



Market Research: A Critical Step Within Acquisition Planning



Who has time for market research?

The hope is when you consider this question, the answer that comes to your mind is, “Every procurement officer should **MAKE** time for market research!” It has been said that failing to plan is like planning to fail. If we hope to have the most effective and efficient contract in place, we absolutely must consider what is happening in the market before/during/after our solicitation process.

What is market research and **when** should it be done?

Market research is defined in the NIGP Dictionary of Procurement Terms as “Collecting and analyzing information about capabilities within the market to satisfy agency *needs*. The results of market research are used to arrive at the most suitable approach to *acquiring, distributing, and supporting goods and services*.” There are clues in this definition that speak to *when* this should occur. Once the end user/entity’s *needs* have been clearly identified, it is time to research.

How much research is necessary is based on a multitude of factors: the complexity of the need, the projected spend for the project, the data that is available along with the known history associated with the need, and the risk associated with the project, just to name a few. Market research should be conducted throughout the acquisition and contract lifecycle and preferably well in advance of when contract award or order placement is necessary. Waiting until the last minute when there is an urgent need generally impedes beneficial outcomes, restricts competition, and increases prices.

This leads to (and in many ways answers) the next important question.

Why should I conduct market research?

Acquisition Planning & Market Research are vital steps in the procurement process that are all too often overlooked. These steps in the acquisition cycle help agencies ensure they adopt strategies appropriate to the market for the specific supplies or services they are purchasing.

The South Carolina Consolidated Procurement Code **Regulation 19.445-2017B** notes the purpose of acquisition planning and market research as referenced below:

“The purpose of acquisition planning is to ensure that the using agency meets its needs in the most effective, economical, and timely manner.” Uncovering the reasoning and customer’s perspective for specifications and requirements is critical.

Acquisition Planning helps:

- * to clearly define the agency’s needs
- * support a fully open & competitive environment
- * informs the appropriate source selection method & contract type
- * promotes acquisition of commercially available items to the maximum extent practicable
- * promotes appropriate consideration of the use of term contracts

Where should I start?

In conducting your market research, you will gather data using two methodologies: primary and secondary research. *Primary*

research is information that comes directly from the source--that is, potential customers. This information can be gathered via surveys, end-user interviews, target focus groups or other methods. *Secondary research* involves collecting statistics, reports, studies, and/or contracts/solicitations for similar goods/services. Additional data is gathered from organizations such as governmental agencies, trade associations, potential suppliers, and the wonderful World Wide Web. If useful information is elusive, consider issuing a Request for Information (RFI) or advertise and conduct a pre-solicitation meeting where information can be gathered and shared among potential users and suppliers alike.

Procurement adds the most value when partnering in the process of needs assessment and specification development. Understand the customer's priorities. Consider what outcomes are desired from the product/service and determine whether what is being requested will actually meet the need. Seek other agencies who have issued similar solicitations. Conduct market research through primary and secondary research methods. Review existing contracts and speak to end users. Both can provide valuable insight and "lessons learned" from what was done last time, how the contract worked in practice, and, most importantly, what can and *should* be done differently in the future with the aim of efficiency and effectivity.

Want to learn more about acquisition planning and market research? Let us know! Our desire is to collect *market research* on what **you** would like to learn more about so we can address it in future editions of *DisPatcheS* and webinars. Don't be shy; we would love to know! Email your thoughts and ideas to dps@sfaa.sc.gov.



DPS Training Update

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Division of Procurement Services has canceled all face-to-face courses for the rest of the year. While we are working to make course information available online, the process is slowed by the need to set up the infrastructure to support such offerings. We appreciate everyone's patience while we get things situated.

In the meantime, the Division of Procurement Services is pleased to announce its new initiative: **DPS Ask an Expert**. This will include dedicated space within each *DisPatcheS* newsletter for our Procurement Experts to answer questions that you may have about the Procurement Code and Regulations, along with corresponding webinars on "hot topic" issues. Please submit your questions to dps@sfaa.sc.gov, and be on the lookout for a webinar schedule in the next issue of *DisPatcheS*.

We look forward to hearing from you.



School's out for COVID. Click [HERE](#) to Ask an Expert to keep your procurement knowledge growing.

“Who Ya Gonna Call...?”

There are a significant number of State Term Contracts for your use. When you have questions about a specific contract, how do you know who to reach out to for assistance?

You can locate the actual solicitation/contract documents by searching in SCEIS. However the Procurement Manager who conducted the solicitation may no longer be assigned to manage the contract, especially for contracts that have been in place for a while. For example, if a Procurement Manager leaves our organization, his/her contracts will be reassigned to other buyers. Contracts are also reassigned when new employees join SFAA DPS and when buyer teams are restructured.

When new contract manager assignments are made we update the quick-reference “contract sheets” to reflect the change. The contract sheets on our website have the Procurement Manager’s name and contact information at the top of the first page. The links are:

<https://procurement.sc.gov/agency/contracts/goods-and-services> and

<https://procurement.sc.gov/agency/contracts/information-technology>

The contract sheet is your best bet for determining who you should call with questions about any given contract. They’re also stuffed full of useful information about the contract itself and how to put it to work! Let this be your first stop when inquiring minds want to know.

Spoiler Alert: we’re developing a new format and search function for our state term contracts. Soon they’ll be much more user-friendly and will each share a consistent, friendly look and feel across subject areas. Regular users will notice a distinct improvement!



Congrats to DPS’ own Division Director Delbert Singleton, 2021 President-elect!



The National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO) announced the results of the Board of Directors Election for the term beginning January 1, 2021. South Carolina’s Delbert Singleton will serve as president-elect in 2021 and will assume the presidency in 2022.

“I am honored and certainly humbled to have been elected as NASPO’s 2021-President elect, especially to have be chosen from among the group of stellar and accomplished procurement professionals that were vying for the position. This is not an individual achievement but a group achievement that I share with our Division of Procurement Services staff. Their dedication and commitment to our profession day in and day out has played an important role in my selection as NASPO’s president elect. I look forward to being a part of the continued effort to nationally elevate the procurement profession,” says Singleton.

NASPO is a non-profit associated dedicated to advancing public procurement through leadership, excellence, and integrity.



Statewide Contract News

SPECIAL NOTICE

Dental Products Contracts UPDATE – Smile! All MMCAP Dental Products contracts (Darby Dental – 4400023705, Henry Schein – 4400023352, and DHPI – 4400024379) are updated and effective. Details are available on the new Dental Products contract sheet on our website, procurement.sc.gov.

Managed Print Services Contract – The current contract for Managed Print Services is extended for an additional year term, from Dec. 13, 2020 to Dec. 13, 2021, or until such time as the services provided for are awarded and become effective under a new State Copy and Print Output Device program. The extension includes all current contract holders who agree to continue under the terms and conditions in effect. The State will also include in the contract amendment language for survivability of agreements, up to 60 months, from when the agreement is executed, when signed prior to the final contract expiration date.

State Term Contracting Team News

The State Term Contracting Team (Goods and Services) has a position available. The position description and application procedures are available on at <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/sc>.

The State Term Contracting Team position is unlike any other. It is a challenging position with excellent opportunities. This position offers a unique perspective to procurement and presents an opportunity to be a part of a team that helps to lead the State of South Carolina procurement into the future.

Market Research and Agency Input Requests for NEW State Term Contracts (STC)

*The Office of State Procurement (OSP) is seeking input on the following recommendations for new State Term Contracts (STC). If you have any information you can share, please contact the appropriate procurement manager. **Our goal is to put contracts in place that will meet your needs, but we need your input to ensure success.***

Extreme & Aerohive Network Hardware -- OSP is planning to issue a solicitation for Extreme & Aerohive Network Hardware in the month of October/November timeframe with an anticipation award date in January 2021 and effective March 27, 2021. This new STC will take the place of the current NASPO agreements we have in place. Extreme bought out Aerohive, so this would be one contract for both products. Having a STC with applicable terms and conditions will also allow the State to receive E-rate funds. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Randy Barr, Sr. at rbarr@mmo.sc.gov by Oct. 15, 2020.

Market Research and Agency Input Requests for existing State Term Contracts — *Our goal is to put contracts in place that will meet your needs, but we need your input to ensure success. Let us know if the contracts are working well or if adjustments would be helpful.*

Household Appliances – We have some exciting news about this contract...it's getting better. We've been working closely with eBridge to construct a contract that not only includes household appliances, but **commercial appliances and smallwares**. We're confident that the resulting contract will be of interest to many of our customers and will give them access to equipment that is not currently available. Stay tuned for additional details. If this interests you and you have any insight that would be helpful, please reach out to DeAna Reed-Sharpe at drsharpe@mmo.sc.gov.

Service Award Pins – DeAna Reed-Sharpe is poking around in the current contract and is asking for input. Please contact her at drsharpe@mmo.sc.gov.

Tires – Ellicia Howard (ehoward@mmo.sc.gov) is at the starting line with her research onto the next iteration of the STC for tires. Please contact her if you have any suggestions for improvements to the current contract which skids to a stop in March of 2021.

Used Oil & Filter, Contaminated Water & Solvent Collection and Recycling Services (Expires August 1, 2021) – DeAna Reed-Sharpe (drsharpe@mmo.sc.gov) recently launched into the research phase for the next version of this contract. If anyone has any feedback, she would certainly appreciate you reaching out to her.

Airport Vegetation Management (Expires June 23, 2021) – Ellicia Howard (ehoward@mmo.sc.gov) is now “in the weeds” with her research for the next generation of this contract. Not many agencies use this contract so we need targeted input from

those who do. Please reach out to Ellicia as soon as possible with any seeds of wisdom you can share.

Battle Dress Uniforms (Expires August 28, 2021) – DeAna Reed-Sharpe (drsharpe@mmo.sc.gov) is looking for any input you may have. It's not just law enforcement who use this contract! It's important that we have the information to ensure we get the items on contract that all types of users need, not what we *think* they need. Trust us, you don't want us dressing you.

Semi-Automatic Weapons (Expires February 2, 2021) – Michael Speakmon (mspeakmon@mmo.sc.gov) is looking for any input you have for this contract. History has shown us it's been a pretty stable contract in its construction, however, if you want to share some ideas, they'd be welcome. Reach out to Michael as soon as possible.

Boats, Patrol and Rescue (Expires June 30, 2021) – HEY, SCDNR! It's time again to start thinking about your boats and what you want from them. Of course, the folks at SCDNR aren't the only ones who use this contract, but they are the main source for the specs required in the coastal and inland waterways of the beautiful Palmetto State. That doesn't mean we can't put MORE boats on contract than just what DNR needs. So if your organization wants a particular type of boat on contract, now is the time float your some ideas to Michael Speakmon (mspeakmon@mmo.sc.gov).

Electronics Equipment Recycling — The current contract, 4400012206, is set to expire Jan. 27, 2021. OSP is seeking input on how to improve the contract to best serve the State of South Carolina. If you have any input, questions, or concerns, please contact Kristen Hutto at khutto@mmo.sc.gov by **Oct. 15, 2020**.

McAfee Software & Hardware — The current contract, 4400013555, is set to expire Feb. 19, 2021. OSP is conducting a business analysis to determine the necessity, viability, and criticality of these products on statewide contract. If we keep 'em, what can be done to improve the contract to best serve the State. If you have any input, questions, or concerns, please contact Kristen Hutto at khutto@mmo.sc.gov by **Oct. 15, 2020**.

Reverse Auction — The current contract, 4400012894, is set to expire April 28, 2021. The OSP is seeking input on how to improve the contract to best serve the State of South Carolina. If you have any input, questions, or concerns, please contact Kristen Hutto at khutto@mmo.sc.gov by **Oct. 15, 2020**.

SAP SuccessFactors LMS Statewide (540009365) — OSP intends to have a replacement contract in place prior to the current contract's expiration date (Dec. 28, 2020). If you have any input, questions, or concerns please contact Kristen Hutto to immediately at khutto@mmo.sc.gov.

Trend Micro Security Software - The current contract, 4400017785, is set to expire Jan. 4, 2021. OSP is conducting a business analysis to determine the necessity, viability, and criticality of these products on statewide contract. If there's room for improvement, please contact Kristen Hutto at khutto@mmo.sc.gov by **Oct. 15, 2020**.

Westlaw Legal Research - The current contract, 4400011669, is set to expire Dec. 31, 2020. OSP plans to have a replacement contract in place prior to this new expiration date. If you have any input, questions, or concerns regarding how the existing contract is structured or how it's functioning, please contact Kristen Hutto at khutto@mmo.sc.gov as soon as possible.

Self-Funded Web Portal – The current contract 4400008796 resulting from solicitation 5400007500 expires in July of 2021. OSP will publish an RFP for subject solicitation in the October/November 2020 timeframe. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Randy Barr, Sr. at rbarr@mmo.sc.gov or 803-896-5232.

Small Applications Development – OSP is conducting a business analysis to determine changes necessary with the next solicitation cycle. If you have any input, questions, suggestions, or concerns, please contact Will Butler at wbutler@mmo.sc.gov.

Copy and Print Output Device Program – A new Statewide Request for Proposals for a comprehensive copy and print output device program contract is in its final stages of development. **The resulting contract(s) will bring acquisition of copiers, multi-function devices, printers, duplicators, large Format Printers and Scanners, maintenance, service, a managed print program and cost-per-copy agreement options into one STC.** We want to streamline the equipment selection processes for customer convenience, ease cost comparison and verification, standardize maintenance and service agreements, and reduce costs. It's a tall order, so the State is assembling a user group, representing a cross-section of users, to participate in a pre-publication review of the solicitation. Participation will require a time commitment for: an initial WebEx call to take place by Oct. 9, an independent review period and submission of comments, questions and concerns through Oct. 12, and a follow up WebEx call by Oct. 21. If you would like to participate, please contact Carol Norfleet

at cnorfleet@mmo.sc.gov or leave a voice message at (803) 737-3224, **by Oct. 7, 2020.**

State Term Contracts which will NOT be renewed or resolicited: Nothing new to report.

Currently Published Solicitations

Solar Flashers (5400020342) – Ellicia Howard (ehoward@mmo.sc.gov) didn't receive any responsive offers for our initial solicitation. We modified the specs and published a new solicitation on Sept. 22, 2020 with an anticipated bid opening date of Sept. 30, 2020. Due to this unforeseen circumstance, it's possible there may be a short break between the two contracts, but we do not anticipate that to be the case. We recommend you plan accordingly though. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

Purchase Card Program (Pcard) (5400020074) — Ellicia Howard (ehoward@mmo.sc.gov) published the RFP for the next Pcard program contract. We have purposely published this solicitation very early to permit time for offer consideration and negotiations. The current contract does not expire until Sept. 30, 2021, and the new contract will not begin until Oct. 1, 2021.

Vehicles – We published the amendments to our annual vehicle solicitations on September 11, 2020. We received no additional questions and the anticipated award date remains October 9, 2020. All vehicle contracts are effective on November 1st of each year, so check the contract sheet for the vehicle you are interested in on that day for updated information and pricing.

Vehicle Rental Services (Expires November 30, 2020) – We're currently negotiating with Enterprise and Hertz to participate in the NASPO Nationwide Vehicle Rental Services contract. This contract is important because it permits us to initiate vehicle rentals outside the borders of South Carolina, which was not a feature of previous contracts. The NASPO contracts not only provide us a nationwide leasing option, but also offer more rental options and at rates comparable to those we enjoy under our current rental contract.

We don't anticipate a failure in negotiations and are confident new contracts will be effective the day after the expiration of the current contract (no interruption of services). Stay tuned to DisPatches for more detail as we get closer to wrapping this one up and putting a bow on it.

Digital Transaction Management Solution (5400020073) — The solicitation for this new statewide contract published this month and is scheduled to be awarded in November. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kristen Hutto at khutto@mmo.sc.gov.

STC Quest One RFP (5400019911) has been published with an anticipated award date of Oct. 15, 2020. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Randy Barr, Sr. at rbarr@mmo.sc.gov or 803-896-5232.

Newly Awarded State Term Contracts (STC)

Records Conversion – Paper to Digital (540008164) – The contract award for Paper Conversion is expected on Sept. 24. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Will Butler at wbutler@mmo.sc.gov or 803-737-9854.

Telematics (After Market Fleet Monitoring) (5400018151) – The contract to establish a STC for Telematics was awarded on Sept. 10. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Will Butler at wbutler@mmo.sc.gov or (803) 737-9854.

Currently Advertised Cooperative Contracts

NASPO Value-Added Reseller RFP — In accordance with the SC Code of Laws §11-35-4810, the OSP is currently advertising in SCBO its intent to participate in the multi-state solicitation for *Software Value-Added Reseller* by the Lead State of Arizona. Solicitation BPM002338 can be accessed and downloaded from the State of Arizona Department of Administration, State Procurement Office division website located [here](#). We're still reviewing this opportunity to determine if it will result in the right kind of contracts for SC. We're advertising in the event that such determination is made. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kristen Hutto at khutto@mmo.sc.gov.

