Each issue of the *Defense Acquisition Research Journal* will bring to the attention of the defense acquisition community a topic of current research, which has been undertaken by the DAU Virtual Research Library team in collaboration with DAU’s Director of Research. Both government civilian and military Defense Acquisition Workforce readers will be able to access papers publicly and from licensed resources on the DAU Virtual Research Library Website: https://dau.libguides.com/daukr.

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*Defense Acquisition Research Journal* readers are encouraged to submit proposed topics for future research by the DAU Virtual Research Library team. Please send your suggestion with a short write-up (less than 100 words) explaining the topic’s relevance to current defense acquisition to: Managing Editor, *Defense Acquisition Research Journal*, DefenseARJ@dau.edu.
COVID-19 Contracting: Opportunities to Improve Practices to Assess Prospective Vendors and Capture Lessons Learned

Marie A. Mak

Summary:
In response to COVID-19, agencies awarded contracts for goods and services to vendors from a range of industries and with varying levels of federal contracting experience, but some vendors have been unable to deliver under those contracts. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act included a provision for the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to review COVID-19-related federal contracting under the Act. This report addresses (a) COVID-19 contract obligations and characteristics of vendors, (b) contracting challenges, including agency assessments of vendors, and (c) whether lessons learned efforts reflect those challenges. GAO analyzed federal procurement data on agencies’ reported COVID-19 contract obligations through May 31, 2021.

APA Citation:
Observations: Fiscal Year 2020 COVID-19 Federal Contracting

Brooke Holmes

Summary:

The Pandemic Response Accountability Committee (PRAC)'s objective was to review pandemic-related federal contracts and identify first-time contractors and contracts awarded without competitive bidding. The author found that first-time federal contractors received $4.4 billion worth of pandemic contracts in Fiscal Year 2020 and that $128 million was deobligated from contracts with first-time federal contractors during the same period. Additionally, the author identified the four most common flexibilities applied to justify limited competition were: (a) urgency, (b) only one source, (c) simplified acquisition procedures, and (d) authorized by statute. Of these, the author found that 11% of noncompetitive contracts used the “only one responsible source” authority, which is defined to be used when supplies and services are available from only one source in certain conditions. A limited sample revealed that 10 of 14 contracts either shouldn’t have selected that authority or had data entry errors within the Federal Procurement Data System.

APA Citation:

Special Report on Best Practices and Lessons Learned for DoD Contracting Officials in the Pandemic Environment

Theresa S. Hull

Summary:

This special report provides best practices and lessons learned identified in audit reports related to disaster responses. Of the 52 reports, 36 were focused on oversight of contracting related to disaster response activities. The author analyzed the audit reports and determined several
best practices and lessons learned related to contracting from the DoD’s previous disaster relief responses. In addition, this special report provides potential procurement fraud schemes and tips to avoid potential fraudulent activity.

APA Citation:

"Crisis Is a Great Accelerant": How the U.S. Navy is Dramatically Improving Its Contracting Performance Under COVID-19

Anne Laurent

Summary:
By the end of April 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic was forcing most of the United States to shut down and federal agencies had begun teleworking en masse, the U.S. Navy reported that it was beating its 2019 contracting performance by double digits. By April 2020, the Navy had already put $94.6 billion on contract—33% more than the $74 billion it had obligated at the same time in 2019. Not only that, but the increase came with a 19% decrease in contract actions. What’s more, the contracting acceleration came as more than 95% of Navy contracting personnel were teleworking, according to James “Hondo” Geurts, Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Research, Development, and Acquisition). Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy Karen Fenstermacher and her team also reached out directly to most of the supplier base, listening to their stories with an ear toward how the Navy could help—which helped the Navy to determine which companies to prioritize and how to align opportunities for stimulus funding.

APA Citation:
COVID-19: Lessons Learned in Public Procurement. Time for a New Normal?

Laurence Folliot Lallion and Christopher R. Yukins

Summary:

The COVID-19 crisis upended markets and assumptions in public procurement, and posed an almost existential threat to traditional procurement systems. Seismic changes occurred in economic relationships—governments were no longer monopsonists, government officials failed as economic intermediaries between suppliers and the public, and supplies that were traditionally treated as private (such as medical equipment) suddenly became “public” goods in demand worldwide. Traditional trade rules were rendered irrelevant, as the goal was no longer simply to open individual procurements but rather to open borders to intense global demand. Although the disruption was revolutionary, ironically the solution is to return to first principles of transparency and integrity to preserve governments’ fragile legitimacy in a crisis.

APA Citation: