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# Why Marketing Matters: Strengthening the Defense Supplier Base Through Better Communication with Industry

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Our 2020 research demonstrated that the **vast majority of DOD suppliers** over the last 20 years, including participants in DOD innovation programs, continue to be **legacy contractors**.

We posited that one reason why the DOD does a poor job of attracting innovative new vendors is its **failure to adequately market its requirements to communities outside of the traditional defense industrial base**.

We aimed to explore that hypothesis in more detail—specifically, we sought to analyze **how the composition and marketing of DOD requirements impacts the military's efforts to attract innovative, nontraditional suppliers**.

## Research Criteria

- 1 Discoverability:** The extent to which non-trationals can find relevant DOD opportunities.
- 2 Response Time:** The number of days between when an opportunity is posted and when responses are due.
- 3 Content:** The extent to which requirements are written in a clear and readable fashion; and the extent to which they contain the information needed for non-trationals to adequately evaluate them.
- 4 Redundancy:** The extent to which multiple DOD / government entities simultaneously seek similar solutions, and how redundancy may affect non-trationals' ability to prioritize relevant opportunities.

## Relevant Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR)

### FAR Part 5:

Mandates that information about contract actions >\$25K are disseminated through [beta.sam.gov](https://beta.sam.gov)

### FAR Part 6:

Requires government stakeholders to ensure opportunities are marketed competitively

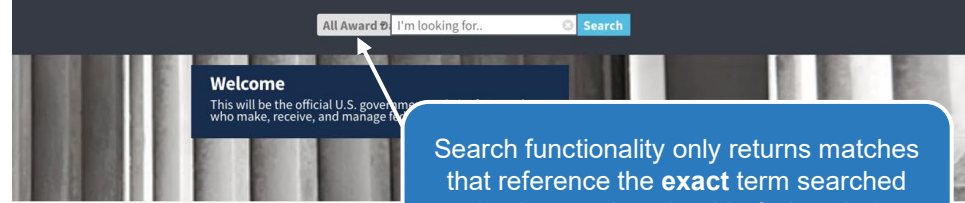
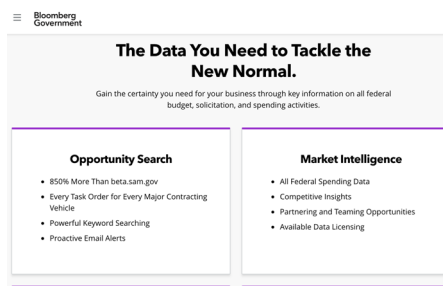
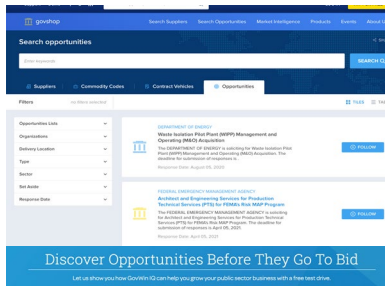
### FAR Part 10:

Outlines the steps required during the market research process, to ensure government stakeholders arrive at the “most suitable approach to acquiring, distributing, and supporting supplies and services”

# Discoverability

Do non-traditionals know beta.sam.gov exists, and do they know how to navigate the site to search for relevant opportunities?

A secondary market for publicly available government opportunity data suggests that beta.sam.gov fails to serve as a viable resource for this information.



What Can I Do Here?

## Contracting



### Contract Data Reports (FPDS Reports)

This website has officially replaced FPDS.gov reports.

- Learn About Contract Data Reports
- Run Contract Data Reports

### Contract Opportunities (FBO)

This website has officially replaced FBO.gov.

- Learn About Contract Opportunities
- Search Contract Opportunities

### Wage Determinations (WDOL)

This website has officially replaced WDOL.gov.

- Learn About Wage Determinations
- Search Wage Determinations

FPDS.gov [remains](#) the authoritative source for contract information. To prepare for the future, we encourage you to test the search, user accounts, saved searches, and provide [feedback](#).



Site is designed for multiple audiences: "people who make, receive, and manage federal awards"



## Federal Assistance



### Assistance Listings (CFDA)

This website has officially replaced CFDA.gov.

- Learn About Assistance Listings
- Search Assistance Listings

Federal users should migrate their roles from CFDA and manage their listings using a new user account.

## Entities

SAM.gov remains the authoritative source for entity information at this time. However, we encourage you to test searching for entity registrations and exclusions here and to provide [feedback](#).



### Entity Registration (SAM)

To register your entity or update your registration, please continue to use [SAM.gov](#).

- Learn About Entities





# Discoverability

## Recommendations

- Create a supplier-specific website, aggressively market it in places with high exposure to nontraditional audiences, and invest in SEO
- Incorporate related search terms
- Require DOD stakeholders to outline needs in the description field, or enable searches to include attachments



# Response Time

To analyze response timeframes, we aggregated the archived solicitation data from beta.sam.gov from 2002-2020, filtered it to isolate solicitations issued by the DOD, and filtered it to include the most recent solicitation listing associated with a solicitation ID and title.

We excluded solicitations that contained no text in the name or the solicitation description, listed a response date prior to the publishing date, or corresponded to notice types for “Sale of Surplus Property,” “Modification / Amendment / Cancel,” and “Foreign Government Standard,” “Award Only” notices, and “Justifications.”

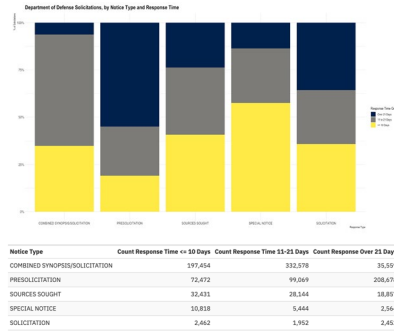
**Our resulting data set of total DOD solicitations for analysis was 1,050,933.**

To determine the response timeframe for each solicitation, we calculated the number of days between the date the solicitation was published and the date by which a response was due.

Every year, 22% to 35% of all solicitations had a response time of **10 days or less**, and 45% to 87% had a response time of **21 days or less**. Each year in the last decade, 70% or more had a response time of 21 days or less, and with the exception of 2020, at least **30% of all solicitations annually required responses within 10 days**.

**Department of Defense Solicitation Response Time by Year**

| Year | Total Distinct Solicitations | Count Response Time <= 10 Days | Count Response Time 11-21 Days | % Response Time <= 10 Days | % Response Time 11-21 Days | % Response Time <= 21 Days |
|------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2002 | 18,612                       | 4,255                          | 4,487                          | 22.86%                     | 24.11%                     | 46.97%                     |
| 2003 | 21,569                       | 4,818                          | 4,994                          | 22.34%                     | 23.15%                     | 45.49%                     |
| 2004 | 25,496                       | 5,742                          | 6,289                          | 22.52%                     | 24.67%                     | 47.19%                     |
| 2005 | 29,157                       | 6,915                          | 9,734                          | 23.72%                     | 33.38%                     | 57.10%                     |
| 2006 | 38,042                       | 9,793                          | 15,905                         | 25.74%                     | 41.81%                     | 67.55%                     |
| 2007 | 56,854                       | 14,783                         | 26,043                         | 26.00%                     | 45.81%                     | 71.81%                     |
| 2008 | 63,532                       | 15,918                         | 28,197                         | 25.06%                     | 44.39%                     | 69.44%                     |
| 2009 | 64,953                       | 19,384                         | 26,445                         | 29.84%                     | 40.71%                     | 70.56%                     |
| 2010 | 63,389                       | 19,001                         | 26,483                         | 30.13%                     | 41.80%                     | 71.94%                     |
| 2011 | 63,348                       | 18,804                         | 28,092                         | 29.69%                     | 44.35%                     | 74.04%                     |
| 2012 | 56,976                       | 14,212                         | 26,464                         | 24.94%                     | 46.46%                     | 71.40%                     |
| 2013 | 63,143                       | 18,656                         | 31,058                         | 29.54%                     | 49.17%                     | 78.71%                     |
| 2014 | 65,219                       | 22,079                         | 31,484                         | 33.85%                     | 48.27%                     | 82.12%                     |
| 2015 | 64,442                       | 22,288                         | 28,515                         | 34.58%                     | 44.24%                     | 78.82%                     |
| 2016 | 65,248                       | 23,126                         | 29,943                         | 35.44%                     | 45.92%                     | 81.36%                     |
| 2017 | 75,106                       | 25,152                         | 35,897                         | 33.49%                     | 47.80%                     | 81.29%                     |
| 2018 | 75,808                       | 26,460                         | 33,793                         | 34.90%                     | 44.58%                     | 79.48%                     |
| 2019 | 71,139                       | 23,218                         | 30,287                         | 32.64%                     | 42.57%                     | 75.21%                     |
| 2020 | 69,933                       | 18,533                         | 42,253                         | 26.50%                     | 60.42%                     | 86.92%                     |



The vast majority of Special Notices and Sources Sought, and nearly half of all Presolicitations, have a turnaround of 21 days or less. **Based on response time alone, suppliers unfamiliar with the DOD’s supplier outreach methods are effectively precluded from participating in these critical calls for market research.**

**Recommendation:** Require notices to be public for 30+ days, unless a justification is provided.







## Content: Requisite Information

By assessing the features of the data contained in our solicitation data set and reviewing publicly available opportunities on [beta.sam.gov](https://beta.sam.gov), we found that the DOD often **omits critical pieces of information** from opportunity listings altogether.

Specifically, there are **no structured fields** requiring DOD stakeholders to indicate **the value** of an opportunity (estimated or actual) or the **performance period** (estimated or actual).

## Recommendations

- Require solicitation descriptions—along with all text on public-facing websites and in DOD collateral—to be written in “Plain English,” suitable for an 8th-9th Grade reading level.
- Require descriptions to explicitly state the customer’s primary areas of interest.
- Require opportunities to contain estimated or actual contract value and performance period.

# Redundancy

To calculate how many DOD solicitations corresponded to UAVs and/or AI, we focused our analysis on a data set of 69,933 solicitations from 2020.

We leveraged the DTIC thesaurus to expand the set of terms we used to describe UAVs and AI, and we algorithmically searched for incidences of these terms in the description, ID, and title for each solicitation. **With this methodology, we identified 42 DOD opportunities in 2020 that corresponded to UAVs and/or AI.**

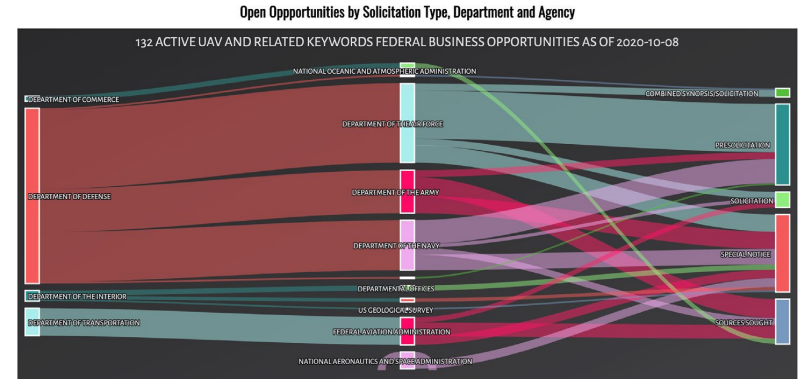
Because the DOD often outlines its needs in attachment data, we next decided to incorporate attachment data for 2020 BAAs and Sources Sought.

We incorporated the text and data contained in attachments for 2,519 BAAs/Sources Sought and utilized Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and other methods of text-extraction to search this data for UAV/AI terms. With this methodology, **we identified an additional 22 DOD UAV/AI opportunities, bringing the total to 64.**

**Utilizing OCR and text-extraction on just 3.6% of the solicitation data increased the number of matched opportunities by more than 50%.** One can assume that the total number of DOD stakeholders that posited demand for UAV/AI capabilities in 2020 was substantially more than 64.

To explore government-wide demand, we aggregated all open federal opportunities on a single day, including attachment data, and searched for UAV terms across this data set.

**132 open opportunities corresponded to UAVs on October 8, 2020**



## Recommendation:

Military stakeholders must coordinate their outreach and communication efforts to maximize exposure of their requirements. For priority verticals, we recommend that DOD stakeholders issue joint requirements in the market research/outreach phases. We suggest that prior to release, the DOD circulate requirements related to priority verticals to designated offices within each service branch.



COMMUNICATIONS