

Return to the Workplace

Acquisition Innovation Roundtable Executive Summary – May 14, 2020

Rationale for the Event

This Acquisition Innovation Roundtable (AIR) held on May 14, 2020 (4 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.) was the second AIR event on this topic. The previous event was held on May 7, 2020. The purpose of this event was to provide industry with an overview of the Return to the Workplace efforts and policies from several other Lines of Business and to hear from industry their efforts and thoughts on three deep dive topics.

Attendees

- Industry – Twenty-one industry attendees representing 13 associations/groups signed into the webinar.
- Government – Twenty-eight government personnel signed into the webinar. These attendees included members of the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer (OCPO), Heads of Contracting Activities and Industry Liaisons from five Components, and representatives from the Office of the Chief Security Officer (OCSO), the Office of the Chief Readiness Support Officer (OCRSO), and the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO).

Agenda Overview

Soraya Correa, Chief Procurement Officer, provided opening remarks and a high-level overview of DHS COVID-19 health and safety criteria. Roland Edwards, Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer, Rich McComb, Chief Security Officer and Tom Chaleki, Chief Readiness Support Officer, updated attendees on specific guidance and procedures employed in their respective areas of oversight within DHS. Industry provided insights on three deep dive topics: Telework Policies; Building Readiness Criteria; and Access, Security, and Badging. Paul Courtney, Deputy Chief Procurement Officer delivered closing remarks.

Key Takeaways & Information

- Key Points from the Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer – Roland Edwards
 - Leaders across DHS have received and been briefed on DHS’ overarching strategy to align operations with the “Opening Up America Framework” issued on April 20, 2020. This strategy provides guidance to Components to enable them to make decisions that are appropriate for their respective missions
 - ***There is no drop-dead date for a return to the workplace.*** Decisions to return to the workplace will be dependent upon the geographic area and the status of meeting gates and phase criteria as identified in the national guidance.
 - A tool that will track and display the status of states and regions meeting criteria across the country is in development and expected to be available in the next few weeks.
 - Guidance for temperature screening and questionnaires for facility entry have been provided to Component implementation as practicable.
 - DHS is currently working on guidance for contact tracing.
 - DHS is not mandating face coverings right now – face coverings are very different from Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that is required for an individual in a certain role and requires a fit test to ensure it will operate properly. Use of PPE is associated with a Job Hazard Analysis to mitigate employee exposure and risk.
 - Information was provided to employees to ensure they understand why face coverings may be beneficial at work and in their personal lives.

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- Key Points from the Chief Security Officer – Rich McComb
 - Personnel security and onboarding work has continued virtually, and this level of flexibility will be monitored through July 31, 2020.
 - DHS has developed temporary procedures for processing or deferring fingerprints, to include mission-critical personnel; procedures for onboarding personnel and approving preliminary Entry-on-Duty (EOD) determinations without fingerprints; and circumstances for temporary deferment of physical requirements for identity proofing and credentialing.
 - DHS developed a Derived Alternate Credential that can be used in lieu of the DHS PIV Card during the COVID-19 pandemic should the Component limit physical presence of their employees and contractors at their issuance facilities.
 - Seventy-five percent of the credentialing activities are open across the U.S.
 - An average of 1,200 PIV cards are issued each week.
 - Guidance for virtual indoctrinations has been provided.
 - Front-line employees [still] conduct in-person onboarding and other required activities, as dictated by local requirements.
 - A physical security committee has been established at each location to determine appropriate local access control, social distancing, and cleaning.
 - State and local level status will be weighed as we continue to work out the compliance program.

- Key Points from the Chief Readiness Support Officer – Tom Chaleki
 - DHS has identified a total of 216 positive cases of COVID-19 and cleaned more than 192 buildings according to CDC/EPA guidelines.
 - The Science and Technology directorate is conducting research on the effectiveness of disinfectants. They have also been analyzing how temperature and humidity of buildings affect the virus' longevity. It has been determined that the virus has a life of approximately four days given the average temperature and humidity within DHS buildings.
 - Key areas such as lobbies, elevators, restrooms, breakrooms and conference areas as well as individual workspaces must be evaluated, and a maximum capacity determined for safe use.
 - OCRSO has recommended that DHS buildings have no more than 30-50% capacity upon return and that groups consider rotation of personnel and work stations.
 - Additional challenges for the workforce relate to their confidence in the public transportation system to travel to work, not just the DHS buildings.
 - Decisions about how each Component implements guidelines is based on their geographic situation, mission, etc. and how DHS uses its facilities will be an ongoing discussion.

- Telework Policy Deep Dive Discussion
 - Overall, companies have not experienced issues with telework and expect to be teleworking for quite a while; Productivity has increased with staff on telework
 - Companies may not have closed, but do discourage employees from going in and only using the space when critical need exists
 - Telework policies for some companies are determined project by project, especially in cases of classified work; others have followed client guidance.
 - Major considerations for the eventual return to the workplace on both the government and contractor side include consideration of school closures and childcare in addition to commuting.

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- Cost and risk benefit analysis for the return will be important – considering PPE, commute risks, children and home, etc. – They are analyzing the objective and value of teams returning to the workplace compared to the risk/cost.
- Building Readiness Criteria Deep Dive Discussion
 - Companies have connected with their property management companies regarding cleaning, protocols for use of elevators and parking garages.
 - Additionally, some are providing PPE and considering closing some interior spaces such as conference rooms, lunch rooms. They are also considering propping doors and developing signage with guidance.
 - Some are developing phases for re-opening by limiting initial workforce return to 10 percent, followed by 25 and 50 percent with monitoring and successful implementation of social distancing, and other relevant health and safety policies.
 - Some plan to monitor early adopters and apply lessons learned.
- Access, Security and Badging Deep Dive Discussion
 - Industry representatives said they had not experienced issues with DHS.
 - With agencies other than DHS, some companies experienced delays with receiving CAC cards and required protocols for obtaining GFE for telework employees.
 - DHS schedules appointments for GFE pick-up and conducts a touchless process.

Next Steps

As a result of this meeting, DHS will provide this summary and the slides presented by Roland Edwards to participants. A follow up meeting has been scheduled for May 28, 2020.