

Government Liaison Task Force

By: Susan Ramsey and Jerry Baker

It's time to catch our breath again after an excellent APMP Annual Conference held in historic New Orleans! The Federal track took place over the first two information-packed days of the Conference and included the first Federal Idea Markets. Our Conference Chairman, Eric Gregory, did a fantastic job carving out an effective mix of keynote addresses, topical presentations, service/agency panels, and opportunities for interchange.

Jerry Baker, one of APMP's Government Liaisons, kicked off the Federal track with an introduction to a series of Federal Procurement Overviews from our featured speakers. Leading off was David Franke, member of the Senior Executive Service, and Director, Headquarters Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC) Acquisition Center of Excellence, Wright-Patterson

Air Force Base. Mr. Franke discussed the shift from avoiding risk to managing risk. He encouraged searching out and using best practices whenever possible and stressed the need for increasing accuracy in requirements and improving communication.

Second to present was Alan Goldberg, Director of the Source Selection Office at the Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR), a member of the Acquisition Professional Community with DAWIA Level 3 certification, and more than 25 years of acquisition experience. Mr. Goldberg emphasized strengthening understanding among all involved in acquisition and taking whatever steps necessary to turn that understanding into actionable improvement.

Representing the United States Army on our distinguished panel

was Ann Budd, currently Chief of the Contract Advocate Division within the Office of Command Contracting at Headquarters (HQ), U.S. Army Materiel Command (AMC). Ms. Budd is the Special Competition and Commercial Item Advocate and heads various special projects for the Commanding General (CG). She emphasized how much has changed in the Army, and how much still needs to change for interoperability and increases in efficiency and effectiveness.

Chuck Duff provided a civilian perspective to a mostly DOD presence on our panel. As the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Procurement (Acting) for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Mr. Duff works closely with the Assistant Administrator to manage all NASA procurements and procurement policies. He high-

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lighted integrating the right people and information at the right time and emphasized improving dialogue and informing industry sooner.

We all recognize that the Federal Source Selection processes and the proposal development processes are integral parts of the acquisition and business development processes. To understand the influences on the proposal and the evaluation, we all seek to better understand the entire dynamic and integrated process. It is our goal to help Government and Industry develop of a common baseline of understanding from which process improvements and increased success can emerge. Several pieces of this integrated process were identified as prime candidates for Conference topics.

The 2003 APMP Federal track continued with three outstanding presentations followed by three inaugural Federal Idea Market sessions. Three distinct topics were chosen this year: Early Industry Involvement, Cost vs. Price—What is the Common Ground?, and Performance-Based Acquisition. The Idea Market, an already successful event from the APMP Commercial track, was used

experimentally following each featured presentation.

Our first presentation targeted Early Industry Involvement and was delivered by Ed Martin, Deputy Director of the Aeronautical Systems Center, Acquisition Center of Excellence. Mr. Martin described the evolution of the Acquisition Center of Excellence and stressed that early industry Involvement and open communications are the “cornerstones of the Air Force’s enhanced cooperative relationship with industry.” He gave an overview of the process as a whole and discussed in detail different types of requirements documents, keys points about evolutionary acquisition and spiral development, and industry’s role in a number of areas, including requirements and evaluation factor development, risk assessment, draft RFP, and acquisition planning. Mr. Martin stressed throughout his presentation that industry’s involvement is extremely important and notes industry should do whatever is necessary to be heard, including “kick down the door and get in and talk to us.”

Dave Volpe, Mission Support and Weapons Division Head,

NAVAIR Cost Analysis Department, presented Cost vs. Price—What is the Common Ground? Mr. Volpe discussed cost versus price contracts and the need for clarity in proposal instructions. He outlined cost proposal instruction drivers and gave details on acquisition considerations, types of contracts and procurement, and technical risk, as well as defining completeness, reasonableness, and realism evaluations. He delineated “standard” cost data and how that data is used. In conclusion, he outlined areas for improvement for both NAVAIR and Industry.

The last presentation in the Federal track was by Dan Fulmer, Procurement Analyst for the Air Force Material Command Acquisition Center of Excellence. Mr. Fulmer stressed the need for change in performance-based acquisition, highlighting a process that is altogether too lengthy and highly inflexible. He discussed how difficult it is to change old processes even when it is known they should be updated. He outlined the main tenets for performance-based acquisition, and discussed in detail spiral development, insight vs. oversight,

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and the benefits to adopting a performance-based services acquisition philosophy. He touched on Military Specifications, standards and performance-based specifications. He defined Statement of Objectives (SOO), USAF streamlining source selection, contract incentives, Integrated Product and Process Development, Integrated Master Plan and Integrated Master Schedule, risk, acquisition strategy development, and accented partnering with industry and the need for improved communication.

The Idea Market

The introduction of the Idea Market concept occurred during the 2002 APMP Conference within the commercial track. The concept came from an APMP Board member, Neil Cobb, who attended the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators (ISTC) (part of INTECOM) Forum 2000 in London. During this conference, they implemented the FORUM idea of the “long coffee break” atmosphere—an environment that would make it as easy as possible for conference participants to find people with common interests, with a goal to arrange situa-

tions so participants can exchange ideas and experiences.

The Idea Market was tested in the Federal track at this year’s conference and received positive reviews. An Idea Market was open after each of the primary presentations and the comments, questions, and concerns will be posted on the APMP website. We anticipate those topics/questions that received significant attention will be



developed into working group topics to be addressed by the Acquisition Reform Task Force.

The Federal track concluded with the Federal Summary Panel, moderated by APMP’s second Government Liaison, Susan Ramsey. This brought all our service/agency representatives and three featured presenters together with the Federal track audience for one last exchange. Each of the Government representatives took a few minutes to summarize

their experience during the conference and provided some recommendations for the future.

Mr. Duff (NASA) spoke about “investing in a relationship and communication.” He emphasized the value of providing more candor in communication and the need for change, and pondered an interesting situation: while the Government is being encouraged by industry to share more information about their needs, acquisition and budget plans, etc., will industry be more willing to share their capture plans with the Government (to help them better understand industry’s situation)?

Mr. Fulmer (AFMC ACE) reflected on the Government’s own challenges to reduce the overall acquisition cycle. While the average time from requirement definition to RFP, as well as from contract award to delivery, continues to be substantial, there is a continuing emphasis on squeezing the RFP/proposal cycle.

Mr. Goldberg (NAVAIR) noted the similarities between the Government acquisition experts and proposal managers. He asked how both parties could get more involved in the requirement

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determination and RFP development processes, and recommended pressing harder to be more involved upstream.

Mr. Franke (AFMC ACE) emphasized the need for industry to get involved up front and early, but involvement starting with the draft RFP is not early enough! There needs to be more technical input provided by contractors (rather than marketing unrealistic solutions) to shape realistic requirements. He concluded by restating that all the Air Force courses referenced in his presentation are available by

request to contractors.

Mr. Volpe (NAVAIR) returned to a point from his earlier presentation concerning cost realism. He said he could not emphasize enough the need to provide solid historical data and defensible rationale for any deltas between the referenced data and the offering to provide substantiation.

Ms. Budd (AMC) discussed the need for improved collaboration and communication. She noted these are necessary because of reduced resources. She has observed the increased effects due to globalization of the industrial

base and international cooperation to produce solutions, and remains hopeful that industry will lead in the effort to drive change.

That concluded the Federal track of the 2003 APMP Annual Conference and planning began immediately for follow-up projects and structuring the 2004 Annual Conference in Hollywood, Florida. Stay involved and put the first week of June on your calendar now. See you there! ■

Susan Ramsey and Jerry Baker,
Government Directors

APMP Well Represented at AFMC Meeting

APMP was well represented at the second Corporate Council meeting of the AFMC Acquisition Centers of Excellence (ACE). I joined my co-Government Director, Susan Ramsey, Mary Mills (APMP COO), Sharon Lifritz (ARTF), and Howard Nutt (Shipley Associates) in representing APMP at this Air Force acquisition event held in Layton, Utah, on April 29/30 near Hill AFB. The AFMC

ACE continues to move toward its goal of “Operationalizing Enterprise Leadership.”

As you may have read in previous articles, APMP has participated in the Air Force Acquisition Summits and Corporate Councils held periodically at rotating Air Force bases. Under the leadership of David Franke, the ACEs work closely with industry to support the AF acquisition process

while promoting innovation and continuous process improvement. By encouraging industry involvement (i.e., APMP, NDIA, AIA), the open exchange of information has helped both government and industry representatives to better understand each other’s processes and issues.

Mr. Franke opened the Corporate Council meeting by presenting the “State of the ACE.” This briefing included

.....AFMC Meeting

the results of the survey from the January Council, how the “single face” concept has been redefined, how the return on investment (ROI) metric can be used to facilitate ACE involvement, and the AFMC/AE and SAF/ACE “views from the top.” During this briefing, Mr. Franke announced his plan to retire in the August/September time-frame. He was instrumental in establishing a forum for open dialogue with industry and his leadership will be missed.

The APMP attendees provided a presentation on the soon-to-be-launched Business Development Capability Maturity Model (BD-CMM). Mr. Nutt, a member of the leadership team that developed the BD-CMM, provided an outstanding overview of the CMM for the industry side of the acquisition process, including opportunity identification, capture management, and proposal management. He guided the audience through the model, showing how organizations will be able to evaluate their maturity in numerous key process areas similar to the SEI

CMM for software engineering. For those businesses (especially small businesses) that seek assistance in advancing the maturity of their competitive business development processes, our government counterparts will now be able to direct them to APMP for guidance. We thank Mr. Nutt for making the long trek to Utah to bring us all up to date on the impending launch of the BD-CMM in New Orleans.

The ACE agenda also included numerous informative briefings over the two days of the event. Sessions were held on the topics of Battlelabs Warrior Outreach, Business Transformation, Consolidation of ACE Training, Enterprise Leadership, Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR), AF Metrology and Calibration Requirements, Services Contracting, C4ISP, the SMART tool, Metrics Implementation, and Presentations/Crosstalk by all the ACE Chiefs.

APMP has a CD-ROM with the presentation slides on each of these topics, so please contact us if you are an APMP

member interested in knowing more. We welcome members who would be interested in supporting our participation in the ACE activities and with other agencies as well. The members expressed their appreciation for the great interaction between the ACE staff and APMP in preparation for the APMP Annual Conference, especially the frequent support by Dan Fulmer and Major Al Helm.

As a delightful distraction on the evening between the two day-long Corporate Council meeting sessions, most of the participants attended a social/dinner at the historic and rustic Timbermine Restaurant in the foothills of the nearby mountain range. With the restaurant’s aura and relics creating the atmosphere of an old mining community, the Timbermine experience was relaxing, the food was wonderful, and the hospitality was warm and memorable. ■

Jerry Baker, Government Director