



ACQUISITION RESEARCH PROGRAM SPONSORED REPORT SERIES

Contracting at the Speed of Relevance: A Survey to Aid U.S. Navy Speed and Relevancy

June 2020

**Zachary Augustine
Chelsea A. Isherwood**

Thesis Advisors: Dr. Charles K Pickar, Senior Lecturer
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Graduate School of Defense Management

Naval Postgraduate School

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Prepared for the Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA 93943.



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to create a survey that will help various Naval Undersea Warfare Center divisions identify areas that contracting officers (KOs) and negotiators see as gaps or obstacles to awarding contracts, and to make recommendations to close the gaps in pursuit of mission success. We examine why it is essential that requirements are delivered on time, along with the different contractual vehicles and high-velocity techniques available to aid in closing the gaps identified by KOs and negotiators.



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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DOD	Department of Defense
DON	Department of the Navy
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
FASA	Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act
GSA	General Services Administration
HVL	High-Velocity Learning
NAVSEA	Naval Sea Systems Command
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NSS	National Security Strategy
NSWC	Naval Surface Warfare Center
NUWC	Naval Undersea Warfare Center
NUWC DIVNPT	Naval Undersea Warfare Center, Division Newport
OTA	Other Transaction Authority
RDT&E	Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation
STRLs	Science and Technology Reinvention Laboratories



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

China is determined to achieve the “Chinese Dream.” Russia too seeks power dominance by displacing United States military power and influence. The United States of America is not at war or at peace with revisionist powers; it is in an arena of unremitting competition.

To maintain U.S. superiority and continually emerge victorious in the arena of competition, the National Defense Strategy (NDS) calls for “greater efficiency in procurement of material and services” (Department of Defense, 2018, p. 11).

This joint applied project, through the creation of a survey, seeks to help Navy warfare centers assess whether the warfare center is utilizing tools designed to produce greater efficiency in procurement of material and services. Specifically, the survey was created by student investigators to allow warfare center contract shops to answer the following questions: (1) whether historical contracting methods designed for procurement efficiency are being utilized, (2) whether high-velocity learning is being utilized as a tool for greater procurement efficiency, and (3) whether the warfare center’s specific culture is a barrier to greater procurement efficiency. The survey is an instrument to aid the Navy in ushering in greater performance and efficiency in the procurement of material and services.

In order to demonstrate to readers the information that can be learned from administrating the survey at a local warfare center contract shop, student investigators actually administered the survey within their local warfare center, Naval Undersea Warfare Center, Division Newport (NUWC DIVNPT).

After evaluating survey results, student investigators found that the survey revealed data to help inform warfare center leadership of potential gaps and obstacles as each warfare center strategizes to carry out the National Security Strategy (NSS), the NDS, and the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) policy of greater performance and efficiency in the procurement of material and services. Specifically, student investigators made the following findings as they relate to the research questions:

- (1) Whether historical contracting methods designed for procurement



efficiency are being utilized

Survey results stipulate that: (1) 76% of respondents agree that employees at NUWCDIVNPT are encouraged to use new and innovative contracting methods and (2) NUWCDIVNPT is utilizing other transaction authorities (OTAs), Commercial Contracting, Section 233, and Prize Challenges.

- (2) Whether high-velocity learning (HVL) is being utilized as a tool for greater procurement efficiency

Only 6% of respondents disagree that HVL is utilized by NUWCDIVNPT.

- (3) Whether the warfare center's specific culture is a barrier to greater procurement efficiency

NUWCDIVNPT is likely in need of more human capital, according to respondents, specifically, in the form of experienced contract specialists and contracting officers, to help improve efficiencies and evenly spread out the workload. A common theme found in responses to many of the questions throughout the survey, that is indicative of improving skill set, is a call by respondents for more training. Ethical behavior is a core value at NUWCDIVNPT, as 94% of respondents agree that they work with ethical individuals.



I. INTRODUCTION

In 2018, a new U.S. National Defense Strategy (NDS) was issued by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis. The NDS recognizes “inter-state strategic competition” as the primary threat to U.S. national security (Department of Defense [DOD], 2018, p. 1). As the NDS details, the U.S. has, for many decades, “enjoyed uncontested or dominant superiority in every operating domain” (DOD, 2018, p. 3). However, the decades of uncontested superiority are over, as every domain—air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace—is now contested (DOD, 2018, p. 3).

To maintain U.S. superiority and continually emerge victorious in the arena of competition, the NDS lays out several objectives; one specifically calls for “continuously delivering performance with affordability and speed as DOD changes Departmental mindset, culture, and management systems” (DOD, 2018, p. 4). Specifically, regarding procurement, the NDS calls for “greater efficiency in procurement of material and services” (DOD, 2018, p. 11).

A. PURPOSE

The National Security Strategy (NSS), NDS, and Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) warfare center activities recognize that the procurement process is a vital instrument to help the U.S. military remain superior, and that the U.S. must obtain “greater performance and affordability” through “greater efficiency in the procurement of material and services” to ensure warfighters get what they need when it is needed (DOD, 2018, pp. 5, 11).

Student investigators have identified several contracting methods and a learning technique, high-velocity learning (HVL), that were developed by scholars and federal procurement leaders to allow for greater efficiencies. If a warfare center is not utilizing the methods or technique, it could be a gap that hinders greater performance and efficiency in the procurement of material and services. The student investigators have also determined it necessary for a warfare center to examine its culture to learn whether cultural issues are creating obstacles to greater efficiency in the procurement of materials and services. By creating a survey, the student investigators aim to help warfare center leadership determine:



(1) whether historical contracting methods designed for procurement efficiency are being utilized, (2) whether HVL is being utilized as a tool for greater procurement efficiency, and (3) whether the warfare center's specific culture is a barrier to greater procurement efficiency.

The survey the Student Investigators created contains questions that allow these three areas to be explored, gaging whether the seminal contracting methods and HVL are being utilized and whether a specific warfare center has a culture that is hindering efficiency in procurement. The results from the survey can help inform warfare center leadership of potential gaps and obstacles as leadership strategizes to carry out the NSS, NDS, and NAVSEA policy of greater performance and efficiency in the procurement of material and services.

To demonstrate what information can be learned from administering this survey at a local warfare center contract shop, the student investigators administered the survey within their local warfare center, NUWC DIVNPT, and examined the information obtained to determine: (1) whether historical contracting methods designed for procurement efficiency are being utilized, (2) whether HVL is being utilized as a tool for greater procurement efficiency, and (3) whether the warfare center's specific culture is a barrier to greater procurement efficiency.

B. SCOPE

The scope of this joint applied project is focused on creating and administering a survey created by student investigators that may be given by any Navy warfare center to aid it in the identification of gaps and obstacles that hinder greater performance and efficiency in the procurement of material and services, an NDS policy. Specifically, the survey created by the student investigators is designed to allow warfare center contract shops to answer the following questions: (1) whether historical contracting methods designed for procurement efficiency are being utilized, (2) whether HVL is being utilized as a tool for greater procurement efficiency, and (3) whether the warfare center's specific culture is a barrier to greater procurement efficiency.



C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The NPS Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the use of an anonymous survey, which the student investigators administered to their local warfare center, as research procedures. Subjects surveyed were Navy warfare center employees who work within the federal acquisition system and are familiar with its policies, processes, and culture.

Administering the survey at NUWCDIVNPT, and analyzing the survey results demonstrates to readers what information can be learned from administering the survey. It also shows how the survey results help to answer: (1) whether historical contracting methods designed for procurement efficiency are being utilized, (2) whether HVL is being utilized as a tool for greater procurement efficiency, and (3) whether the warfare center's specific culture is a barrier to greater procurement efficiency.

The questions utilized in the survey were structured to permit participants to identify gaps and obstacles encountered on a daily basis that hinder greater performance and efficiency in the procurement of material and services. Specifically, the questions include "statements of agreement" and "narrative format" that allow for the ability to comment and provide the insight the participant deemed appropriate.

The survey created for this study was distributed within the student investigators local warfare center through e-mail with a link to take the survey through LimeSurvey. Participants had the option to participate in taking the survey, or disregard the e-mail. The survey did not ask for personal identification information, and provided complete anonymity to participants. LimeSurvey collected the data received from the twenty-eight (28) "statements of agreement" and "narrative" questions. Breach of confidentiality was a possibility, but minimum risk was associated with this survey. All risks or discomforts were minimized as much as possible by ensuring complete anonymity of participants.

The survey questions provided to participants are shown in the Appendix.

D. PROJECT OVERVIEW

In Chapter II, The Procurement Efficiency Mandate, readers are provided the background and policies behind the NSS, NDS, and NAVSEA call for greater efficiency



in the procurement of materials and services. Chapter III provides an overview of contracting methods and a learning technique, high-velocity learning, that were developed by scholars and federal procumbent leaders to allow for greater efficiencies. Chapter IV describes how a survey was created for the NAVSEA warfare centers to use as a tool to identify gaps that prevent greater efficiency in the procurement of materials and services. Chapter V provides an example of the survey's utility by summarizing survey findings obtained at NUWCDIVNPT and examining whether the contracting methods and learning techniques detailed in Chapter III are utilized.



II. THE PROCUREMENT EFFICIENCY MANDATE

This chapter lays the framework for this project by providing the background and reasoning for the NSS, NDS, and NAVSEA policy calling for greater efficiency in the procurement of materials and services.

A CALL FOR GREATER EFFICIENCY IN PROCUREMENT: BACKGROUND AND POLICY

President Donald J. Trump issued the U.S. NSS in December of 2017. It stresses that the United States is not at war or at peace with revisionist powers, but rather, the U.S. is in “an arena of continuous competition” (White House, 2017, p. 28). The NDS acknowledges this when it states, “The central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security is the reemergence of long-term, strategic competition by ... revisionist powers,” primarily China and Russia (DOD, 2018, p. 2). This competition includes the fight for military advantage and superiority. As the NDS details, the United States has, for many decades, “enjoyed uncontested or dominant superiority in every operating domain” (DOD, 2018, 3). However, the decades of uncontested superiority are over, as every domain—air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace—is now contested (DOD, 2018, p. 3).

China is determined to achieve the “Chinese Dream”—a rise to the status of a prosperous and powerful nation (Heath et al., 2016, p. 8). China seeks to become a nation of economic prosperity and social stability (Heath et al., 2016, p. 8). To help achieve this dream, China is actively modernizing its military through improvements in weapon systems, space and cyber capabilities, joint arms exercise activities, and structural and doctrinal changes (Heath et al., 2016, p. 29). The Chinese aim in modernizing is to achieve military ascendance through Indo-Pacific hegemony and displacement of U.S. military power and influence (DOD, 2018, p. 2).

Russia too seeks power dominance by displacing U.S. military power and influence. Russia is investing in and developing new military capabilities and advanced weapons systems, such as the modernization of its nuclear arsenal (White House, 2017, pp. 8, 25; DOD, 2018, p. 2). Through cyber interference, Russia is actively trying to manipulate and



influence political elections in the United States and other countries (White House, 2017, p. 26). In all, such Russian aggression poses a danger to the U.S. Homeland as well as Eurasia and the rest of the World.

The DOD is mandated to carry out the NSS through implementing a NDS that aligns with the NSS. In 2018, a new NDS was issued by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis to align with President Trump’s December 2017 NSS. The NDS recognizes “inter-state strategic competition” as the primary threat to U.S. National Security (DOD, 2018, p. 1).

To maintain U.S. superiority and continually emerge victorious in the arena of competition, the NDS lays out several objectives. Specifically, regarding procurement, the NDS calls for “greater efficiency in procurement of material and services” (DOD, 2018, p. 11).

The NDS recognizes that the procurement process is a vital tool to help the U.S. military remain superior and that “greater performance and affordability” through “greater efficiency in the procurement of material and services” (DOD, 2018, pp. 5, 11) must be obtained to ensure the warfighter is getting what they need when it is needed. To achieve this, culture regarding procurement needs to change; contracts, authorities, and processes must be streamlined; and commercial-off-the-shelf items must be utilized (DOD, 2018, p. 11).

To ensure the United States maintains military superiority in the face of inter-state strategic competition, the mission of NAVSEA must be firmly aligned with the NDS and NAVSEA activities (such as the Naval Warfare Centers) must execute that mission.

As a U.S. Department of the Navy (DON) organization, NAVSEA “engineers, builds, buys and maintains the Navy’s ships and submarines and their combat systems” (Naval Sea Systems Command, n.d., para. About NAVSEA). NAVSEA has 33 activities in 16 states and manages 150 acquisition programs with the assistance of Contracting Departments within NAVSEA field activities (NAVSEA, 2017b, sec. About NAVSEA). Among the field activities are two Warfare Centers, Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC) and the Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC). The purpose of the warfare centers is as follows:



[To] supply the technical operations, people technology, engineering services and products needed to equip and support the fleet and meet the warfighter’s needs. In addition, the warfare centers are the Navy’s principal research, development, test and evaluation (RDT&E), analysis and assessment activities for ship and submarine platform and machinery technology for surface combat systems, ordnance, mines, and strategic systems products and support. (NAVSEA, 2017b, sec. WarfareCenters)

NUWC is comprised of two Divisions, Newport (NUWC DIVNPT) and Keyport.

The mission of NAVSEA is to “design, build, deliver, and maintain ships and systems on time and on cost for the U.S. Navy” (NAVSEA, 2017b). Its vision, titled “Expand the Advantage,” states:

Today, traditional and non-traditional forces threaten our safety at home and abroad. Our technical and tactical advantage over our adversaries is being challenged as technology advances at a rapid pace. The overarching objective and vision of the NAVSEA Campaign is to expand the U.S. Navy’s maritime advantage over our adversaries through our people, products, and services. (NAVSEA, 2017b)

To accomplish its mission and vision, “On-Time Delivery of Ships and Submarines” is a NAVSEA priority (NAVSEA, 2017b). “Ensuring maritime superiority requires a ready and capable fleet of ships, submarines, and associated combat systems;” therefore “On-Time Delivery of Ships and Submarines” is a priority in order to ensure that naval assets are provided to Combatant Commanders when they are needed. (NAVSEA, 2017b). Specifically, regarding procurement, this priority is achieved in several ways:

1. Planning: Get requirements right;
Execution: Deliver first-time quality;
2. Contracting: Establish an executable, stable workload, well-defined requirements, and incentivize contractor performance. Develop more effective contracting strategies and streamline the contract award process; and
3. Requirements: Eliminate/streamline specifications and requirements that add unnecessary time and cost. (NAVSEA, 2017b)

As NAVSEA activities, NSWC and NUWC have adopted NAVSEA’s mission and vision of overall greater efficiency in procurement of material and services.



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III. CONTRACTING METHODS AND LEARNING DESIGNED TO PROMOTE EFFICIENT PROCUREMENTS

The following chapter provides an overview of contracting methods and a learning technique, high-velocity learning (HVL), designed by scholars and federal procumbent leaders to create greater efficiencies. Specifically, other transaction authority (OTAs), Commercial Contracting, Prize Challenges, Section 233, and HVL. By utilizing these methods and HVL, the NAVSEA Warfare Centers can be better aligned to carry out the NSS, NDS, and NAVSEA polices (detailed in Chapter II) of greater efficiency in the procurement of materials and services.

A. OTHER TRANSACTION AUTHORITY

The majority of DOD acquisitions are governed by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and awarded by traditional contracts. However, in an attempt to give contracting officers more flexibility to structure agreements, Congress has given the DOD authority to enter into OTAs, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. §2371(a) and U.S.C. §2371(b) (Peters, 2019, p. 2). 10 USC §2371(a) grants “authority to use OTAs for basic, applied, and advanced research projects (Peters, 2019, p. 2). 10 USC §2371(b) grants “authority to use OTAs for prototype projects and follow-on production” (Peters, 2019, p. 2).

As the Congressional Research Service has stated, OTAs provide significant benefits to the DOD by the following:

- attracting nontraditional contractors with promising technological capabilities to work with DOD,
- establishing a mechanism to pool resources with other entities to facilitate development of, and obtain, state-of-the-art dual-use technologies, and
- offering a unique mechanism for DOD to invest in, and influence the direction of, technology development. (Peters, 2019, p. 2)

The Congressional Research Service has not only pointed out the benefits, but also the risks to using OTAs:

- Diminished oversight,
- An exemption from laws that are designed to protect taxpayer interests, and



- An abuse of authority could lead Congress to end the authority altogether. (Peters, 2019, p. 2)

In the end, what must not be understated is an OTAs ability to attract nontraditional contractors. If a strategy is designed to contract at the speed of relevance, a party to the contract must be one that possess the best means and tools to that end. Many commercial Contractors, particularly Silicon Valley start-ups, may not wish to enter into contracts with the U.S. Government because the traditional FAR regulated procurement process is slow, regulation heavy, allows for little negotiation, and has a cumbersome and expensive cost-based pricing system (Sidebottom, 2018, p. 3). OTA is a means to bring nontraditional contractors to the table.

B. COMMERCIAL CONTRACTING

In 1994, the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act (FASA) was passed. FASA was enacted because burdensome regulatory requirements were creating barriers for Vendors wishing to contract with the Federal Government. Specifically, the burdensome barriers included an “overreliance on outdated specifications and standards” and “onerous accounting requirements” (Rumbaugh, 2010, p. 16). To eliminate said barriers, FASA introduced an emphasis on commercial contracting methods by expanding the definitions of commercial item and non-developmental item.

By expanding the definition of commercial items, FASA made it possible for Vendors to avoid submitting certified cost or pricing data for items not yet available in the commercial marketplace, “provided they evolved from an existing commercial item due to advances in technology” (Rumbaugh, 2010, p. 18). Before FASA, the certified cost or pricing data exception only applied to items that had “established catalog or market prices and were sold in substantial quantities to the general public” (Rumbaugh, 2010, p. 17). This narrow definition of commercial items made it difficult for the Government to acquire new computers or software updates because they were not sold in substantial quantities and, thus, not considered commercial (Rumbaugh, 2010, p. 17). To further encourage Vendors to contract with the Government, FASA eliminated the applicability of many laws to commercial item procurement (Rumbaugh, 2010, p. 18). The large listing can be found in FAR 12.5.



With the elimination of many burdensome laws, it is now easier for Vendors “without separate accounting and recordkeeping systems, for Government Contracts, to participate in federal acquisitions” (Rumbaugh, 2010, p. 18).

C. PRIZE CHALLENGES

Prize challenges are designed to spur innovation and are defined as:

competitions among individuals, communities, government entities, businesses, institutions, or non-profit organizations to achieve defined goals in a defined timeframe. They often use cash prizes and other incentives to reach beyond the “usual suspects” and increase the number of problem-solvers addressing a critical issue. (White House, Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation, n.d., para. 2)

Federal Agencies can run a challenge through the official website for Prize Challenges hosted by the General Services Administration, challenge.gov. Through the website, agencies can “engage citizen-solvers in prize competitions for top ideas and concepts as well as breakthrough software, scientific and technology solutions that help achieve their agency missions” (General Services Administration, n.d.).

Open competition that is incentivized through cash prizes allows for the delivery of innovative, cost-effective, and efficient services. Specifically, agencies have discovered that prizes and challenges allow them to:

- Pay only for success and establish an ambitious goal without having to predict which team or approach is most likely to succeed.
- Expand the Federal government’s reach to citizen solvers and entrepreneurs of diverse backgrounds, skillsets, and experience.
- Bring out-of-discipline perspectives to bear.
- Increase cost-effectiveness to maximize the return on taxpayer dollars.
- Inspire risk-taking by offering a level playing field through credible rules and robust judging mechanisms. (White House, Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation, n.d, para. 4)

Innovative problems require innovative solutions and prize challenges are an important tool to find those solutions.



D. NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT, SECTION 233: PILOT PROGRAM FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TEST, AND EVALUATION CENTERS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Section 233 of the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) directs the Secretary of Defense and secretaries of each Military Department to “carry out a pilot program to demonstrate methods for the more effective development of technology and management of functions at eligible centers,” including:

- Science and technology reinvention laboratories (STRs)
- Test and evaluation centers (NDAA, 2017, Section 233)

In other words, Section 233 allows DOD STRs “to propose and implement alternative methods for generating greater efficiency in research and development and enable a more rapid deployment of warfighter capabilities” (Miller, 2019, para. 2).

The Navy has actuated Section 233 STR pilot programs for RDT&E Zones C and D (Miller, 2019, para. 3). STR field activity commanding officers possess the 233 authority to propose and implement (Miller, 2019, para. 2). For example, NUWC Keyport has implemented the authority to tackle cyber security (Miller, 2019, para. 6). The Commanding Officer at Keyport has stated: “The Section 233 Zone C and D pilot will increase our collective knowledge regarding cybersecurity by pushing ownership for standalone system to the Warfare Centers” (Miller, 2019, para. 7).

E. HIGH-VELOCITY LEARNING

HVL helps streamline the procurement processes by identifying and closing contracting process gaps and obstacles. NAVSEA Commander Vice Admiral Moore and executive director for NAVSEA, James Smerchansky, both state that HVL will “contribute to the overall effort of the Secretary of Defense’s National Defense Strategy to broaden that capability gap” (Naval Surface Warfare Center, 2018, para. 3).

HVL was created by Steven J. Spear. It is the constant assessment of how an organization works and how performance can be more efficient. Specifically, high-velocity organizations are those where management and employees are constantly reviewing how and what they can perform better (Copeland, 2017, p. 1). HVL is made up of four



capabilities: (1) see: seeing and understanding the ins and outs of the organization; (2) solve: once there is seeing, there must be problem solving and improvement; (3) share: once a solution is found for a problem, it must be shared with the rest of the organization; (4) sustain: develop high-velocity skills in others, in order to sustain the new organizational culture of learning and remaining efficient (Spear, 2009, pp. 22–26).

NAVSEA, including its contract shops, is committed to using HVL as a tool to improve efficiencies. Within the NUWCDIVNPT contracts department, HVL begins with a call for volunteers to form HVL Teams, which look within the department to see what processes can be improved. The contracts department created its first HVL team the third quarter of fiscal year 2019. The HVL team met, discussed areas within the contract shop that need improvement, and categorized the problems as a “just do it” or a “project.”

The “just do it” category is made up of small issues that can be resolved with immediate action, such as minimizing the time it takes to review and approve a Statement of Work. NUWCDIVNPT’s HVL team found that reviewing SOWs was an issue that has been increasing the lead time to get a requirement posted for solicitation. It had been taking on average one week to two weeks, sometimes more, to achieve the goal of an approved final SOW. The HVL team discussed, and agreed that it should take no more than two to three days to achieve a final approved SOW, and worked together to get to the root of the problem. What they found is that the review and approval process for a SOW was taking a significant period of time because stakeholders were reviewing and communicating primarily through email. Not only did each member have to wait their turn to review the SOW, but there was also miscommunication and improper perceptions surrounding comments. The solution, meet in person in two to three block hours to review the SOW. What the HVL team discovered, once the solution was implemented, is that SOW review and approval took no more than two days, because everyone could meet to discuss the SOW in person and in real time, eliminating miscommunication and review time amongst the parties.

An HVL “project” is an issue that takes several HVL team meetings to find a solution. One such project the NUWCDIVNPT HVL team worked was improving the simplified acquisition process, examining where bottlenecks existed in the process. The



team asked members of the technical code to join the “project” to receive all stakeholder perspectives on the issue. Stakeholders understand that simplified acquisitions should take no more than thirty (30) days to complete from receipt of the requirement in the contract shop, to award. What the team discovered is that the major bottleneck in the entire process was the review and completion of market research, sole source justifications, and brand name specification documents. The focus of the team next turned to examining what aspects of the market research, sole source justifications, and brand name specification documents caused multiple stakeholder review cycles before approval. It found that the forms required repetitive information and many questions that can muddy requirement information.

Together, the technical code and the contract shop members rewrote and formatted the three documents, simplifying them to what each document truly needs to state without repetitive information. Market research went from five pages of questions and bulletpoint formatting to two, while the sole source justification and brand name specification went from three pages to one. The HVL project has not only helped improve the simplified acquisition process, but has encouraged future HVL collaboration between stakeholders.

The importance of HVL is communicated to all NAVSEA warfare centers, as it is one of the steps of Vice Admiral Moore’s campaign to Expand the Advantage. NAVSEA warfare centers have been using a social intranet space called iFUSION, “a central place to connect, collaborate and share solutions in a secure, CAC-enabled environment/setting” (NAVSEA, 2017a, par. 1). The iFUSION platform allows users to communicate through instant messaging, and “to follow relevant hashtags of interest” to quickly share information, lessons learned, and new discoveries quickly across warfare centers (NAVSEA, 2017a, par. 4). HVL is meant to be a communication process to improve efficiencies and share solutions. iFUSION “serves as a high velocity tool that empowers field activities to share best practices and solutions through articles, blogs and videos to benefit the larger organization” (NAVSEA, 2017a, par. 6).

Recently, the iFUSION site has been used to help acquire facemasks during the COVID-19 pandemic. The supervisor of shipbuilding at Conversion and Repair Newport News needed facemasks for his team. The current supply had dwindled to only thirty (30)



remaining masks by the morning of 9 April 2020, and he would not receive a new supply for another week. Quickly, the commanding officer, Capt. Jason Lloyd, turned to iFUSION requesting advice on how to increase the supply of facemasks. The Captain quickly received many responses, in the form of recommendations and solutions, from all warfare centers within NAVSEA. One recommendation mentioned that Norfolk Navy Shipyard was “using its internal capability to sew cloth facemasks for its workforce” (Seapower, 2020, par. 5). Captain Lloyd reached out to Norfolk Navy Shipyard for help. By 1400 of 9 April 2020, the Conversion and Repair Newport News procured and received one hundred (100) facemasks sewed by the Norfolk Navy Shipyard. iFUSION helped the shipbuilding command in Newport News receive enough masks to protect their employees in just one day. The shipbuilding command did not have to make any changes to the shipbuilding schedule, tell their employees to stay home until shipment the next week for masks, or ask their employees to reuse masks. Greg Mitchell, the supervisor at the Conversion and Repair Newport News shipbuilding, stated “There is no better way to use HVL than Fusion, thanks to everyone involved who made this a complete Fusion success. We are and will always be a “One Navy” Team” (Seapower, 2020, par. 8).

Through utilizing HVL, contract shops can work to eliminate identified gaps that prevent efficient contracting processes. “The idea of HVL is not only improving processes by seeing the problems and swarming them for solutions, but it’s also about sharing across the enterprise so the workforce is working smarter and continuing to expand the advantage” (United States Navy, 2018, par. 16).



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IV. SURVEY

This chapter describes why and how a survey was created for administration by NAVSEA warfare centers to use as a tool to identify gaps that prevent greater efficiency in the procurement of materials and services.

A. SURVEY CREATION: WHY?

The NDS recognizes that the procurement process is a vital tool to help the U.S. military remain superior in an age of continuous competition with adversaries and that “greater performance and affordability” through “greater efficiency in the procurement of material and services” (DOD, 2018, pp. 5, 11) must be obtained to ensure the warfighter is getting what they need when it is needed. To achieve this, the NDS states: contracts, authorities, and processes must be streamlined; commercial-off-the-shelf items must be utilized; and culture regarding procurement needs to change (DOD, 2018, p. 11).

To work toward greater procurement efficiency, the NDS focuses on (1) streamlining contracts, authorities, and processes; (2) commercial contracting; and (3) culture. Thus, the survey created by the student investigators aims to help warfare center leadership answer the following questions: (1) whether historical contracting methods designed for procurement efficiency are being utilized, (2) whether HVL is being utilized as a tool for greater procurement efficiency, and (3) whether the warfare center’s specific culture is a barrier to greater procurement efficiency.

The survey the student investigators created contains questions that allow the above three areas to be explored, thereby, allowing warfare centers to gauge whether the seminal contracting methods and HVL are being utilized and whether a specific warfare center has a culture that is hindering procurement efficiencies. The results from the survey can help inform warfare center leadership of potential gaps and obstacles as it strategies to carry out the NSS, NDS, and NAVSEA policy of greater performance and efficiency in the procurement of material and services.

1. Contracting Methods Survey Questions

As detailed in Chapter III, student investigators identified several contracting



methods designed to create greater efficiency in the procurement of materials and services. The contracting methods are designed to streamline contracts, authorities, and processes. If a warfare center is not utilizing one or several of the methods, it could hinder greater performance and efficiency in the procurement of material and services. Warfare center leaders must identify whether these methods are being utilized and to what extent. If these methods are not being utilized, leaders must ask why and begin an exploration into whether implementation can help improve procurement efficiency for their particular contract shop.

As a result, the survey contains questions concerning whether acquisition professionals are, in general, encouraged to use innovative contracting methods, and, in particular, whether specific streamlined contracting methods, like OTAs, are in fact utilized.

2. HVL Survey Questions

Also detailed in Chapter III, was a learning technique, HVL. HVL is a tool to improve efficiencies that, if utilized, will help contract shops meet the needs of the warfighter at a faster pace. HVL helps streamline the procurement processes by identifying and closing contracting process gaps. Thus, the survey created by student investigators specifically asks whether high-velocity learning is utilized within a warfare center's contract shop.

3. Organizational Culture Survey Questions

Once a strategy is formed, it must be executed. Implementing a strategy is often difficult and complex (Braun & Latham, 2014, p. 128). An essential element to implementation is having the right human capital. Possessing the right talent means having individuals who possess the right skill set, attitude, and core beliefs to support the organization (Braun & Latham, 2014, pp. 133–136). Culture is the core values and beliefs held by an organization and shared by its employees (Braun & Latham, 2014, p. 135).

In order to effectively carry out the NSS, NDS, and NAVSEA strategy and policy, detailed in Chapter II, warfare centers cannot only have efficient contracting methods, but they must also possess the right human capital and a culture that supports and encourages



an efficient procurement process to outperform adversaries. Therefore, it is necessary for a warfare center to learn if cultural issues are creating obstacles to greater efficiency in the procurement of materials and services.

Warfare center leaders must understand the current contract shop human capital and culture to implement specific policies and processes that create greater efficiency in the procurement of materials and services. As a result, the student investigators created survey questions that concern training, skills, and collaboration between the contract shop and the technical departments.

B. SURVEY CREATION: HOW?

The purpose of the survey created by the student investigators is to discover gaps and obstacles hindering the contract process to acquire goods and services at the speed of relevance. How do the student investigators organize a survey to best answer the three questions: (1) whether historical contracting methods designed for procurement efficiency are being utilized, (2) whether HVL is being utilized as a tool for greater procurement efficiency, and (3) whether the warfare center's specific culture is a barrier to greater procurement efficiency? The student investigators separated the survey questions into three (3) separate categories: background questions, statements of agreement, and comment questions. Each category holds questions that will gather answers from participants about their experience with contracting, what they have learned, how the culture in their organization provides for efficiency in contracting, and what gaps or obstacles there are within the warfare center delaying contracting at the speed of relevance.

There are five (5) background questions to gauge a general understanding of the participants taking the survey and what their experience is in the world of contracting. How many years have the participants been working in contracting? Do they hold experience in acquiring goods and services? Are the participants warrant holders? Do the participants primarily work pre-award or post-award actions? What contracting methods do the



participants primarily work on? These questions will provide insight into what the participants may know about different contracting methods from a contract specialist's side and from a contracting officer's side.

The statements of agreement questions ask participants to state whether they disagree, agree, or strongly agree. There are fourteen (14) statements of agreement with one comment question for participants to provide further information on why they agree, strongly agree or disagree with a statement. Questions under the statements of agreement category ask participants if they have read and understand the NAVSEA 2.0 Campaign Plan. Answers from participants will enable warfare centers to gauge whether their employees are aware of the need to contract at the speed of relevance. The statement questions also ask whether the work load within the contract shop is spread out evenly amongst contract specialists and contracting officers. Participant answers will help determine the culture within the workforce and whether gaps lie within the number employees working in the contract shop.

There are statement questions that ask whether the technical departments submit timely, complete and accurate requirement packages to the contract shop, which will determine if training needs to occur outside the contract shop with the technical departments. Other cultural questions ask whether the participants agree that they work with ethical and professional professionals and are encouraged to use new innovative contracting techniques. The student investigators ask questions of whether the warfare center culture supports and values the contract shop and whether adequate collaboration exists between the contract shop and technical departments. It is also important to understand what the culture and relationships are between the contract shop and outside vendors, therefore there is one question of whether adequate collaboration exists between the two.

The final questions in the statement of agreement category concentrate on whether the contract shop is well trained in the contracting process, is too risk averse, and uses HVL learning capabilities to create more efficient contracting practices. Answers received from the statements of agreement questions will provide the warfare center with an understanding of what areas within the contracting process, culture, or learning



environment need improvement in order to contract at the speed of relevance.

The third and final category of questions in the survey are comment questions. There are eight (8) questions in this section, that allow participants to provide clarifications on whether there is an area in the contract process that needs improvement and what might be a good solution. Participants are asked if there is a hindrance for delivering high quality products and on-time services to the fleet. A comment question asks whether there is an obstacle the contract shop faces to provide exceptional procurement expertise and sound business judgment to support timely and efficient contracting.

Two comment questions revolve around staffing, asking whether staffing levels are adequate and if hiring is needed; and obstacles to recruiting, training, developing and retaining a highly skilled acquisition workforce. Three questions focus on contracting methods, if they are underutilized, which areas Section 233 have been used, and whether other contracting methods such as OTAs, prize challenges and commercial contracting are used within the contract shop. These questions help a warfare center learn if more training is required in different contracting methods, or whether new contracting methods such as OTAs and prize challenges can be used. The comment questions will pinpoint more directly what gaps and obstacles exist that hinder contracting at the speed of relevance.

All question categories throughout the survey are meant to gather data that will enable warfare centers to determine if gaps and obstacles exist within their contracting shops slowing the contracting process, and where solutions can be employed.



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V. SURVEY RESULTS

To demonstrate to readers what information can be learned from administering this survey at a local warfare center contract shop, student investigators actually administered the survey within their local warfare center, NUWCDIVNPT, and examined the information obtained to determine: (1) whether historical contracting methods designed for procurement efficiency are being utilized, (2) whether HVL is being utilized as a tool for greater procurement efficiency, and (3) whether the warfare center's specific culture is a barrier to greater procurement efficiency. This chapter examines the survey results through the three questions posed by student investigators.

Thirty-four (34) individuals participated in the survey. Of these individuals, 59% hold a warrant, 35% do not, and 6% did not specify. NUWCDIVNPT contracts for goods and services, with most of its work focusing on the pre-award acquisition phase.

A. WHETHER CONTRACTING METHODS DESIGNED FOR PROCUREMENT EFFICIENCY ARE UTILIZED

The survey contained several questions concerning whether acquisition professionals are: (1) in general, encouraged to use innovative contracting methods and (2) in particular, whether the following specific streamlined contracting methods are in fact utilized: OTAs, Commercial Contracting, Section 233, and Prize Challenges.

Survey results stipulate that 76% of respondents are in agreement that employees at NUWCDIVNPT are encouraged to use new and innovative contracting methods (see Table 1).

Table 1. Survey Results: New and Innovative Techniques.

I am encouraged to utilize new and innovative contracting techniques	
Agree	76%
Disagree	24%

NUWCDIVNPT is utilizing OTAs, Commercial Contracting, Section 233, and Prize Challenges. Specifically, respondents stated OTA utilization is increasing in frequency for prototype development and engagement with non-traditional vendors.



Commercial contracting is used frequently, with 71% of respondents stating they primarily use this contracting method. Section 233 is utilized for: construction contracting and interagency agreements as well as increasing dollar thresholds for approvals related to business clearances and justification and approvals.

Prize challenges are the least utilized method at NUWCDIVNPT, with at least one executed. Based on this finding, leadership and KOs can explore whether NUWCDIVNPT can increase the use of prize challenges to meet emergent needs that require innovative solutions. Prize challenges have been used by other agencies to spur innovative, cost-effective, and efficient services.

The survey shows the contracting methods identified by student investigators are encouraged and primarily utilized at NUWCDIVNPT.

B. WHETHER HVL IS UTILIZED AS A TOOL FOR GREATER PROCUREMENT EFFICIENCY

The survey contained several questions concerning whether acquisition professionals are utilizing HVL. The use of HVL is pivotal to help ensure U.S. Naval Superiority by creating innovative solutions to close acquisition process gaps and overcome roadblocks. Contracting professionals at NUWCDIVNPT agree that HVL is utilized (see Table 2).

Table 2. Survey Results: Use of High-Velocity Learning

My Warfare Center utilizes High-Velocity Learning (HVL) Capabilities	
Agree	88%
Disagree	6%

Based on survey results, only 6% of respondents disagree that HVL is utilized by NUWCDIVNPT or they do not know how HVL is being utilized. In retrospect, student investigators should have included a question that asks respondents to detail successful HVL initiatives. This would provide leadership with information detailing areas where HVL has benefited the acquisition process. This is a question that can be added to the survey if a warfare center administers the survey. However, as NUWCDIVNPT employees, student investigators know HVL is successfully used to improve areas



concerning electronic filing of contract files, information sharing between Departments, real time comment resolution and review of contracts and solicitations, and to reform quality review processes.

Once a high-velocity environment is achieved, the Navy can adhere more properly to its mission of “Ensuring Maritime Superiority” by providing on-time delivery of ships and submarines. Thus, it is important to determine whether HVL is actually utilized by a warfare center. As Vice Admiral Moore and James Smerchansky have stated: HVL will “contribute to the overall effort of the Secretary of Defense’s National Defense Strategy to broaden that capability gap” (Naval Surface Warfare Center, 2018, para. 3).

C. WHETHER THE WARFARE CENTER’S SPECIFIC CULTURE IS A BARRIER TO GREATER PROCUREMENT EFFICIENCY

Warfare centers must possess the right human capital and a culture that fosters an efficient procurement process to outperform adversaries.

Once a strategy is formed, it must be executed. An essential element to implementation is having the right human capital. Possessing the right talent means having individuals who possess the right skill set and core beliefs to support the organization (Braun & Latham, 2014, pp. 133–136). In these areas, the information that follows below was found.

The survey found that 58% of respondents read and understand the current NAVSEA 2.0 strategy, with 61% understanding how their work helps to carry out the NAVSEA 2.0 Campaign Plan. A workforce that is aware of an organization’s strategy and appreciates how individual work directly impacts and benefits that strategy shows attitude and core beliefs are not only aligned with the strategy, but are shared amongst the workforce. The survey reveals that for around 40% of respondents, this may not be the case. Perhaps this is a gap leadership can work to bridge to improve strategy execution (see Table 3).



Table 3. Survey Results: Understanding and Carrying out the NAVSEA 2.0

I read and understand the current NAVSEA 2.0 Campaign Plan.	
Agree	58%
Disagree	21%
I understand how my work helps to carry out the NAVSEA 2.0 Campaign Plan.	
Agree	61%
Disagree	24%

NUWCDIVNPT is in need of more human capital, according to respondents, specifically in the form of experienced contract specialists and contracting officers, to help improve efficiencies and evenly spread out the workload. To provide some perspective, Respondent contracting experience at NUWCDIVNPT is broken down in Table 4.

Table 4. Survey Results: Contracting Years of Experience

0-3 years	23.53%
4-6 years	32.35%
7-9 years	2.94%
10-12 years	23.53%
13-15 years	11.76%
16 or More years	5.88%

The survey found that only 36% of respondents felt the workload is spread out evenly amongst contract specialists. A slightly higher, 42%, agreed that the workload was evenly distributed amongst contracting officers.

When asked if staffing levels are adequate to produce high quality acquisition products and on-time services, the following concepts were discussed as roadblocks: The contract shop lacks journeyman level professionals

- Too many 1102s leave for private industry and other government agencies due to pay imbalances
- Additional staff is needed due to high workload demand
- Adequate staffing, but need more training
- Staffing is adequate, but perfection is slowing the process down.
- High workload is preventing experienced individuals from training less experienced

When asked of the obstacles to recruiting, hiring, training, developing, and retaining a highly skilled acquisition workforce, the following concepts were discussed:



- Higher pay in private industry or other Government agencies
- Contracting requires years of training and development
- Lack of strong work ethic and motivation to learn
- KO inability to train due to workload

A common theme found in responses to many of the questions throughout the survey, that is indicative of improving skill set, is a call by respondents for more training. As some respondents expressed, lack of training hinders high quality products and on-time services to the fleet. Respondents called for both formal and informal training. For example, respondents expressed the need for senior KOs to train the newer members of the workforce. Overall, when asked if the contract shop is well trained in all phases of the acquisition and contracting process, 64% agreed it is well trained. The survey shows that respondents are encouraging trainings and find them beneficial (see Table 5).

Table 5. Survey Results: Training in Acquisition and Contracting Processes

My Contract Shop is well trained in all phases of the acquisition and contracting processes.	
Agree	64%
Disagree	36%

The survey results calling for improving the skill set through training was not limited to the contract shop, the results also reveal a need for the technical requiring departments (contract shop customers) to provide training to their personnel. Specifically, the survey found that 18% of survey participants agree that the technical departments provide complete and accurate requirement documents to the contract shop. While 30% of participants agree that the technical departments submit timely requirement packages to the contract shop to ensure award by the required “need by” date (see Table 6).

Table 6. Survey Results: Complete, Accurate, and Timely Contract Requirement Packages

The Technical Departments submit complete and accurate contract requirement packages to the Contract Shop.	
Agree	18%
Disagree	79%
The Technical Departments submit timely contract requirement packages to the Contract Shop.	
Agree	30%
Disagree	70%



Despite the call to strengthen the overall acquisition skill set amongst acquisition and technical professionals, the survey shows that, overall, 76% of respondents agree that NUWCDIVNPT culture supports and values the contract shop. Similarly, 76% of respondents agree that there is adequate collaboration between the contract shop and the technical departments to produce efficient and effective contracts; demonstrating a culture that encourages collaboration amongst acquisition stakeholders (see Table 7).

Table 7. Survey Results: Culture and Collaboration

The overall Warfare Center culture supports and values my Contract Shop.	
Agree	76%
Disagree	18%
There is adequate collaboration between the Contract Shop and the Technical Departments to produce efficient and effective contracts.	
Agree	76%
Disagree	21%

When it comes to a risk averse culture, 55% of respondents agree that the acquisition and contracting process is too risk adverse (see Table 8). Instead, for acquisition success, a healthy level of risk must be tolerated.

Table 8. Survey Results: Contracting Process Risk Averse

The acquisition and contracting processes is too risk adverse.	
Agree	55%
Disagree	39%

It also appears ethical behavior is a core value at NUWCDIVNPT, as 94% of respondents agree that they work with ethical individuals (see Table 9). This helps prevent fraud, waste, and abuse.

Table 9. Survey Results: Ethical and Professional

I work with ethical and professional acquisition professionals.	
Agree	94%
Disagree	0%
No Answer	6%



The NAVSEA 2.0 strategy cannot be implemented without the right skill set and core beliefs to support the organization. The above survey responses reveal areas for possible improvement and further exploration as NUWCDIVNPT strives to cultivate the skill sets and core beliefs to support the Navy and carry out the NAVSEA 2.0 strategy.



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VI. CONCLUSION

NAVSEA warfare center activities recognize that the U.S. must obtain “greater performance and affordability” through “greater efficiency in the procurement of material and services” (DOD, 2018, pp. 5, 11). Therefore, through this JAP, student investigators created a survey to help warfare center leadership determine: (1) whether historical contracting methods designed for procurement efficiency are being utilized, (2) whether HVL is being utilized as a tool for greater procurement efficiency and, (3) whether the warfare center’s specific culture is a barrier to greater procurement efficiency.

Student investigators found that the survey revealed information to help inform warfare center leadership of potential gaps and obstacles to greater procurement performance and efficiency. Student investigators also discovered the survey helps reveal areas where processes are efficient. The information obtained by this survey is valuable to leadership because the information is obtained from the men and women—the contracting officers and negotiators—who are on the frontlines of procurement and work through the processes every day. Their positions allow them to provide valuable feedback and insight into the current gaps and obstacles.

Future research on this topic can examine a specific contracting process before gaps were identified and after gaps were identified and rectified. Specifically, what were the gaps, what issues did they cause, how were they rectified, and how did it improve efficiencies?

Greater efficiency can only be achieved when gaps and obstacles are identified and rectified. This survey allows leadership to begin that exploration.



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APPENDIX. SURVEY QUESTIONS

Background Questions:

1. Do you hold a warrant? Yes No
2. How many years have you been in the contracting professional field? 0-3yrs 4-6yrs 7-9yrs 10-12yrs 13-15yrs 16 or More
3. Do you primarily acquire goods, services, or both? Goods Services Both
4. What contracting methods do you primarily work on: Simplified Acquisitions Procedures (SAPs)
Commercial
Non-Commercial
Delivery/Task Order
5. Do you primarily work pre-award or post-award? pre-award post-award

Statements of Agreement:

6. I read and understand the current NAVSEA 2.0 Campaign Plan.
Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
7. I understand how my work helps to carry out the NAVSEA 2.0 Campaign Plan. Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
8. The workload in my Contract Shop is spread out evenly amongst the *Contract Specialists*.
Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
9. The workload in my Contract Shop is spread out evenly amongst the *Contracting Officers*.
Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
10. The Technical Departments submit *complete and accurate* contract requirement packages to the contract shop.
Disagree Agree Strongly Agree
11. The Technical Departments submit *timely* contract requirement packages to the contract shop.



- | | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|----------|-------|----------------|
| 12. I am encouraged to utilize new and innovative contracting techniques. | Disagree | Agree | Strongly |
| | Agree | | Agree |
| 13. The overall Warfare Center culture supports and values my contract shop. | Disagree | Agree | Strongly |
| | Agree | | Agree |
| 14. I work with ethical and professional acquisition professionals. | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 15. There is adequate collaboration between the contract shop and the <i>Technical Departments</i> to produce efficient and effective contracts. | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 16. There is adequate collaboration between the contract shop and <i>outside contractors/vendors</i> to produce efficient and effective contracts. | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 17. My contract shop is well trained in all phases of the acquisition and contracting processes. | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 18. The acquisition and contracting processes is too risk averse. | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 19. My Warfare Center utilizes High Velocity Learning (HVL) Capabilities. | Disagree | Agree | Strongly |
| | Agree | | Agree |
| 20. If you would like to provide further comment on one or more of the above agreement statements, please do so here: | | | |

Comment Questions:

21. What is hindering the delivery of high quality acquisition products and on-time services to the fleet?
22. What is hindering your contract shop from providing exceptional procurement expertise and sound business judgment to support timely and efficient contracting?
23. What contracting methods are over or underutilized in your contract shop?



24. Do you have the requisite tools, knowledge, and capacity to deliver timely contracting solutions? If no, explain.
25. Do you feel the staffing levels within your contract shop are adequate to produce high quality acquisition products and on-time services? If no, explain.
26. What areas has Section 233 been utilized in your Warfare Center?
27. Do you use Other Transaction Agreements (OTAs), commercial contracting, and Prize Challenges? How frequently?
28. What are the obstacles to recruiting, hiring, training, developing, and retaining a highly skilled acquisition workforce?



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