

**United States Transportation Command
(USTRANSCOM)**

**Directorate of Acquisition
(TCAQ)**

Vendor Communication Plan



April 2018

Table of Contents

	Introduction	1
1.	TCAQ Commitment.....	2
2.	Senior Official Responsible for Promoting Engagement	3
3.	Reducing Barriers and Promoting Engagements.....	3
4.	Vendor Input during the Pre-Award Phase of Acquisitions – Vendor Engagement Strategy	5
5.	Publications of Engagement Events	5
6.	Brief Description of Roles and Responsibilities	6
7.	Awareness Efforts for Employees and Contractors.....	7
8.	Defense Innovation Marketplace.....	8
9.	Defense Technical Information Center	9
10.	Existing Policy	8
11.	Assessing Communication Plan Effectiveness through Employee and Vendor Feedback	10

Introduction

The United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) is one of nine U. S. combatant commands. Established in 1987, it is the single manager of America's global defense transportation system, tasked with the coordination of people and transportation assets to allow our country to project and sustain forces, whenever, wherever, and for as long as they are needed. USTRANSCOM's mission is to provide full-spectrum global mobility solutions and related enabling capabilities for supported customers' requirements in peace and war.

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). AMC is the air component of USTRANSCOM, located at Scott AFB. The AMC fleet provides aerial refueling capability, aeromedical evacuation, and delivers people and cargo anywhere around the globe in a matter of hours. In addition to military aircraft assets, 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.
- Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command (SDDC). SDDC, headquartered at Scott AFB, is the overland lift component and primary surface distribution manager for USTRANSCOM. SDDC's mission is to provide global deployment and distribution services in the support of the Department of Defense (DoD).
- Military Sealift Command (MSC). MSC, as USTRANSCOM's sealift component, provides efficient sea transportation worldwide for DoD in peace and war. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., 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). JECC, located at Naval Station Norfolk, VA, provides mission-tailored, 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). The JTRU mission is to augment the USTRANSCOM in providing air, land and sea transportation for the DoD, both in times of peace and war.

In support of the USTRANSCOM mission, the Command's Acquisition Directorate (TCAQ) communicates, collaborates, and contracts 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; executes DoD's international Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) program and scheduled service air cargo contracts; provides responsive, flexible contracting support for USTRANSCOM IT and Advisory and Assistance Services (A&AS) initiatives, and our component commands' transportation system requirements (support includes, but is not limited to, commercial and non-commercial software development and related support services, management support services, ancillary support services, classified and unclassified network support, and research & development (R&D)); procures sealift inter-modal ocean transportation services in support of DoD's peace and wartime movement of cargo worldwide; and, provides a center of excellence for specialized transportation and support programs, serving as the Command focal point for Regional/Domestic Transportation Services and contracting activities.

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), Part 15.201,¹ 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, but are not limited to, 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;
- 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;
- Enhanced 'Best Value' determination;
- More realistic expectations about marketplace capabilities;
- Higher quality contract deliverables; and
- Fewer performance problems.

TCAQ is committed to conducting acquisitions in an effective, responsible and efficient manner. 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 fair and reasonable prices.

¹ Federal Acquisition Regulation 15.201 "Exchanges with Industry Before Receipt of Proposals;" <https://www.acquisition.gov/far/index.html>

USTRANSCOM Directorate of Acquisition Vendor Communication Plan

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' proposals and other information obtained during the source selection process.

2. Senior Official Responsible for Promoting Engagement

The USTRANSCOM 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)	Semi-Annual
Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) EWG	Semi-Annual
Surface EWG	Annual
"Reverse" Industry Day	As determined beneficial
IT and A&AS Industry Day	Annual
Industry Days	Acquisition specific
Pre-Solicitation/Pre-Proposal Conferences with Industry One-on-One sessions	Acquisition specific
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 upon 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 to resolve transportation challenges. It also provides another opportunity to keep the dialogue open between Government and industry. The USTRANSCOM Commander meets with industry leaders several times a year, including the annual NDTA 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 rates 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.
- **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 initiatives and our component commands’ transportation systems. The agenda usually includes industry one-on-one sessions with program managers, functional requirements’ owners, 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 and evolving transportation 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” page, which contains information and resources for industry and includes a current “TCAQ Procurement Forecast”. Additional information regarding the “SDDC Freight Carrier Registration Program” and the Air Mobility Command’s “How to Become a DoD Approved Air Carrier” is available through links located here.

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

TCAQ encourages early exchanges of information regarding 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 promotes competition. While TCAQ does not define a minimum dollar threshold for including comprehensive vendor engagements 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 are conducted for high dollar, high risk, or complex programs or those that may fail to attract new vendors during re-competition. TCAQ vendor engagements also benefit the 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

If an acquisition warrants or may benefit from increased vendor engagement, the Contracting Officer (CO) may recommend any or all of the previously listed techniques to the Program Manager (PM) or Services Acquisition Managers (SAM).

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 contracting 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 • Share lessons learned and participate in collaboration and outreach opportunities.
<p>Contracting Officer (CO)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In concert with PM/SAM, 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 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; • Collaborate with USTRANSCOM Staff Judge Advocate; • Post procurement opportunities on acquisition advertisement sites such as FedBizOpps and eBuy; • Establish and maintain the ground rules for information sharing and ensure 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.
<p>Program Managers (PM) and Services Acquisition Managers (SAM)</p>	<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/SAM 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

USTRANSCOM Directorate of Acquisition Vendor Communication Plan

Official	Vendor Communication Roles and Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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"> • Serve as an independent party providing a neutral, confidential and independent review of procurement integrity and task or delivery order issues and • Provide assistance to individuals and industry resolving problems with the acquisition process.
Competition Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the USTRANSCOM competition program by challenging barriers to full and open competition.
USTRANSCOM Staff Judge Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon request, provide 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.
USTRANSCOM OSBP and Small Business Specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct outreach with small businesses on doing business with USTRANSCOM, including providing one-on-one counseling and training opportunities for industry; • Assist 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 on efforts to encourage industry engagement; • Maintain 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 • Function as the USTRANSCOM Transportation and Technology Industry Liaison Office (TTILO).

7. Awareness Efforts for Employees and Contractors

TCAQ’s goal is to promote the significant benefits that can be realized through early and frequent communication with industry. Information to facilitate public awareness of industry participation opportunities will be posted on the FedBizOpps and the “Doing Business with USTRANSCOM” websites (listed below). This plan will be included on the “Doing Business with USTRANSCOM” website. Training efforts for TCAQ employees will include the dissemination of internal guidance and feedback such as Acquisition After Action Reports and periodic Training Tip or “Did You Know” email 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 other agencies' best practices to identify opportunities for implementation within TCAQ.

8. Defense Innovation Marketplace

USTRANSCOM promotes use of the Defense Innovation Marketplace to facilitate dissemination of information. This resource provides industry with improved insight into the Research and Engineering (R&E) investment priorities of the DoD. The Marketplace contains DoD R&E strategic documents, solicitations, and news/events to better inform independent Research and Development (R&D) planning. The IR&D Secure Portal houses project summaries that provide DoD with visibility into the IR&D efforts submitted.

9. Defense Technical Information Center

USTRANSCOM promotes use of the Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC) to maximize our Nation's investment in DoD research and development, by working together to solve problems and avoid duplicative work. DTIC collects, organizes and safeguards the results of DoD's multibillion dollar investment each year in science and technology, prototyping, and rapid fielding by providing scientific and technical information to authorized users. DTIC captures the life cycle of science and technology, from requirement through technology insertion, and strives to provide users complete and relevant data to enhance current capabilities and envision future capabilities while protecting DoD information assets from adversaries and rivals.

10. Existing Policy

Links to USTRANSCOM contracting information include:

- USTRANSCOM public portal page <https://www.ustranscom.mil/>
- "Doing Business with USTRANSCOM" <https://www.ustranscom.mil/dbw/index.cfm>
- USTRANSCOM TRANSFARS <http://farsite.hill.af.mil/vmustca.htm>
- USTRANSCOM AQ Directorate <https://www.ustranscom.mil/about/org/tcaq/>
- USTRANSCOM Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP)
<https://www.ustranscom.mil/dbw/osbp.cfm>
- Transportation & Technology Industry Liaison Office (TTILO)
<https://www.ustranscom.mil/dbw/ttilo/>
- SDDC Freight Carrier Registration Program –
<http://www.sddc.army.mil/sddc/Pages/doingBus.aspx>
- AMC How to Become a DoD Approved Air Carrier - <http://www.amc.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/144030/how-to-become-a-dod-approved-air-carrier/>

Links to Federal/DoD contracting information include:

USTRANSCOM Directorate of Acquisition Vendor Communication Plan

- 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=>
- Defense Innovation Marketplace – <http://www.defenseinnovationmarketplace.mil/>
- Defense Technical Information Center – <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/index.html>

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.
<https://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.
https://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.
<https://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#>

11. Assessing Communication Plan Effectiveness through Employee and Vendor Feedback

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.