

Appendix J Case Study: USDA's Farmers.gov Portal Development

J.1 Introduction

The following case study exhibits how ChBA has been successfully implemented under a Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) to enhance the acquiring agency's source selection process. This case study provides sample language, lessons learned, and key takeaways that can be leveraged to support other ChBA activities and initiatives. ChBA and the use of technical challenges or demonstrations during the source selection phase are an opportunity for the procuring activity to witness the vendor's practices rather than merely read about them via "paper promises". The Government can garner a much better understanding into the merit of the solution being offered through the ChBA approach. Furthermore, the Government, through the use of a technical challenge or demonstration can assess if the vendor is a good fit for the project by observing how the vendor uses the technology for their response to the prototype scenario with additional insights gained into the Offeror's team dynamics, creativity, thought processes and the depth of development to the provided challenges. This "try before you buy", "test drive", "fly off", or "bake off" approach puts integrity and discipline into the process while reducing risk for the Government and affording Industry the ability to be more creative, collaborative, and innovative as they build out the solution space.

J.1.1 Acquisition Background

In July 2018, the USDA awarded a single BPA call order from the General Services Administration (GSA) Salesforce Implementation, Integration, and Support Services (SISS) BPA, using innovative procurement techniques, including ChBA, for agile software development requirements.

The USDA conducted the acquisition tapping into a multi-step method as well as several best practices and non-traditional techniques summarized as follows:

1. Digital Services Best Practice: Use of a Statement of Objectives (SOO)
 - Goal: Industry advises the Government on what is required and how to best execute using commercial practices.
2. Technique: Perform Due diligence
 - Goal: Increase industry-government communication during the solicitation process regarding the solicitation and requirements to receive better proposal submissions, reduce assumptions, and, ultimately, attain better, potentially more innovative technical solutions.
3. Technique: Execute a technical challenge
 - Goal: Increase likelihood of successful evaluations by letting vendors demonstrate their capabilities rather than only write about them.
4. Technique: Select the best and finalize
 - Goal: Enable technical evaluation outcomes to take precedence by collaboratively defining and refining the requirements of the performance work statement and the contract terms and conditions one on one with the vendor selected for contract award that was based on best overall value to the Government.

J.1.2 Case Study Case Write-Up Approach:

- In writing this case study, we convey the process used by the Government, including language from the solicitation itself.
- In the spirit of “build once, use many” and “continuous iteration” we hope you find value in the information included below, feel free to adopt as your own and improve upon it.
- We also attempt to reference Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) citations when appropriate.
- This acquisition was conducted in accordance with FAR Part 8 procedures however we may reference other parts of the FAR demonstrating application of these techniques beyond Part 8 and further solidify the soundness of the approach throughout more rigid or prescribed federal acquisition process.
- Key terms unique to agile software development are defined the bottom of this case study.

J.1.3 Project Background and Statement of Objectives

USDA Agencies (bureaus are known as “agencies” at the USDA), execute the Department’s mission, and serve Farmers, Ranchers and Landowners through a variety of programs. Often, the agencies’ work is not integrated and does not take advantage of opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness. A “Portal” was ideated where USDA customers could access USDA programs in a centralized online space. This portal is called “Farmers.gov” located at www.farmers.gov.

Sample Language – Statement of Objectives:

- *Currently, there is limited or no access to USDA systems for the 8.5 million Farmers registered with USDA.*
- *To apply for assistance or check the status of a claim, Farmers commonly visit one of the ~2,600 USDA field offices in person.*
- *Not all USDA field offices offer the same services. Farmers commonly must visit different USDA offices depending on which programs and Agencies they must connect with.*
- *Agency data on farms and farmers is siloed. Every time Farmers apply for a program or its renewal, they must provide the same crop data and personal information, even if it has been previously collected by the USDA. Additionally, the Agencies have no way to check individual farm data for inconsistencies.*
- *USDA employees often manually retype all applications in a variety of systems.*
- *It is difficult to verify if a Farmer applied for a program and doing so makes them ineligible for another, increasing the possibility of duplicate payments.*

As a result of these challenges and others, online customers and the USDA employees that serve those customers encounter inconsistent digital information and resources spread across agencies. Systems and applications providing these services do not necessarily follow current design and customer-centric best practices, often using outdated technology, thus increasing the cost of conducting business with USDA and reducing customer and employee satisfaction.

Product Vision: *Our vision is to create a “wowing” unified digital experience for those supporting our Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) customers and our customers directly. We believe providing on-line, intuitive, self-service options for our customers and seamless, intuitive tools and information for our employees will support our customers’ journey to discover and sign up for the most valuable services provided by FPAC and USDA.*

FPAC objectives for overall product experience and the underlying Transactional Portal:

- *The product - and its features - will provide our customers with usable tools, resources, and information that support their business activities;*
- *Our customers will have the ability to access the product and complete transactions, such as completing forms/applications, from any connected device;*
- *The product interactivity and functionality will be built around the customer's needs and industry best practices;*
- *Our customers will have the ability to easily access their USDA authenticated information and accounts through the web-site's front door;*
- *The product will engage new and existing farmers through modern design and digital media;*
- *The product will educate customers about FPAC programs and resources with streamlined information and plain language.*
- *Transactional Portal will work together as a seamless experience for the customer and employee, with an emphasis on local content and personalized customer information.*
- *The Transactional Portal will operate seamlessly with the website.*

CASE STUDY KEY INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUE: SOLIDIFY THE DEFINITION OF DONE

- A Definition of Done (DoD) is critical in Agile software development contracts. The DoD can be initially stated by the Government in the solicitation and then finalized with the vendor prior to contract award.
- The Definition of Done provides a checklist which usefully guides pre-implementation activities: discussion, estimation, design. The Definition of Done limits the cost of rework once a feature has been accepted as "done" having an explicit contract limits the risk of misunderstanding and conflict between the development team and the customer or product owner.
- Please see the Reference: AgileAlliance.org/definition-of-done for more thorough information on expected benefits and common pitfalls.

Sample Language – Definition of Done

The resulting task order will be considered successful when the following outputs have been delivered:

- *The product vision is validated through continual build and testing of hypotheses, user research, and success metrics.*
- *The build and launch of new digital products into production through agile development methods, including the creation of Minimum Viable Products (MVPs) and continued development, enhancements, and problem resolution for those products once in production.*
- *Usability research with end users has been used to determine whether success was met through validated learning.*
- *Products and investments into products are prioritized and their business value is validated based on user/customer research and usability research.*
- *The product road map, user stories, system documentation, usability testing results, and any additional documentation is up to date and maintained regularly.*

J.1.4 Applicable Conditions

The USDA chose Salesforce as the platform enabling accomplishment of these requirements. Salesforce is a Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) specializing in customer relationship management. Additionally, a lean-agile approach to software development was chosen per recognized best practices. Given the low technical maturity of the USDA and the magnitude of the project, a Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe)

approach was determined to be necessary. This approach provided structured processes and clear responsibilities for government and contractor personnel.

J.2 Problem Set

The Secretary of Agriculture announced this initiative publicly prior to this acquisition and product launch. Given this visibility and the importance of this project in accomplishing the USDA's mission, the project needed to rapidly and continuously deliver increased functionality. The acquisition had to support this without setbacks.

J.3 Multi-Step, Interactive ChBA Approach

The USDA engaged experienced vendors highly capable of developing on the Salesforce platform using SAFe Agile methods via the GSA Salesforce Implementation, Integration, and Support Services (a.k.a. "SISS") Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA). The Request for Quote (RFQ) was issued directly to GSA SISS BPA holders for the USDA's Portal Salesforce Development Project. The USDA considered award of at least one (1) and up to two (2) BPA Call (Task) Orders from this RFQ.

The RFQ Followed a six (6) step approach:

- Step 1 -- Industry Day
- Step 2 -- Opt. In
- Step 3 -- Due Diligence Sessions
- Step4A -- Technical Solution and Price
- Step4B -- Submit Presentation
- Step 5 -- Demonstration Evaluations Completed
- Step 6 -- Announce Award

The details of each step are described in the subsequent sections of this appendix.

As described in the solicitation, The Offeror's proposals were evaluated on a Best Value Source Selection of the Offeror's response to the factors listed the RFQ. Non-price factors were significantly more important when compared to price. BEST VALUE will be evaluated based on:

- Non-Price Factors
 - Written Technical Solution
 - SAFe/Agile Approach
 - Design Process Approach
 - Prototype Demonstration
- Price: Prices for mandatory deliverables

NOTE: Past Performance was not considered. The GSA SISS BPA was selected due to the perceived importance of experience with the Salesforce Platform. When the BPA was established past performance/experience was evaluated. Further evaluation of past performance/experience would be redundant given the prior evaluation of vendors at the BPA level.

Sample Language – Industry Challenge

Step 1 Industry Day:

Industry Day and the associated teleconference with the USDA was open to all SISS BPA holders for participation. The intent of the call was to provide an overview of the Statement of Objectives (SOO), explanation of the RFQ steps, and answer any questions.

Step 2 Opt. In:

Open to all SISS BPA holders to confirm further quote participation. Opt. In is required to participate in steps 3, 4A, 4B, 5, and 6. Failure to Opt-In excludes participation in further RFQ steps. SISS BPA holders reserve the right to Opt-Out at any point. Prototype Scenario, Final SOO, and Final RFQ will be released only to those offerors who have Opted in by the required date and time.

Step 3 Due Diligence:

This is an individual meeting with each SISS vendor who has elected to Opt. In. This meeting is considered a site visit and is a non-evaluated step. No comments, information, or questions presented by the vendor will be considered in the evaluation. This time is open to the vendor to ask questions in order to limit the amount of assumptions included as part of the offeror's technical or price solutions. This is a non-evaluated step.

Step 4 This step has been broken into two (2) parts:

4A, Submittal of Technical Solution & Price.

4B, Technical Capabilities Demonstration.

The culmination of these two are to be evaluated in step 5.

Step 4A Submittal of Technical Solution & Price:

Submit the following:

- Written Technical Solution limited to 15 pages excluding cover letter and table of contents from page count in PDF Format.
- Price
- The Technical Solution should demonstrate the Offeror's ability and expertise to deliver a solution that meets the established needs and purpose of the RFQ. Offeror's proposed solution should identify how the goals will be met as stated in the Statement of Objectives. Within the Technical Solution, the Offeror should demonstrate its:
 1. Overall methodology and approach to the build and design of Salesforce solutions for a variety of potential end users, both internal and external to the USDA.
 2. Identification of what the offeror would need from the Government to ensure success as well as identifying any barriers that would reduce or delay success.
 3. How will success and end user satisfaction be determined, and what is the strategy for capturing both product metrics and process metrics?
 4. Knowledge, experience, and approach to SAFe/Agile Portfolio Management, including but not limited to the following:
 - a) Agile Release Train (ART) Formation
 - b) Program Backlog Management
 - c) Governance and strategy of multiple teams
 - d) Organizational change management
 - e) Team
 - f) Integration and management
 - g) Prioritization and Business Value consultation
 - h) Common tools and practices
 5. Knowledge, experience, and approach to User Centered design, including but not limited to the following:

- a) Utilizing Epics and hypotheses to identify and validate MVPs or Product Features
 - b) Defining and prioritizing user needs
 - c) Designing solutions
 - d) Soliciting user feedback on solutions
 - e) Documenting and applying user feedback
 - f) Assessing outcomes for users
6. Knowledge, experience, and approach to Agile implementation, including but not limited to the following:
- a) Management of a SAFe/Agile software development methodology
 - b) Definition of Done
 - c) Program Increment Planning
 - d) Program Backlog Management; Feature Prioritization
 - e) User Story management (Team backlog), sizing, and estimation method
 - f) Techniques for release planning
 - g) Approach to operations & maintenance of products released into production
 - h) Methods for capturing and applying lessons learned, testing processes, reasons behind the composition of their Agile teams
 - i) Rationale behind the proposed development talent and project oversight (tied to Product Vision)

This factor will be evaluated based on the above, to determine the extent to which the Offeror's proposed approach will ensure successful implementation of the stated objectives. This factor will assess the Offeror's overall approach to the project and what, if anything, it would need from the Government to ensure success as well as identifying any barriers that would reduce or delay success.

Technical Assumptions, Conditions, or Exceptions – Technical submissions shall include all (if any) technical assumptions, conditions, or exceptions related to any of the requirements or terms and conditions of the Statement of Objectives. If not noted in this section of Offeror's quote, it will be assumed that there are no assumptions, conditions, or exceptions for award, and that the Offeror agrees to comply with all of the terms and conditions set forth in this RFQ. It is not the responsibility of the Government to seek out and identify technical assumptions, conditions, or exceptions buried within the Offeror's submission. The Government reserves the right to reject any quote that includes any technical assumptions, conditions, or exceptions that impact or affect the Government's objectives or requirements.

Offerors shall submit a price volume which shall include the following:

- Firm Fixed Price per iteration
- Firm Fixed Price by CLIN
- Supporting documentation
- Assumptions, conditions, and exceptions related to price

Supporting documentation - Documentation is required to support the pricing proposed. This shall demonstrate the correlation between the proposed technical solution and the pricing submitted. The supporting documentation shall also include a Basis of Estimate (BOE) which aligns to how the

pricing methodology is applied within each iteration. The BOE should include, but is not limited to, such things as:

- *Number of Teams proposed*
- *Size of Agile Teams*
- *Labor categories used to comprise each team*
- *User Story sizing methodology*
- *Any discounts applied*

Price assumptions, conditions, or exceptions – Submit all (if any) price assumptions, conditions, or exceptions related to any of the terms and conditions of the Statement of Objectives. If not noted in this section of the Offeror’s quote, it will be assumed that the Offeror proposes no price assumptions, conditions, or exceptions for award, and agrees to comply with all of the terms and conditions set forth in this RFQ. It is not the responsibility of the Government to seek out and identify price assumptions, conditions, or exceptions buried within the Offeror’s quote. The Government reserves the right to reject any quote that includes any price assumptions, conditions, or exceptions that impact or affect the Government’s objectives or requirements.

Price will be evaluated to determine whether the firm, fixed price proposed is reasonable. This determination will be based on the review of the technical solution in comparison to the total proposed price and the backup documentation submitted.

Step 4B Technical Capabilities Demonstration:

Open to only those SISS BPA holders who have elected to Opt. in to RFQ and completed step 4A.

The goal of the Technical Capabilities Demonstration (TCD) will be for the Offeror to walk the Government through their proposed solution and provide a working prototype in response to the scenario. It is the opportunity to determine how team dynamics will work as the Offeror is required to utilize the scenario to demonstrate how the proposed User Centered Design, SAFe Agile Portfolio Management, Salesforce technical capabilities, and Agile Software Development Methodology will function if the Task Order is awarded. The process used to develop the prototype should demonstrate the technical solution as proposed in the Technical Capabilities Document. The vendor shall submit any presentation material and artifacts created in the design & development of the prototype. Examples may include wireframes, user stories created, end user questions, etc. Artifacts, additional technical solution materials, or other non-germane documents not directly related to the design & development of the prototype will not be accepted.

The contracting officer has the ability to remove any documentation submitted that does not support the TCD. The Government will schedule the demonstrations by drawing lots among those Offerors who opt in to this RFQ. The Government will advise Offerors of the date and time for the presentation of their TCD.

The Government will have the ability to ask clarifying questions specific to the offeror’s proposed solution during the time allotted for the TCD. These do not count as discussions and no revised Technical Capabilities Documents will be accepted, unless otherwise directed by the Contracting Officer.

The TCD will be evaluated to determine the Offeror's capability and suitability to perform the work required in the Technical Solution. Through the walk through of the scenario, the technical capabilities demonstration will be assessed to determine if the overall solution is feasible, will result in the continued delivery of high-quality product, and will meet the objectives for digital strategy implementation.

Step 5 Evaluation:

Contracting will be evaluating your responses by BEST VALUE based on:

- *Non-Price:*
 - *Written Technical Solution*
 - *SAFe/Agile Approach*
 - *Design Process Approach*
 - *Prototype Demonstration*
- *Price*
 - *Prices for mandatory deliverables*

Non-price factors are significantly more important than price factors. Additional Value- Added Deliverables may be used as trade-off for non-price factor to determine the Best Value to the Government.

Step 6 Finalization & Award:

Final technical solutions may be worked out with only those offerors that have provided the highest value solutions as determined in step 5 as in the best interest of the Government.

Items that may be worked out are the Performance Work Statement (PWS), Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan (QASP), and associated minor price adjustments. This Step will be opened to the highest value offerors as determined in step 5. Award or awards will be made to the best value offeror as determined to be in the best interest of the Government. If a solution cannot be worked out or fails to provide best value solution award(s) then the Government may select the next highest value vendor as determined in step 5.

SISS BPA Task Orders will be placed with at least one, but may go up to two (2), responsible Offeror(s) whose proposals and demonstrations contains the combination of those factors offering the best overall value to the Government utilizing a tradeoff process. This will be determined by comparing differences in technical capability with differences in price to the Government. In making this comparison, the Government is more concerned with obtaining superior technical merit. However, the Government will not make an award at significantly higher price to the Government to achieve slightly superior technical merit. The Government reserves the right to make an award to other than the lowest priced Offeror or to the Offeror with a higher technical score if the Contracting Officer determines that to do so would result in the best value to the Government.

Government reserves the right to:

- *Award SOO task areas to one or more vendors*
- *Conduct future acquisitions related to overall program objectives which fall under the scope*
- *Repeat all or some of Step 4A, and/or 4B, and/or Step 5 and/or Step 6 for non-exercised options.*

J.4 The Challenge

The technical challenge for this procurement was a “Prototype Scenario” occurring during Step 5 – Evaluation. The challenge occurred after written submissions were submitted and reviewed.

CASE STUDY CHALLENGE SELECTION:

- The Technical Capabilities Demonstration (TCD) was designed as an opportunity for the Offeror to walk the Government through their proposed solution and provide a working prototype in response to the scenario. It was also an opportunity for the evaluation team to demonstrate how the Offeror’s proposed User Centered Design, SAFe Agile Portfolio Management, Salesforce technical capabilities, and Agile Software Development Methodology would function. The Government had the ability to ask clarifying questions specific to the offeror’s TCD presentation which did not count as discussions nor were revised TCDs requested/accepted. The TCD was a “test drive” of the Offeror’s approach and vision for the project to determine if the Government had confidence in each Offeror’s ability to successfully perform.
- The Offeror was asked to demonstrate how they would take the provided scenario “epics” (defined below) from concept which was provided in the RFQ to a working Minimum Viable Product (MVP) along with a demo.
- The epics were related to a fictitious banking scenario taking customer interactions from brick-and-mortar to virtual applications focusing on how the customer and bank employees could use the back end transactional platform to help view and process customer loans as well as the power of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform. Five sample “personas” (defined below) and a sample current state workflow of the customer’s interaction with the bank for a loan were released with the RFQ. Offerors were given latitude to create new personas as seen fit for sample persona’s user needs.
- Creativity was encouraged in researching and identifying users and create fictitious data as needed for the prototype.

Sample Language – The Challenge

Current Context: A banking organization delivers its loan services using a traditional customer visit to a brick and mortar store front, and paper forms. The bank conducts some customer transactions via phone, with little to no visibility into what those transactions are. The bank has a hypothesis: customers are interested in viewing their current loan information as well as being able to apply for loans on-line, and self-service options for existing loans. Employees of the bank who service customers directly have little to no visibility into the customers’ interaction with the bank. For example, the home loans department doesn’t know who has auto loans or personal loans, etc. Also, none of the loan organizations identified above know if customers have existing bank accounts or consume other banking services. No information from other banking services are shared across the Bank’s organizational silos, causing the customer to report the same information over and over to the bank.

Strategic Themes:

- *Appeal to younger customer segments.*
- *Positive customer brand image.*
- *Employee operational excellence to serve customers.*

Table J-1. Epic Hypothesis Samples

<i>Sample Epic Hypothesis Statement</i>	
<i>For</i>	<i>Organizational employees</i>
<i>who</i>	<i>Service customers directly</i>
<i>the</i>	<i>Employee portal</i>
<i>is an</i>	<i>interactive data analytics experience</i>
<i>that</i>	<i>Provides the ability to understand customer interactions no matter the channel or existing store brand</i>
<i>Unlike</i>	<i>our existing lack of shared cross brand information</i>
<i>our solution</i>	<i>Provides a multi-channel view of our customers interactions</i>
<i>Business outcome hypothesis:</i>	<i>Majority of customer interactions visible to servicing employees Better customer service experience</i>
<i>Leading indicators:</i>	<i>Better visibility into customer interaction channels (counter, phone, web) Increased Net Promoter scores</i>
<i>Non-Functionals:</i>	<i>10 ms response time for customer information screen load</i>

Supporting Information:

This sample problem is related to loans in the banking industry. The strategic themes were developed in relation to 3 organizational problems and hypotheses as follows:

- Customers do not have a multi-channel experience, meaning the customer largely has one method, an in-person location visit, to do business with the Bank. The Bank has a hypothesis that customers are interested in more on-line interactions.*
- Employees who service customers have limited to no visibility into customer interactions across the loan departments (home, auto, personal) and other Banking services, which affects employee morale, productivity, and the customer experience.*
- Organizational leadership does not have metrics to drive strategic business cases for investment into other customer channels (phone, on-line) or other methods to improve the customer’s experience.*

Instructions:

You will have approximately 4 weeks to generate at least 2 epic hypotheses, supporting user stories, and a working prototype. You will have approximately 1 hour to demonstrate how you would take the Epic(s) from concept to a working Minimum Viable Product along with a demo. As mentioned in the Statement of Objectives, this work is centered on a transactional portal and interacts with an informational website. For this prototype, you can assume the integration already exists. The development is utilizing human centered design patterns.

Prototype:

Develop a working prototype that shows how the customer and bank employees could use the back end transactional platform to help view and process customer loans as well as the power of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform. Attached to this scenario are five sample personas and a sample current state workflow of the customer’s interaction with the bank for a loan. Feel free to create new personas as you see fit as you engage real people to understand user needs. Be creative in researching and identifying users and create fictitious data as needed for the

prototype. The prototype should include customer facing components since authenticated customers will directly interact with Salesforce (Transactional portal). Integration with is not required. The prototype is to be an example of the technical decisions that would be made related to the Salesforce application itself.

Technical Solution Demonstration:

The goal of the Technical Capabilities Demonstration (TCD) will be for the Offeror to walk the Government through their proposed solution and provide a working prototype in response to the scenario. It is the opportunity to determine how team dynamics will work as the Offeror is required to utilize the scenario to demonstrate how the proposed User Centered Design, Agile Portfolio Management, Salesforce technical capabilities, and SAFe/Agile Software Development Methodology will function if the Task Order is awarded. The process used to develop the prototype should demonstrate the technical solution as proposed in the Technical Capabilities Document. The vendor shall submit any presentation material and artifacts created in the design & development of the prototype. Examples may include: wireframes, user stories created, end user questions, etc. Artifacts, additional technical solution materials, or other non-germane documents not directly related to the design & development of the prototype will not be accepted. The contracting officer has the ability to remove any documentation submitted that do not support the TCD. This is your opportunity to showcase how your company’s processes would help the Department of Agriculture build and refine the product vision and deliver solutions for the Salesforce transactional portal.

Table J-2. Personas to Consider

<i>Name</i>	<i>BIO</i>	<i>NEEDS</i>	<i>HAS</i>
<i>Jack Smack</i>	<i>Existing Customer who is on the go and active with their banking information. Always up to date with the latest gadget, likes service improvements.</i>	<i>Quick anywhere access to info. All banking on-line. To send the bank emails, not talk on the phone or visit a location.</i>	<i>Business loan Checking and Savings accounts. Good financial status. Home Loan</i>
<i>Nelly New</i>	<i>She’s a new Customer who travels, especially overseas a lot. Shops around for best deals. She understands the internet is now part of our lives.</i>	<i>Help understanding loans. Help applying for loans. Personalized service. To be able to go to any branch, anywhere.</i>	<i>No existing relationship with the bank.</i>
<i>Larry Leisure</i>	<i>Existing customer who finds comfort in interacting with staff face to face.</i>	<i>Stability in the way services have been offered. Help with technology. A friendly voice on the phone. Not be transferred around.</i>	<i>Car, will drive. No access to a cellular phone. Auto loan.</i>
<i>Sam Super</i>	<i>She is a bank location employee who is always</i>	<i>The latest and greatest tech.</i>	<i>Appetite for learning.</i>

	<i>looking for ways to improve the customer experience. Very up to date with technology.</i>	<i>As much information about the customer she's working with. Metrics to drive change.</i>	<i>Extensive knowledge of the entire organization.</i>
<i>Paul Bunyan</i>	<i>VP Bank Loans. Leads all loan operations for the bank. Is a new leader who is looking for data to drive positive customer outcomes.</i>	<i>Metrics on customer tact time, customer wait times, etc. Customer experience metrics. Channel metrics (in-person, phone, on-line). Technology to help drive positive customer experiences.</i>	<i>No information existing customer. Smart phone, will work anywhere, anytime. Drive for continuous improvement.</i>

SAMPLE CURRENT STATE CUSTOMER WORKFLOW:



Figure J-1. Customer Workflow

CASE STUDY WRITE-UP FINAL THOUGHTS

- Overall evaluation was easier due to the multiple data points observed during the assessment (written, discussed, demonstrated). There was less likelihood of making assumptions about what the offeror meant by a cryptic statement or inference of ability via regurgitation of the solicitation or recitation of industry “buzzwords.”
- The technical challenge approach provided clear data the company could execute successfully in the manner they promised in the write-up.
- The evaluation team had higher confidence in their decision and viewed the evaluation beneficially.
- One technical evaluator made the statement: “In over 10 years of evaluating IT vendors this is the first time I feel truly confident the evaluation team has made the right recommendation.”

CASE STUDY TAKEAWAY: DEMO VALUE

- The TCD evaluation determined the Offeror’s capability and suitability to perform the work required in the Technical Solution. Via a walkthrough, the technical capabilities demonstration assessed if the overall solution was feasible, would result in the continued delivery of high-quality product and meet the objectives for digital strategy implementation.
- The ability to see the development approach and agile maturity of the company was key to correlating the stated capabilities related in their respective written submissions.

J.5 Summary of Best Practices, Key Techniques, Recommendations, and Lessons Learned

CASE STUDY BEST PRACTICE

Don't over complicate the RFQ by asking for items without clear value. Role play the value an item will add and how it will assist drawing conclusions about an approach compared to the requirements.

Example: don't ask for past performance if it was already assessed in a relevant manner at a higher order of contract (SISS BPA for example). If past performance/experience assessment is desired, ensure reference inquires very specific to the information you require and not general or broad questions about overall quality of performance.

CASE STUDY RECOMMENDATION: ISSUE DRAFT DOCUMENTS

Issue draft RFQ as soon as possible to interested vendors. The Government should revise drafts if during the sessions a vendor points out areas that are not a commercial best practice or other areas of improvement. The final RFQ is issued after the due-diligence and prior to technical submission. This practice will limit the amount of RFQ amendments.

CASE STUDY KEY INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUE: DUE DILIGENCE SESSIONS

Hold due diligence sessions with vendors individually. This provides an open forum for the vendor to ask questions more directly than they would in front of competitors.

It's very important to note this is a "non-evaluation" step. The Contracting Officer should conduct a short pre-brief to government participants highlighting this and conduct another short debrief afterwards to discuss any changes to the RFQ required based on new information provided to a vendor so other vendors have equal information.

These sessions limit assumptions made by the vendor in quote preparations with the goal of the Government receiving better quality technical and price responses to the RFQ. As referenced above, any new information provided to a single vendor during these sessions should be published as soon as practicable in a solicitation amendment. Approaching information release in this manner doesn't "give-away" any technical information from a single vendor, is efficient and collaborative, and ensures the playing field is leveled across the competition of Offerors.

Note: This technique is provided for in "FAR Part 15.201(f) Exchanges with industry before receipt of proposals" and "FAR Part 15.202 Advisory multi-step process."

CASE STUDY RECOMMENDATION: TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

Technical challenges are an opportunity to witness the vendor's practices rather than merely read about them. The Government can garner a much better understanding into the quality of work and if the vendor is a good fit for the project by observing how the vendor uses the technology for their response to the prototype scenario with additional insights gained into the Offeror's team dynamics, creativity, thought processes and the depth of development to the provided challenges. This "try before you buy", "test drive", "fly off", or "bake off" approach puts integrity and discipline into the process while reducing risk for the Government and affording Industry the ability to be more creative, collaborative, and innovative as they build out the solution space.

CASE STUDY RECOMMENDATION: FINALIZATION

The finalization step refines minor details of the best-value offeror's approach, assumptions, and price. It is very important to understand, and state in the solicitation, this is not considered "discussions" nor establishing a "competitive range." It may be another opportunity to remind offerors the part of the FAR the solicitation is pursuant to (if Part 8 you can expound that Part 15 doesn't apply).

In this step, the actual PWS to be incorporated into the order is refined and agreed upon and does not constitute a quote revision. The RFQ states "This Step will be opened to the highest value offerors as determined in step 5" but this doesn't mean you have to open this step with multiple offerors if your decision is to award only one order. Your best-value decision was made in Step 5, this does not backtrack on that determination. This provides an opportunity to create a better contract with reduced/clarified assumptions and have a final ability to avoid "land-mines" that may still exist despite thorough exclamation and review of assumptions.

This step avoids the requirement to modify the contract or have other "meeting of the minds" talks after award as often happens in traditional practices when there isn't perfect alignment on approach to the situation "on the ground."

If during this finalization step an agreement cannot be reached on the minor points requiring refinement the government may pause talks with the first vendor and enter the finalization step with the next best suited vendor.

In the case of Farmers.gov the finalization step was successful with the "best value" vendor and additional finalization was not required with other vendors.

CASE STUDY LESSON LEARNED #1: CLIN STRUCTURE

Structure CLINs based on the purchase of sprint team capacity rather than being based on the sprint roadmap. This will allow for the roadmap to be a separate living document and to be able to adjust iterations without a contract modification.

Don't state: "CLIN 0001: Sprint 1 Period of Performance Month XX 20XX – Month XX 20XX"

Instead include a "CLIN 0001: Development Sprint" leaving the CLIN non-timebound.

This way you can scale capacity up and down at different time as well as "buy more" sprints when required if funds are available for additional software functionality at any given time.

CASE STUDY LESSON LEARNED #2: EVALUATION TEAM PARTICIPATION

Ensure your project is sponsored effectively and chartered appropriately, laying out expectations of team members throughout each step.

This approach will take a while to work through the steps and involves in-depth participation from the Government's technical team. This may not be appropriate for all types of requirements. Value of all elements considered should be well thought out during the solicitation development.

While the steps do take some time to complete, the acquisition was fairly streamlined and only took about 10 weeks to complete between the acquisition project starting and award – indicated by green filled rows in the schedule below.

This did not require a 100% dedicated team the entire time, rather this was a part time responsibility of all participants until days of heavy evaluation. Participants were distributed between Washington, DC; Kansas City, MO; and Fort Collins, CO. Participants travelled to Washington DC for evaluation activities only.

Table J-1. Milestone Schedule

Description of Procurement Activity	Point of Contact	Start Date	End Date
Start Acquisition activities:	Program	5/2/2018	5/2/2018
Draft Requirements (SOO) Complete	Program	5/7/2018	5/14/2018
Draft Prototype Problem	Program	5/7/2018	5/14/2018
Requirement Finalized	All	5/15/2018	5/15/2018
Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE) Complete	Program	5/14/2018	5/14/2018
Acquisition Approval Request	Program	5/2/2018	5/2/2018
Acquisition Plan Complete & 91D Form	Contracting	5/14/2018	5/18/2018
Evaluation Criteria Complete	All	5/18/2018	5/24/2018
Draft RFQ Complete	Contracting	5/24/2018	5/31/2018
Funding request	Program	5/2/2018	5/22/2018
Requisition Completed	Program Budget	5/22/2018	6/5/2018
Industry Day Teleconference (step 1)	Contracting	5/24/2018	5/24/2018
Opt in Due (step 2)	Contracting	5/31/2018	5/31/2018
Release Final SOO/RFQ & request Opt in	SISS BPA Holders	6/1/2018	6/1/2018
Due Diligence (step 3)	All	6/6/2018	6/7/2018
Procurement Approach Review	Contracting	6/7/2018	6/12/2018
Submit Proposals (step 4a)	SISS BPA Holders	6/19/2018	6/19/2018
Read Tech, Prototype, RoM	All	6/21/2018	6/22/2018
IPT Meets prior to Demos	All	6/26/2018	6/26/2018
Demo/Design Challenge (step 4b)	All	6/27/2018	6/27/2018
Evaluations (Step 5)	All	6/28/2018	6/29/2018
Draft PWS for Task 1 & Task 2 submission for Govt Review	Vendor	7/11/2018	7/11/2018
Read Draft PWS & Review Completed	Program	7/12/2018	7/13/2018
Finalization (2 days)	All	7/16/2018	7/19/2018
Awards Complete and Announced	Contracting	7/20/2018	7/25/2018
Post-Award (Kick-off) Meetings Complete	All	8/8/2018	8/8/2018
Performance Start	Contractor	8/22/2018	8/22/2018

J.6 Attribution of Credit

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