

Transcription

Announcer:

The "Behind the Buy" podcast features audio stories told by members of the Federal acquisition workforce who have successfully executed best practice IT contracting strategies from the TechFAR and Digital Services Playbook to help their agency meet its mission.

Anne:

Hi everyone, I'm Anne Rung- Administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy. Joining us today for the Administration's Behind the Buy audio series, we hear from a contracting officer who used agile and iterative procurement to save American lives overseas. Prior to working for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), Tara Jamison, worked for the Department of Defense and Department of Justice. Thank you Tara for joining us.

Anne (Warm-Up Questions):

Your agile and iterative procurement solution actually saved American lives through counter-IED technology and reduced American casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan. How does that make you feel?

You grew up in a military household. Has that experience given you a sense of duty when procuring for service members?

Anne:

Let's dig deeper into how you used Play #4's agile and iterative approach to streamline the acquisition process and ultimately, save lives. Take us back to 2005 – What specific challenge was the NAVY looking to solve?

Tara:

- Faced increasing casualties during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq due to IEDs (41% of U.S. casualties' in-theater).
- Combatants used cellular telephones and other devices to remotely detonate IEDs.
- JCREW Program tasked with deploying immediate solutions to IEDs by procuring and developing jammers to block the radio frequency triggers.

Anne:

How did you use rapid development and deployment strategy to streamline this acquisition?

Tara:

- The Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) required jammer platforms that could be worn by soldiers, mounted to armed vehicles, and fixed on structures.
- Issued BAA asking for commercial technology capable of meeting need.
- Awarded Letter Contracts for initial testing; Limited Competition to award Test & Evaluation Contracts; Limited Competition to award Research & Development Contracts; Limited Competition to award Production Contracts.

- Contracts focused on Dismounted, Mounted, and Dual Jammer Systems.

Anne:

Were industry days effective in finding a responsive and responsible vendor?

Tara:

- Industry days were critical. New threat, new technology requirement.
- Targeted engagement with industry.
- Facilitated teaming and collaboration among vendors.
- Feedback and information exchange between Government and industry regarding best practices, strategies, and potential solutions.

Anne:

Why did you choose a commercial solution?

Tara:

- Immediate need and urgent requirement.
- Needed existing technology that could be enhanced and developed.
- Initial systems were enhanced COTS. Mature program now develops technology outright to meet requirements.

Anne:

How did the team prioritize requirements throughout service delivery?

Tara:

- Morning "Stand-Up" call/meeting every morning to discuss priorities for the day.
- Focused efforts on reports from JIEDDO and testing results. If threat changed, our approach changed.
- Fielding/Deployment date governed activities and all actions were in support of the overall deadline.

Anne:

How did your team plan for testing and evaluation of the service?

Tara:

- Systems underwent regular testing at DOD testing facilities as each iteration was developed.
- Testing informed next steps concerning development and capability.

Anne:

Did your team have direct access to NAVY leadership in case unexpected problems occurred?

Tara:

- DOD leadership was engaged across the board. Procurement processes and reviews were streamlined.
- Regular briefings at the Pentagon and with senior military officials.
- Regular contact with military officers in-theater.
- Budget, Procurement, Legal, and Leadership collaborated and stayed engaged. Many officials participated in morning “Stand-Up” call/meeting every morning.

Anne:

How did you balance competing interests between the team, leadership, and vendors?

Tara:

- Central Command (CENTCOM), JIEDDO, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Army all coordinated to agree on specifications and capabilities.
- Managed competing priorities with each iteration.
- Cross-Agency collaboration for testing, evaluation, and source selection proceedings.
- Established rules of engagement and kept all relevant stakeholders involved.

Anne:

While most procurement offices do not encounter requirements in support of life-threatening military operations, how do you believe other contracting officers can take advantage of these agile and iterative practices for their agency requirements?

Tara:

- Working with your customers to identify requirements early to facilitate collaboration and strategizing.
- Keep focus on desired outcome and be flexible in the approach.
- See industry as partners in achieving the agencies goals and maintain open communication.
- Be willing to adjust the approach and change direction.
- Continually reassess progress and accomplishments.
- Make sure all stakeholders remain engaged and involved.

Anne:

As we heard today from Tara’s story, contracting officers often have a direct impact on protecting American lives and enhancing taxpayer value through service delivery. We know that there exist many unsung heroes in the Federal Government and we want to hear your story and

share agile and iterative procurement solutions. Share your experiences and learn from your peers by visiting [buyers club dot idea scale dot com](https://buyersclub.idea-scale.com) and clicking "TechFAR Hub Use Cases." Access curated expertise, prices paid data, and contract vehicles for categorized goods and services by visiting the Acquisition Gateway at [hallways dot cap dot gsa dot gov](https://hallways.cap.gsa.gov). Thank you Tara for sharing and thanks to our listeners. Listen for us next time, where we'll continue