



STATEMENT BY  
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TO THE SERVICES ACQUISITION ADVISORY (“1423”) PANEL

FEBRUARY 9, 2005

Madam chair and distinguished members of the Services Acquisition Advisory Panel:

On behalf of the Professional Services Council (PSC) and its members, congratulations on your selection to this important advisory panel. PSC was a strong supporter of the creation of the Panel during the Congressional consideration of the Services Acquisition Reform Act (SARA) and we have waited more than a year for this Panel to be appointed. We now look forward to working with you, the federal agencies and the public in developing a set of recommendations to meet the Panel’s charter for improving the federal government’s ability to buy commercial items and professional services.

As you know, the Professional Services Council is the leading national trade association that represents more than 170 companies of all business sizes providing professional and technical services to virtually every agency of the federal government, including information technology, engineering, logistics, operations and maintenance, consulting, international development, scientific, environmental, and social sciences.

While this first public session was announced as an administrative session only, we asked for the opportunity to present our views on how the Panel should conduct its deliberations to achieve the greatest results in the limited time allotted. We look forward to future opportunities to present our substantive recommendations.

In our view, the key to the Panel’s success will be to ensure the transparency of your work and constant communications and interaction with all stakeholders in your deliberations and in developing your recommendations.

Research

First, we strongly encourage you to move expeditiously to identify and commence the preliminary research on the laws, regulations and practices affecting the policy areas addressed in the statute – and beyond. This should be an evolving process since the federal acquisition system is an integrated, inter-dependent fabric and changes in one part could have an effect on

other areas. This may lead the Panel to consider an evolving set of preliminary recommendations over the yearlong effort, with no preliminary recommendation adopted as final until all of the recommendations have been considered comprehensively.

Related to that research, we urge you to make the research and all other substantive information provided to the Panel promptly available to the public by establishing a Panel website where you can post the information provided. This public access will allow interested parties to comment on the information available and provide supplemental information for the Panel's consideration. The website can also be a convenient tool to supplement the required legal procedures to inform the public about the Panel's work, including future meeting dates, agendas, areas of inquiry and requests for public comment.

### Outreach

Second, we strongly recommend an aggressive and formal outreach to federal agencies, practitioners and the public. This would include a mechanism for any person or organization to submit recommendations for the Panel's consideration, to add to the research published and to comment on the recommendations – even if they are wrong! While the Panel will be solely responsible for the final recommendations, no one should have the option of sitting out the debate and then simply criticizing the recommendations at the end. A portion of the credibility of the Panel's recommendations will be the extent to which proponents and opponents have had an opportunity to scrutinize and debate the recommendations.

### Public Sessions

Third, we strongly support and encourage the full Panel, or a subcommittee, to hold frequent public sessions in the D.C. area and, to the extent possible, around the country. As we see all the time at PSC when discussing policy issues with our national membership, the perspectives and recommendations of the community in the Washington, D.C. area, or at an agency headquarters, may not be the same as those of contractors that do business outside of D.C. or those of front-line organizations in the field. Since many of you travel extensively as part of your "day" job, we encourage you to identify opportunities for outreach sessions around the country to give small businesses, front-line officials and others the opportunity for involvement and investment in the Panel's work.

In addition, use these public sessions for meaningful interaction with the public about their experiences, practices, recommendations and concerns. As we have seen with the Section 800 Panel's actions and the FAR 15 rewrite, collaboration with the public early on and throughout the Panel's deliberations contributed significantly to the ultimate success of the final product and added to the quality and credibility of the final recommendations.

### Subcommittees

We encourage the Panel to create subcommittees that will delve more deeply into individual topic areas and permit these subgroups to meet separately (but in public) from the full Panel to

focus on specific areas of interest. Any Panel member should feel free to attend any Panel meeting, however.

### Staff

The Panel will have a limited dedicated staff but many of you have access to policy professionals and practitioners that can supplement the Panel's work. Industry organizations, including PSC and the Council of Defense and Space Industries Associations (CODSIA), of which PSC is a member, have mechanisms in place for broad outreach to interested participants that can supplement the substantive research and analysis that the Panel may consider and obtain quality feedback on initiatives. We encourage you to leverage the resources of PSC and other organizations – and we would not object to disclosing our identity to the Panel and the public on material we submit to any member of the Panel. Except for any staff support a Panel member receives to assist him or her in fulfilling the work on the Panel, we believe this disclosure and attribution of submissions from outside the Panel, regardless of source, is an important element of transparency.

### Conclusion

Despite our disappointment with the delay in establishing this important Panel, we compliment each of you on your selection and look forward to working with you over the coming year to develop a clear, credible and implementable set of recommendations for enhancing the Federal Government's use of commercial items and its acquisition of services. The Professional Services Council, and our members, looks forward to actively contributing to your work and offering our views on the issues as you develop them.

In the interim, if PSC or I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to let me know.