

Focusing on Customer Success

Acquisition Planning and Support Services (APSS)

Bob Hunter

The Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) will engage in Acquisition Planning and Support Services (APSS) activities at the start of the acquisition strategy and contract structuring processes, and will remain engaged throughout the acquisition life cycle.”

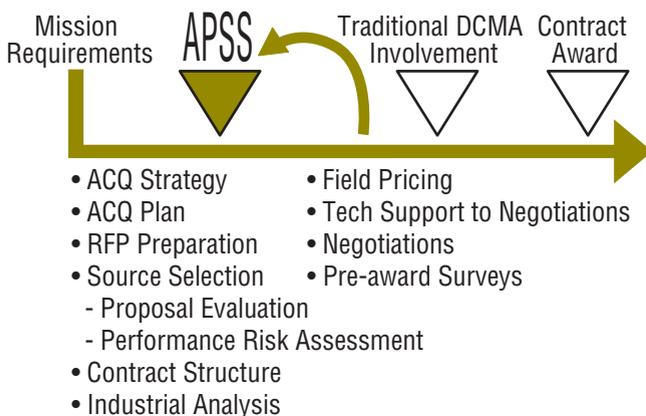
With this intent statement, Army Brig. Gen. Edward M. Harrington, DCMA director, reiterated the agency’s long-standing commitment to the acquisition community. DCMA, with its experienced on-site acquisition professionals, is well positioned to provide customers with unique and valuable insight in planning acquisitions. With both a pre- and post-award contract perspective, we are able to assist in developing acquisition strategies; identify performance risk at prospective contractors; perform industrial capability assessments and market analyses; help construct more effective requests for proposal; structure contracts that are more easily managed; and conduct sole source negotiations. Early engagement with DCMA has been recognized throughout the acquisition community as an important factor in the success of acquisition programs.

The Beginnings: Early CAS

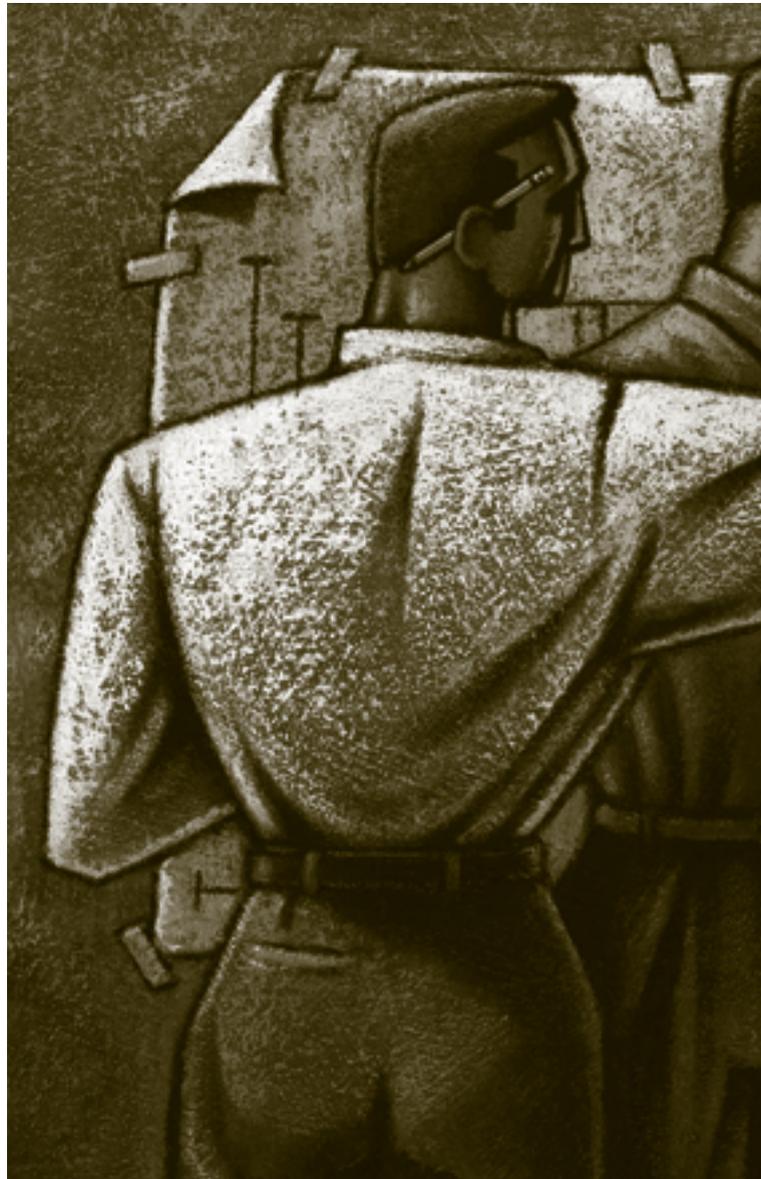
DCMA’s focus on APSS began in the mid-1990s. In May 1994, DCMA’s precursor, the Defense Contract Manage-

ment Command (DCMC) initiated a new line of customer services known collectively as early contract administration services (Early CAS). Early CAS was defined as teaming with buying commands early in the acquisition process to help plan acquisition strategies; develop requests for proposal; structure contracts; conduct source selections (for example, past performance/performance risk assessment, cost/price analyses, etc.); and conduct sole source negotiations (such as integrated product team (IPT)

FIGURE 1. DCMA Pre-contractual Involvement in the Acquisition Process



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pricing, alpha acquisition, and so on). This was a major step forward for the agency, as our traditional involvement prior to contract award had been limited to the performance of pre-award surveys, field pricing, and technical support to negotiations (Figure 1).

The March 1995 final report of the Department of Defense (DoD) Contract Administration Services Reform Process action team recommended that Early CAS be institutionalized within the DoD acquisition process: “Our conclusion is that significant benefits may be gained from greater participation of contract administration personnel during the pre-contractual stages of the acquisition process. Accordingly, the IPT recommends that DoD establish contract administration support during the pre-contractual phase as a basic mission necessity.”

One of the implementing taskings of the report was for component acquisition executives to “share advance plan-

ning information between buying activities, program offices and DCMC and ensure that buying activities give consideration to the DCMC liaison officer as a member of their procurement planning committees and provide access to the acquisition planning processes.”

In addition, support to program offices and buying activities in pre-contractual efforts leading to solicitation or award was incorporated into the Defense Federal Acquisition Supplement as a formal contract administration of office function (DFARS 242.302(a)(67)).

These efforts led to the increased involvement of DCMC and then DCMA in Early CAS efforts, as the acquisition community learned that our continuous interaction with the contractor community gave DCMA unique insight into contractor capabilities and past performance. The community also learned that DCMA brings to the acquisition planning table a wealth of risk-based acquisition strategy and contracting lessons learned. By providing these insights when they can do the most good—prior to contract award—we are able to improve the acquisition process and increase the likelihood of acquisition program success. DCMA’s involvement helps to minimize post-award problems by helping buying activities to select more capable contractors, to more reliably identify



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performance risk, to construct more effective solicitations, and to develop contracts that are easier to execute.

The Evolution of APSS

Over the next several years, Early CAS became institutionalized as one of DCMA’s core business areas. As our involvement increased, it became clear that there were opportunities for this support throughout the acquisition



As DCMA transforms to a customer-centered culture and focuses on customer outcomes as a measure of our success, the importance of APSS to our future becomes apparent.

Putting APSS Support to Work for You

The earlier DCMA joins the buying activity pre-award team, the greater the opportunity for value-added insight. Customer liaison representatives, located at major buying activities, are the focal points for requests for APSS. Find them at <http://home.dcma.mil/dcma-pi/liasons.htm>.

If you don't have a customer liaison at your activity, contact your APSS performance advocates:

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life cycle. These opportunities were recognized with the name change to APSS, which is now identified as one of DCMA's 13 service sets.

Acquisition reform and DCMA's identification of special emphasis areas have provided us with additional opportunities to support the DoD acquisition community in the APSS arena.

The DCMA Industrial Analysis Center supports DoD with industrial capability and surge analyses for major weapon systems acquisition, logistics, and readiness programs. Its products are helpful in planning for and maintaining military readiness, preserving essential/unique industrial capabilities, protecting critical infrastructure, and making informed defense industrial base investment decisions—all critical factors in acquisition strategy planning.

The Quadrennial Defense Review of September 2001 required DoD to implement performance-based logistics (PBL) to compress the supply chain and improve readiness for major weapons systems and commodities. DCMA has

provided APSS to PBL-related processes and capabilities, including supply chain management, demand forecasting, obsolescence management, logistics surveillance, and partnering arrangements. This has been a growth area for DCMA support over the last two years.

Another focus area for APSS within DCMA has been performance-based payments (PBP). With its many years of experience, DCMA is able to advise buying activities on how best to develop PBP plans of action. In fact, the Professional Services Council IPT is considering recommending coordination with DCMA and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) to improve contract structuring and facilitate timely payments of certain contracts, including those containing performance-based payment provisions.

APSS in Action

DCMA has provided APSS support to many major defense acquisition programs over the years, most recently to such programs critical to DoD's future as Future Combat Systems, DD(X), Joint Tactical Radio System (JTRS), the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), E2 Advanced Hawkeye, Tactical Tomahawk, Joint Standoff Weapon (Baseline and Unitary), Advanced Extreme High Frequency (AEHF) Satellite, Multi-Sensor Command and Control Aircraft System (MC2A), and the Joint Strike Fighter. As DCMA transforms to a customer-centered culture and focuses on customer outcomes as a measure of our success, the importance of APSS to our future becomes apparent. It is by helping our customers to succeed that we will become an indispensable partner.

Editor's note: The author welcomes questions and comments and can be reached at bob.hunter@dcma.mil.

Learn More About DCMA and APSS

The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) Continuous Learning Center has a continuous learning module entitled "Leveraging DCMA for Program Success." The module provides details on the products and services provided by DCMA to a program manager and program management office staff. You'll learn how DCMA support can be used to reduce program risk and how to contact DCMA to arrange for program support. Also included is a lesson describing DCMA's APSS support and how you can best utilize APSS to improve your acquisitions. You can access the continuous learning center modules at <http://clc.dau.mil>.

DCMA's Web site, www.dcma.mil, has additional information describing agency policies on APSS, DCMA's *APSS Guidebook*, and links to other APSS-related policy and guidance.

Office of Force Transformation Unveils Primer on Network-Centric Warfare (Jan. 7, 2004)



To download a copy, go to the Office of Force Transformation Web site at:

<http://www.ofot.osd.mil/index.cfm>