

# INDUSTRY DAY

## PRESENTING REQUIREMENTS IS JUST THE FIRST STEP

Barbara Machak, then director of the Enterprise and System Integration Center, addresses the 2014 annual DOTC meeting. A two-part agenda, with the government presenting requirements first in a plenary session and industry sharing how it might meet them in smaller closed-door sessions, ensures that the industry day is a conversation, not just a one-way PowerPoint presentation. (Photo courtesy of SCRA)



# OPENS DOORS

When PM CCS began planning for the Gator landmine replacement program, an industry day and a technology consortium led to a wide-open exchange of information and new partnership possibilities.

*by Mr. John Troup*

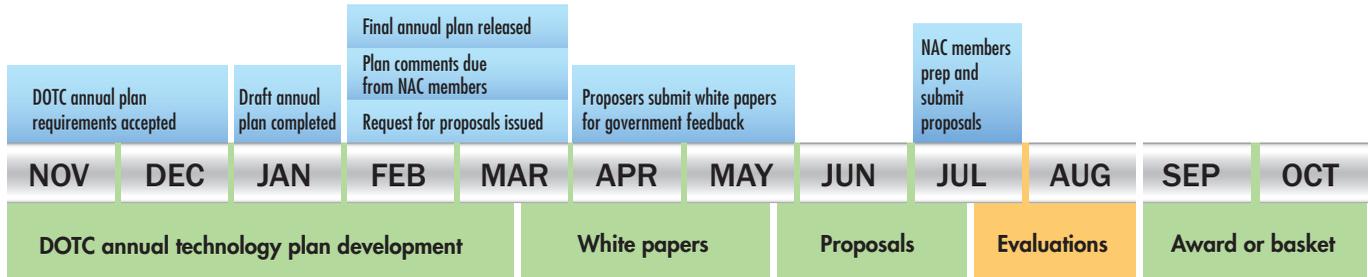
The development of complex weapon systems often involves engaging industry partners early in the acquisition process. When the project manager for close combat systems (PM CCS), under the Program Executive Office (PEO) for Ammunition, began planning for the Gator landmine replacement program last year, it became evident that starting those engagements early doesn't necessarily make things easy. However, a partnership with the U.S. Army Armament Research, Development and Engineering Center (ARDEC) and a technology consortium yielded unexpected benefits that will carry forward into the system development process.

In July 2015, the materiel development decision for the Gator landmine replacement (GLMR) program was approved, initiating the analysis of alternatives (AoA). Months before, PM CCS had recognized how important competitive prototyping—where two or more competing teams develop prototypes during the early stages of a project—would be to conducting a thorough and well-informed materiel solution analysis phase and



FIGURE 1

# DOTC COLLABORATION



- Early engagement enhances industry, academia and government collaboration.
- Continued collaboration improves understanding and refinement of DOD customer requirements.
- Thorough understanding of requirements improves the fidelity of proposals that better meet the customers' needs.
- DOTC offers a unique opportunity for industry, small business and academia to engage DOD customers until proposal submittal.

### THE TABLE WAS ALREADY SET

Working through a standing consortium, the DOTC, PM CCS overcame the difficulties of communicating with industry efficiently before a procurement effort officially hits the street. "Other transaction" agreements already in place through the consortium allow smaller, nontraditional companies and academic groups to join the conversation; and the standing group meeting allowed PM CCS to hold an industry day to discuss the replacement for the Gator landmine without having to supply a location and staff time on nonexistent funds. (SOURCE: DOTC)

AoA. By identifying risks, quantifying affordability and defining development timelines, competitive prototyping leverages the capabilities of industry to inform critical decisions. The logical first step in engaging industry is an industry day.

### FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

In preparing for the industry day, the GLMR team addressed six fundamental questions that would apply to any program planning such an event.

**Why an industry day?** Market surveys, requests for information, or other interactions that don't take place face to face are an appropriate option in many cases. However, with requirements

this early in development there is the potential for the market survey to result in more questions than answers. An industry day allows for more interaction, collaboration and two-way communication. An ancillary benefit is the ability to gather competitors in the same location. All system contractors rely heavily on subcontractors for specialized capabilities, and with a well-cast net the government can create an environment that fosters networking among the participants and has the potential to result in beneficial partnerships that otherwise may not happen.

**Who is the audience?** The broadest participation possible among multiple sectors of industry offers the best opportunity to capture innovative approaches. In this case, the system could

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include everything from long-range delivery and communications to non-lethal effects. It is easy to default to the familiar crowd of defense contractors we work with every day, but that's a tall task even for them. A lot of innovation takes place in smaller, more agile companies that may be less familiar to the government team. So the question becomes, how can we reach beyond the standard FedBizOps announcement that may not catch the interest of small and nontraditional businesses?

**What information is being shared?** The requirements, of course.

**But how can you effectively communicate what your requirements are when they are still so broadly defined? How early is too early?** If there is a documented capability need, then it is not too early to start the conversation. It is critical for all parties to understand both the emerging requirements and the realm of the possible so that progress toward providing a capability is effective and efficient.

**When is the appropriate time to conduct the industry day?** The intent is for industry to help identify risks, quantify affordability and define development

timelines. That is information that can feed into the AoA and ensure a well-informed path forward. Hosting an industry day does not commit the government team to anything beyond sharing the approved information.

**How and where are we able to facilitate an industry day within the limited resources and authorities of a pre-materiel development decision effort?**

Setting up an industry day, though it doesn't require substantial resources, can be problematic prior to the program being funded. Additionally, prior to the materiel development decision the government has not committed to even entering the acquisition process. So at this point, we have no money and no commitment to investigate materiel alternatives, but we need data to inform decisions. Fortunately, the only obligation with an industry day is that the government will provide the venue and the information. Unfortunately, even that seemed out of reach in this case.

Most of these questions were easily answered by focusing on the goals of the event: Inform industry of the emerging requirements and gather information on the state of relevant technology. The difficult questions became where and how

such a gathering could be orchestrated before the program officially started.

For the GLMR team, the answers came from an unexpected place.

While developing the acquisition strategy for the competitive prototyping phase, PM CCS identified a promising alternative to the traditional contracting approach: using other transaction agreements through the DOD Ordnance Technology Consortium (DOTC).

The goal of DOTC is to facilitate collaborative government, industry and academic ordnance technology development and prototyping efforts. Industry and academic members of the National Armaments Consortium (NAC), in conjunction with DOD stakeholders such as ARDEC and PEO Ammunition, form the collaborative DOTC organization. With nearly 400 members, of which more than 60 percent are small businesses or nontraditional defense contractors, NAC and DOTC provide an opportunity to engage additional potential developers outside of the traditional partners that have been working with the program manager over the past several decades. (See Figure 1.) Through the use of a single-point contracting process, the time to award can usually be reduced, which is important when trying to get the initiatives up and running in time to be effective at informing the AoA.

DOTC was eager to partner with PM CCS for the competitive prototyping efforts, and the leadership also recognized an opportunity to go above and beyond for their customers while benefiting the membership as well. At the annual NAC general membership meeting, there was time available that could be used for the GLMR industry day. Furthermore, accommodations could

be made for that block of time where there could be an open forum for any interested party, member or not. This would allow ARDEC and PM CCS to announce the event to the public through FedBizOps and give DOTC and NAC an opportunity to engage prospective new members. Many prospective participants would already be on site, reducing travel costs and providing an incentive to stick around and learn about the emerging requirements when they may not otherwise have been interested enough to make the trip.

ARDEC and the DOTC agreed on an event format that would achieve the two primary goals and result in everyone walking away with more knowledge than they started with. The first session, open to everyone, focused on the government conveying the emerging requirements to the full audience. The second, a closed-door session, allowed interested parties to present how they felt they could address those requirements and what the current state of their capabilities were.

When it comes to presenting the material, it can be tempting for the government to go beyond the facts and into conjecture and theories on what exactly the solution looks like. The key is to stick with the facts as they are known and let the audience use its expertise to develop solutions based on the requirements. In this case, the government team focused on the capability gap, characteristics desired by the initial capabilities document and the driving external forces such as policy constraints. The intent is not to answer all the questions participants may have, but to get all the combined experience and expertise in the room thinking about the problem.

Once they hear what the government team has to say, it is up to the representatives

from industry and academia to decide if they have something relevant to the problem worth sharing. The individual sessions provided them the opportunity to demonstrate their interest and capabilities in an “intellectual-property safe environment.” Significantly fewer firms decided to meet with the government team in the individual sessions, which itself is a valuable data point that sets expectations for the future.

### INDUSTRY DAY FIRST OF MANY STEPS TOWARD PARTNERSHIP

Successful partnerships are not built on a single engagement. The industry day is the initial event in a long, collaborative development process. At this stage, requirements are evolving rapidly and the program plan is becoming clearer week by week. Armed with the knowledge shared during the industry day, the interested potential proposers sharpened pencils and started developing their concepts. Meanwhile, the program team continued to build the necessary detail into the competitive prototyping strategy.

Another advantage of the DOTC proposal process that was particularly useful during this stage was the ability for the government and contractor team to collaborate on the development of their

proposal. Collaboration must stop once proposals are submitted, but up to that point cooperation is encouraged to ensure that everyone is on the right path. The beginning of the proposal development period provided a logical point for a follow-on group engagement. (See Figure 2.) The government plan for executing the competitive prototyping phase was further defined, the contractors started pulling together their concepts and teaming between primes and subs had taken place.

To maintain competitive fairness, it was important that information flowed consistently across the board from the government team to the proposing contractors, so it made sense to pull everyone together for another industry day. Having made it through the first industry day, the hurdles faced the second time were minimal, and it was smooth sailing toward awards.

### CONCLUSION

Looking back, the obstacles that appeared to exist really turned into opportunities, which had a ripple effect through the early phases of acquisition. Engaging industry with the assistance of ARDEC, DOTC and NAC opened possibilities that otherwise may not have existed. PM

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FIGURE 2

**DOTC operates under “other transaction” agreements between the government and SCRA/ATI, the acting NAC consortium management firm.**

**Government laboratories**



OUSD (AT&L) Land Warfare and Munitions.  
 Department of the Army.  
 Department of the Navy.  
 Department of the Air Force.  
 Department of Energy.  
 Special Operations Command.  
 Other agencies and departments.

**National Armaments Consortium**



Major defense contractors.  
 Small businesses.  
 Academic institutions.  
 Nonprofit organizations.  
 Nontraditional defense contractors.



DOTC facilitates collaborative government, industry and academic ordnance technology development and prototyping efforts.

**COLLABORATING AFTER INDUSTRY DAY**

An industry day kicks off government-industry collaboration that lasts until proposals are submitted. Working through a consortium, with already established channels of communication, makes it easier to ensure fairness and the equitable flow of information to all potential proposers. The results are less rework and proposals for products that the government actually wants and industry can actually produce. (SOURCE: DOTC and NAC)

CCS and ARDEC were introduced to new sources of innovative technologies that could be leveraged for this initiative and future ones. Partnerships were formed within industry that just needed the impetus of being in the same room. Additional firms, small and large, traditional and nontraditional, were introduced to the opportunities that existed with the competitive consortiums. Those consortiums expanded their membership base and their ability to better serve current and future customers.

For more information, contact the author at [john.r.troup.civ@mail.mil](mailto:john.r.troup.civ@mail.mil) or go to the PM CCS website at <http://www.pica.army>.

[mil/pmccs/MainSite.html](http://mil/pmccs/MainSite.html). For more information on DOTC and NAC, go to <http://www.nac-dotc.org/>.

MR. JOHN TROUP is a Gator landmine replacement project officer in PM CCS at Picatinny Arsenal, New Jersey. He holds an MBA from the Florida Institute of Technology, an M.E. in mechanical engineering from the Stevens Institute of Technology and a B.S. in mechanical engineering from Lafayette College. He has more than 10 years' acquisition experience and is Level III certified in engineering. He is a member of the Army Acquisition Corps.