of Federal Procurement Policy, Memorandum for Chief Acquisition Officers, Senior Procurement Executives, and Chief Information Officers, February 2, 2011

² Federal Acquisition Regulation 15.201 "Exchanges with Industry Before Receipt of Proposals;" <https://www.acquisition.gov/far/index.html>

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- Better business decisions made by vendors about their private sector investments in products or services offered to the agency;
- Increased competition, including greater use of small businesses in subcontracting opportunities;
- Greater opportunities for small business participation;
- More favorable pricing;
- Increased cost savings;
- More realistic expectations about marketplace capabilities;
- Higher quality contract deliverables; and
- Fewer performance problems.

USTRANSCOM Directorate of Acquisition (TCAQ) is committed to conducting acquisitions in the most effective, responsible and efficient manner possible. TCAQ recognizes the need to communicate with industry to ensure we have access to current market information and can award contracts with effective solutions at reasonable prices.

TCAQ continues to focus on eliminating (1) overly restrictive performance work statements or evaluation criteria, (2) short proposal response times and (3) insufficient market research. TCAQ is committed to protecting proprietary information contained in offerors's proposals and other information obtained during the source selection process.

2. Senior Official Responsible for Promoting Engagement

Gail M. Jorgenson, Director, Acquisition and Component Acquisition Executive is the senior TCAQ official responsible for promoting vendor engagement.

3. Reducing Barriers and Promoting Engagements

TCAQ routinely conducts, or participates in, numerous external events to promote vendor engagement; enhance competition; and support transparency in the Government acquisition process. Examples of such vendor engagement events are identified below:

Vendor Engagement Event	Frequency
National Defense Transportation Association (NDTA) Forum	Annual
Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA) Executive Working Group (EWG)	Three times a year
Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) EWG	Quarterly
Surface EWG	Semi-Annual
"Reverse" Industry Day	Annual
IT and A&AS Industry Day	Annual
Corporate Executive Acquisition Board (CEAB)	As required
Industry Days	Acquisition specific
Pre-Solicitation/Pre-Proposal Conferences with Industry One-on-One sessions	Acquisition specific

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Request for Information (RFI) – “Special Notices”	Acquisition specific
Draft Performance Work Statement to solicit Industry Comments and Questions	Acquisition specific
Draft Request for Proposals (RFP)	Acquisition specific
Site Visits	Acquisition specific
One-On-One Executive Meetings with the Director (Telephone or Visit)	When requested and schedule availability

Vendor Engagements

- NDTA Forums. The NDTA is an organization of Government, military, and industry representatives promoting communication on matters of transportation, travel distribution, logistics, and security. TCAQ’s participation in the NDTA forum allows for knowledge sharing. It also provides another opportunity to keep the dialogue open between Government and industry and to share our transportation concerns and propose solutions. The USTRANSCOM Commander meets several times a year including the annual forum.
- VISA EWG. This EWG is organized by the NDTA Sealift Committee. The VISA EWG consists primarily of representatives from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Transportation Policy, the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the sealift transportation industry. The purpose of the VISA EWG is to study transportation issues of interest to Government and industry and report the progress to the NDTA membership. TCAQ is a regular attendee and member of this working group.
- CRAF EWG. The purpose of the CRAF EWG is to provide a forum for DOD to regularly interact with the commercial airlift carriers to evaluate issues and discuss possible changes for improving the CRAF program. This EWG meets on a regular basis with all CRAF carriers and the DOT to strengthen the strategic relationship between all parties. In addition, TCAQ facilitates meetings with Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) carriers to revise the CRAF rate and Memorandum of Understanding agreements with each carrier.
- Surface EWG. This EWG is a forum used to strengthen the strategic relationship between DOD, DOT, and a cross-section of our commercial partners within the domestic rail and trucking industries. The overall objective of the EWG is to address issues that have strategic impact as identified through this committee and/or other venues. Included in the group are key representatives from OSD Transportation Policy Department of Labor, Joint Munitions Command, Defense Logistics Agency, and industry.
- TCAQ “Reverse” Industry Days. This event is conducted to provide industry representatives the opportunity to discuss current acquisition issues affecting their respective industry. The event provides USTRANSCOM personnel with industry-specific insight, affording them the opportunity to become better consumers. The purpose is to hear from industry on current issues in their respective trades and understand some of their issues and or perspective.

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- Annual IT and A&AS Industry Day. The purpose of the event is to share information with industry regarding upcoming acquisitions for IT and A&AS requirements in support of USTRANSCOM and SDDC national level transportation systems. The agenda usually includes industry one-on-one sessions with program managers, functional users, and contracting officers regarding specific acquisitions.

Specific examples of on-going internal Vendor Engagement Events

- Transportation and Technology Industry Liaison Office. USTRANSCOM is interested in new transportation and evolving technologies generated by industry. In an effort to provide equity and transparency to all industry partners, TCAQ established the Transportation and Technology Industry Liaison Office (TTILO). TTILO is the single point of initial entry for industry seeking consideration interest for their products and services and for coordinating capability briefs and innovative solutions or ideas with USTRANSCOM Program Managers and/or Subject Matter Experts. The TTILO mission is to communicate, collaborate, and connect industry capabilities, innovative ideas, and solutions to USTRANSCOM capability areas of interest. The objective of the TTILO is to establish and administer an impartial and consistent process through which USTRANSCOM can become aware of relevant and innovative products or services in the interest of leveraging those products or services to support the transportation/distribution network and ultimately the warfighter.
- “Doing Business with USTRANSCOM”. The USTRANSCOM portal features the “Doing Business with USTRANSCOM” which contains information and resources for industry and includes a current “TCAQ Procurement Forecast” on this portal page. Additional information regarding the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC) - “SDDC Freight Carrier Registration Program” and the Air Mobility Command - “How to Become a DOD Approved Air Carrier” links are also located here.
- Corporate Executive Acquisition Board (CEAB). TCAQ established a CEAB with representatives from transportation distribution partners. The goal of the board is to solidify long term partnerships with distribution partners and improve acquisition processes by establishing a communication forum to collaborate and share ideas surrounding distribution related acquisition issues. The meeting slides, minutes, of the CEAB are posted on Federal Business Opportunity (FedBizOpps) website as a Special Notice located under Other Defense Agencies, United States Transportation Command.
- Enterprise Readiness Center. The Commander USTRANSCOM established an Enterprise Readiness Center (ERC). The primary mission of the ERC is to preserve readiness capability and serve as the lead strategic integrator in coordinating transportation and readiness issues through collaborative efforts with commercial/industry customers and partners. The ERC focuses on business development, industry interface, and requirements analytics and becomes the command focal point for assessing and evaluating strategic capabilities relative to intermodal programs. The ERC team has a collaborative start to finish customer focus which includes TCAQ as an essential partner for USTRANSCOM to become “Transportation Provider of Choice”.

4. Vendor Input during the Pre-Award Phase of Acquisitions – Vendor Engagement Strategy

TCAQ encourages early exchanges of information about future acquisitions. Communicating early in the acquisition process with potential offerors enhances USTRANSCOM's ability to procure quality supplies and services for customers more efficiently and promote more competition. While TCAQ does not define a minimum dollar threshold for including comprehensive vendor engagement during the acquisition process, USTRANSCOM acquisition professionals are encouraged to (and often do) engage industry for a wide range of procurement types and specialties. For example, industry days, pre-solicitation conferences and RFP question and answer sessions in which procurements are likely to involve opportunity for additional communication are conducted for high dollar, high risk, or complex programs or those that may fail to attract new vendors during re-competition. TCAQ vendor engagement strategy to identify which acquisitions would benefit from vendor input in the pre-award phase include: Re-competition of prior procurements where (1) the requirement did not provide the solution needed, either due to nonconformance of the awardee or due to inadequate definition of the requirement; or (2) a competitive solicitation was issued but only one offeror responded, and market research suggests more than one vendor is available to perform the requirement. Acquisition plans for high risk, large dollar, and complex acquisitions of products and services usually include a comprehensive vendor engagement strategy that:

- Includes at least one industry day or a pre-solicitation or pre-proposal conference;
- Allows for reasonable amount of one-on-one engagement; and
- Allows time for discussions, as needed and in accordance with FAR Part 15, during the proposal evaluation process; or
- Provides a written justification as to why those steps are unnecessary.

Contracting Officers (CO) may apply any or all of the previously listed techniques for acquisition plans if the CO determines that the acquisition warrants or may benefit from increased vendor engagement.

5. Publications of Engagement Events

TCAQ publishes engagement events including, but not limited to: industry days, small business outreach sessions, pre-solicitation conferences, pre-proposal conferences, and RFP question and answer sessions. TCAQ's initiatives are posted on FedBizOpps at www.fbo.gov and are updated regularly.

6. Brief Description of Roles and Responsibilities

Official	Vendor Communication Roles and Responsibilities
<p>Senior Official Responsible for Promoting Vendor Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote internal training and professional development opportunities for acquisition and program management personnel; • Promote participation in collaboration and outreach initiatives; • Communicate the benefits of engaging industry to USTRANSCOM customers and TCAQ personnel; • Formalize TCAQ’s vision for reducing barriers and promoting vendor engagement; • Share lessons learned and participate in collaboration and outreach initiatives sponsored by other organizations; and • Provide feedback to USTRANSCOM Commander on effectiveness of efforts to encourage industry engagement for USTRANSCOM.
<p>Transportation and Technology Industry Liaison Office (TTILO)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates, collaborates, and connects industry capabilities, innovative ideas, and solutions to USTRANSCOM capability areas of interest; • Knowledgeable about USTRANSCOM’s Procurement Forecast; and • Shares lessons learned and participate in collaboration and outreach opportunities.
<p>Enterprise Readiness Center (ERC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on business development, industry interface, and requirements analytics; • Collaborative efforts with commercial/industry customers and partners; • Preserves readiness capability and serves as the lead strategic integrator in coordinating transportations and readiness issues; • Assesses and evaluates strategic capabilities relative to intermodal programs; • Responsible for monitoring, assessing, and developing proactive national defense options to ensure DOD strategic lift capability based on trends in the civil sector and industrial base relative to air, sea, and land transportation; and • Recommends policies, procedures, and programs to ensure USTRANSCOM and DOD air, sea, and surface lift requirements are met.
<p>Contracting Officer (CO)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the timing, frequency, and degree of vendor engagement necessary to appropriately develop requirements, acquisition strategy, and performance metrics; • Document market research and the methods to engage with industry in Acquisition Plans; • Consider methods that will be undertaken to remove barriers to vendor competition and generate new entrants to the market to increase competition; • Work with the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) and USTRANSCOM Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP) to identify the best ways to reach out to small businesses; • Collaborates with USTRANSCOM Staff Judge Advocate;

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Official	Vendor Communication Roles and Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post procurement opportunities on acquisition advertisement sites such as FedBizOpps and eBuy; • Establishes and maintains the ground rules for information sharing and ensures high integrity and fairness throughout the acquisition process; • Set expectations for the Program Managers (PM) and Contracting Officer Representatives (COR) to communicate appropriately for pre-solicitation efforts; • Be the focal point for vendor communication after the solicitation is issued; and • Understand the agency procurement forecast and the content of the document.
Program Managers (PM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confer with the CO early in the acquisition process and inform the CO about the level of vendor engagement needed to help the PM and others conduct effective market research; • Evaluate expected level of competition, assess the need for introducing new entrants to the market and make recommendations to the CO; • Keep the CO informed of vendor engagements activities; and • Share lessons learned and participate in collaboration and outreach opportunities.
Contracting Officer Representatives (COR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ways to improve vendor communications after award; • Keep the CO informed of vendor engagement activities; • Remain cautious not to allow communications with the contractor to evolve into constructive changes to the contract, which could cost money and time; and • Share lessons learned and participate in collaboration and outreach opportunities.
USTRANSCOM Ombudsman for Procurement Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serves as an independent party providing a neutral, confidential and independent review of procurement integrity and task or delivery order issues and • Provides assistance to individuals and industry resolving problems with the acquisition process.
Competition Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manages the USTRANSCOM competition program by challenging barriers to full and open competition.
USTRANSCOM Staff Judge Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon request, provides ethics training addressing vendor communication issues to include explanation of permissible and prohibited vendor engagement activities.
Ethics Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address vendor communications in annual ethics training and • Provide clear explanation of permissible and prohibited vendor engagement activities.

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Official	Vendor Communication Roles and Responsibilities
USTRANSCOM OSBP and Small Business Specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducts outreach with small business on doing business with USTRANSCOM including providing one-on-one counseling and training opportunities for industry and the TCAQ Directorate;• Assists COs with understanding small business capabilities relative to planned and active procurements;• Identify and report on progress towards achieving objectives and provide feedback to the TCAQ Directorate and USTRANSCOM Commander of efforts to encourage industry engagement;• Maintains the “Doing Business with USTRANSCOM” web page for industry information which includes the TCAQ Procurement Forecast;• Use the Small Business Central Event Listing on FedBizOpps to publicize opportunities; and• Functions as the USTRANSCOM Transportation and Technology Industry Liaison Office (TTILO).

7. Awareness Efforts for Employees and Contractors

TCAQ’s goal is to continuously look for opportunities to train AQ Directorate personnel and promote communication with industry to include formal training sessions and conference presentations. Information to facilitate public awareness for industry participation will include posting on the FedBizOpps and the “Doing Business with USTRANSCOM” website (listed below). This plan will be included on the “Doing Business with USTRANSCOM” website. Training efforts for employees will include the dissemination of internal guidance and feedback such as Acquisition-After Action Reports and periodic Training Tip messages to ensure effective use of communication approaches with industry. One of the focuses of training will be emphasizing what communications are allowed versus what communications are not allowed. TCAQ will also benchmark with other agencies best practices to identify opportunities for implementation at TCAQ.

8. Existing Policy

Links to USTRANSCOM contracting information include:

- USTRANSCOM public portal page <http://www.transcom.mil/>
- “Doing Business with USTRANSCOM” http://www.transcom.mil/doing_business.cfm
- USTRANSCOM TRANSFARS <http://farsite.hill.af.mil/vfustca.htm>
- USTRANSCOM AQ Directorate <http://www.transcom.mil/about/org/tcaq/>
- USTRANSCOM Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP) <http://www.transcom.mil/about/org/tccs/OSBP.cfm>
- Transportation & Technology Industry Liaison Office (TTILO) <http://www.transcom.mil/ttilo/>

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- SDDC Freight Carrier Registration Program - [Surface Deployment and Distribution Command \(SDDC\) - Business Customers](#)
- AMC How to Become a DOD Approved Air Carrier - [Air Mobility Command - Business Customers](#)

Links to Federal/DOD contracting information include:

- Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy – <http://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/>
- Federal Acquisition Regulation <https://www.acquisition.gov/far/index.html>
<http://farsite.hill.af.mil>
- Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement and Procedures Guidance and Information – <http://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/dars/dfarspgi/current/index.html>
- Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOpps) –
<https://www.fbo.gov/index?tab=search&s=opportunity&mode=list&cck=1&au=&ck=>

The following are statutorily based limitations on communicating with firms and representatives of the defense industrial base. They are not intended to represent the complete list of requirements applicable to communicating with industry, but serve to provide a basis for regulatory guidance.

- Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. § 423)
<http://www.justice.gov/oip/amended-foia-redlined-2010.pdf> (FAR Subpart 24.2)
- Conflict of Interest Prohibition (18 U.S.C. § 208)
 - Government officials may not participate in a matter that presents an actual or apparent conflict of interest.
<http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/208>
- Procurement Integrity Act (41 U.S.C. § 423)
 - Government officials may not disclose proprietary or source selection information. (FAR 3.104)
<http://www.justice.gov/jmd/procurement-integrity>
- Competition in Contracting Act (10 U.S.C. 2304)
 - Government officials may not give unauthorized preferential treatment to one firm but must treat all firms equally.
http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode10/usc_sec_10_00002304----000-.html
- Trade Secrets Act (18 U.S.C. §1905)
 - Government officials may not disclose trade secrets or other proprietary information without permission of the owner of the information.
 - Government officials must protect procurement-sensitive information and information that would not otherwise be disclosed to the public under the Freedom of Information Act.
<http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/1905>
- Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.2)
 - Government officials must comply with the Federal Advisory Committee Act when seeking consensus advice or recommendations from a group that includes non-Government employees.

<http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/100916#>

9. Assessing Communication Plan Effectiveness through Employee and Vendor Feedback

The Directorate of Acquisition (TCAQ) will conduct general feedback with employees and vendors using various methods such as questionnaires, post-award surveys, or focus group meetings to gauge the overall effectiveness of outreach efforts.

Revisions to this plan will be made as necessary.