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Committee Corner

In response to growing member company interest, and in recognition of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) prominent position among federal agencies in acquiring professional and technical services, PSC launched its newest customer-focused task force 18 months ago: the Veterans Affairs Task Force (VATF).

The VATF is the focal point for PSC's advocacy at VA and provides a forum for member companies to address VA contracting issues and exchange best practices. Above all, the task force is a key resource for VA to seek the consensus voice of the department's services industry partners. Under the guidance of co-chairs Ken Quaglio (Ernst & Young) and Julie Susman (Jefferson Consulting), the task force is undertaking a number of initiatives and meeting with key department leaders. Just days after its official establishment, the task force hosted Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Scott Gould at a Dialogue Series breakfast with PSC members. Gould expressed enthusiasm for collaborating with the task force and pledged VA's cooperation in developing a framework for meaningful ongoing dialogue between the department and the VATF. The task force took a significant step forward in cultivating this dialogue in the fall of 2010 when it hosted VA Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning Dr. Raul Perea-Henze. The VATF provided feedback to Perea-Henze on the department's strategic transformation plan and its major supporting strategies, objectives, and initiatives, and has continued to engage with the department as it refines and implements diverse elements of its strategic plan.

Subsequently, the task force held a series of meetings with Greg Giddens, executive director of VA's then newly created Enterprise Program Management Office (ePMO). As part of the process and systems improvement objectives in support of the department's transformation initiative, the ePMO is developing a new VA acquisition framework. The new framework seeks to align VA processes around acquisition, program design, management, program execution and related skills and personnel requirements. Given the historical autonomy of the department's major components,



implementing such a coordinated approach represents a major challenge and a marked shift in how VA executes major objectives. The VATF developed a white paper for the ePMO recommending a number of actions the department could take to enhance its capabilities in these areas. In particular, the paper focused on the crucial role communication and collaboration regarding roles and requirements for all stakeholders plays in achieving program and acquisition outcomes, and the need for adequate planning and resources throughout the acquisition and program lifecycle.

The task force continues to work with the department, most recently meeting with VA's Office of Acquisitions to address major challenges in how the department partners with the private sector to achieve its mission. Heading into 2012, the VATF will expand its relationships with the department and its component agencies. Potential focus areas include VA's use of information technology and innovative solutions to enhance its capabilities in delivering services to our nation's veterans.

For more information about the task force, or to be added to the VATF mailing list, please visit PSC's website and click on "Committees & Task Forces" or contact Matt Busby at busby@pscouncil.org.