



OPEN LETTER TO
THE WORKFORCE

Tuning NGA's acquisition system to deliver mission results

All,

A few months ago, I began a dialogue with you about improving the agency's acquisition system. I called upon everyone involved in NGA's acquisition system to challenge the status quo, leverage best practices, develop tools and guidance that emphasize flexibilities in the FAR and DFAR, and drive outcomes and accountability to allow people to do their best work. Increased communications, a result of that "call-to-arms", has begun to pay dividends both internally and externally. Notably, I've received feedback suggesting that our recent procurements more closely align with our vision and demonstrate improvements in our business practices. That is truly wonderful news and I thank you for your efforts and focus.

To further demonstrate my commitment to acquisition reform, I assembled a subset of NGA's most senior leaders — those involved in day to day acquisition decisions — and charged us with identifying barriers to making our acquisition efforts faster, clearer, leaner, and better and to establish a clear action plan to remove those barriers. I am pleased to share the results of those discussions and my decisions.

Elevating the component acquisition executive (CAE)

In a recent report, the inspector general found that the current organizational structure, notably the placement of the CAE within the Chief Information Officer/Technology directorate, increases the risk for ineffective or inefficient management of the agency's acquisition activities. To reduce that risk, I direct that the CAE and deputy CAE positions be structurally aligned to the director of plans and programs (DP), and directly responsible to me in my role as the head of agency/acquisition.

This change comports with the best practices of other defense and intelligence agencies, acknowledges the importance of the acquisition function to NGA's overall mission, and provides a clear structure for establishing and implementing a coherent, agency-wide acquisition strategy. This change is effective immediately.

Strengthening portfolio management with acquisition expertise

At the offsite, there was unanimous agreement that vertical and horizontal gaps exist between portfolio managers, executing key components and their assigned program managers, and the CAE. The agency's portfolio managers find it difficult to stay abreast of all acquisition matters and the CAE's influence and control over agency acquisitions is sub-optimized. To close those gaps, and consistent with a program executive office construct found in other DOD components, I have directed that capability program managers (CPM) be established and assigned to each portfolio management team. This small group of acquisition experts will serve as points of consolidation and translation, and provide a common structure for management and oversight of cross-portfolio and cross-capability dependencies. As a result, and through improved understanding of the health and status of the agency's acquisition efforts, portfolio managers will be positioned to make informed decisions and respond early when problems arise. Assignment of the CPMs to the portfolio teams will be completed no later than November 15, 2015.

Enabling and communicating timely decisions

As I mentioned in my last note, mission does not wait and must always come first. Putting mission first, we must eliminate the repeated coordination cycles that have become endemic in NGA's current acquisition governance structure and bring clarity to our decision structures and responsibilities. Therefore, effective immediately, NGA's acquisition governance structure will be as follows:

Mission integration board (MIB) and portfolio integration board (PIB)

These existing governance boards are central to the effective management of the end-to-end acquisition system. The MIB is the primary governance body responsible for validating mission needs. Moving forward, we will utilize the MIB as the principal venue to initiate senior-level discussions on new acquisitions, contract renewals or proposed terminations to determine strategic alignment. If a requirement is approved by the MIB, the MIB Chair will assign responsibility to a portfolio manager for development of a business case.

The business case describes the value proposition, customer segments, impact to current architecture, costs including dollars and positions, and measures of success. Once completed, this business case will be handed off to the PIB for approval or disapproval within current budgetary constraints. The PIB will also present the opportunity costs of this investment to the enterprise. If approved, the requisite KC Directors will then be tasked to execute.

NSG acquisition review board (NARB)

The NARB is responsible for approving program strategies early in the acquisition cycle (6-9 months before initiating individual acquisitions). The focus on programs marks a substantial change from how the NARB has been managed in the recent past where, for the most part, specific contract actions were the focus. In addition, the dollar thresholds for approval are raised, pushing decision making downward as follows:

Program Value	Chair
Greater than \$100 million	DD/NGA
Greater than \$30 million but less than \$100 million	CAE

A formal NARB review is not required for programs less than \$30 million.

Contract review board (CRB)

The CRB is responsible for approving the release of requests for proposal (or other procurement instruments) and for ensuring the resultant contracts or agreements are structured to effectively meet the goals contained in the program strategy approved by the NARB and in compliance with all relevant acquisition regulations.

Program Value	Chair
Greater than \$100 million	Senior procurement executive or designee
Greater than \$30 million; less than \$100 million	Group Chief/OCS
Less than \$30 million	OCS Division Chief

Acquisition working group (ACQWG)

The acquisition working group (renamed from the Acquisition Governance Council-Integration Subcommittee) will continue to meet weekly to support program managers and contracting officers and track progress of programs from mission validation through capability delivery, acting quickly to identify and resolve bottlenecks as they occur.

The structure described above provides the foundation for implementation of an end-to-end acquisition governance structure with known and predictable control gates, documentation, and handoffs between decision makers, offering a repeatable process for effective management and oversight.

The revised governance structure will be codified in new governance charters and implementing policy documents no later than December 31, 2015.

Measuring success

The culmination of these governance changes provides a structured and repeatable approach to validating and managing NGA's acquisition efforts. However, we are mindful that the success of this approach must be a healthy balance between mission flexibility and fiscal and performance accountability. We cannot let the governance process become an obstacle to either objective.

I am confident these changes will bear great fruit and move us smartly toward achieving a faster, clearer, leaner, and better end-to-end acquisition system. One of the goals from the offsite was to create an environment that empowers our program managers, providing them a cohesive decision structure and a better understanding of their authorities and responsibilities, specifically areas where they have the authority to exercise discretion. It is important that we assess whether the changes described above have the intended impact. I've tasked the DP to craft appropriate measures and look forward to sharing them with in the coming months.

With these changes in hand, I ask that you and the senior leadership team continue to identify tangible, process-oriented activities that are derived from policy but could be eliminated or, at least, altered to deliver timely solutions to mission needs. With your energy, ideas, and commitment to the mission and the organizational framework presented above, I have great confidence that, between us, we have the power to transform NGA's acquisition system.

Let's get to it.

Susan M. Gordon
Deputy Director