FEDERAL NEWS NETWORK

EXECUTIVE SURVEY

Striving to make acquisition decisions with confidence and clarity

Brought to you by **appian**

3 themes arise from survey of federal acquisition professionals

Improving acquisition — speeding it up and making it more agile, to be precise — has been a cyclical topic for years within the federal government.

Increasingly, the government's suppliers are implementing end-to-end contract management systems, migrating to cloud services, and embracing automation and artificial intelligence to pull in Federal Acquisition Regulation clauses and compliance rules, and provide data analytics.

Admittedly, industry is out ahead of government. That said, agency acquisition chiefs too are focused on investing in modern technology and integrating the multiple systems and processes that relate to buying and procurement within federal agencies. That's clear in the Office of Federal Procurement Policy's Procurement Acquisition Lead Time memo from 2021, which specifically calls for "leveraging technology to modernize operations and help the workforce move from low- to high-value activities."

To get a snapshot of the current role of technology in federal acquisition — particularly for those on the frontlines in contracting and procurement organizations, Federal News Network produced this survey for Appian. The results offer insights from midtier federal employees across government about their use of IT tools to perform their jobs.

While the data points to changes on the horizon and efforts underway to modernize acquisition technology, the anecdotal comments identify three common themes:

- There's still a lot of legacy technology within government contracting organizations that requires manual processes.
- There are multiple systems, often on premise, serving different parts of the buying process within many agencies — and many lack integration.
- Federal acquisition professionals see the potential for automation and innovation in streamlining work demands and workflow.

While the survey is in no way exhaustive, it does shine a spotlight on the challenges typical for many acquisition professionals in government and also for the IT organizations that must maintain siloed legacy systems as they develop and implement new technologies. We hope you find it insightful and helpful in your own efforts to modernize federal acquisition technology and processes.

Vanessa Roberts
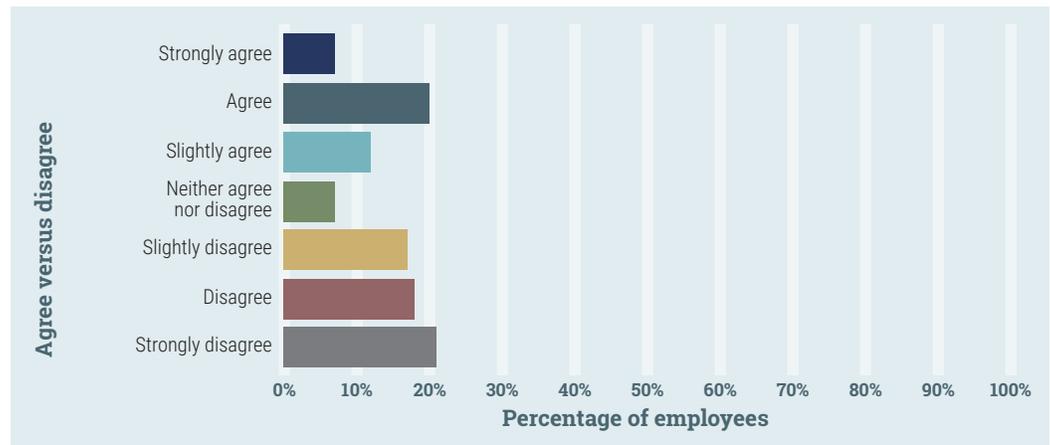**Editor, Custom Content**
Federal News Network

THE RESULTS

> "I don't feel I can trust the systems used and wonder why we need so many different systems to do one contract action."

> "Currently, we have no 'system.' We have separate applications that do one function, but do not communicate with one another."

> "There should be a system in place that works more than 65% of the time and is more templated with many different types of contracts."

> "If we are going to the cloud, then let's go to the cloud."

Acquisition systems mostly make work less effective, harder

"How does your acquisition system impact your job?"

Bar chart — System impact (y-axis) vs Percentage of employees (x-axis, 0%–100%):
- It makes my job easier: ~17%
- It helps with some tasks: ~19%
- It makes me more effective: ~12%
- It makes me neither more nor less effective: ~11%
- It makes me less effective: ~14%
- It makes my job harder: ~27%
- I have no opinion: ~2%
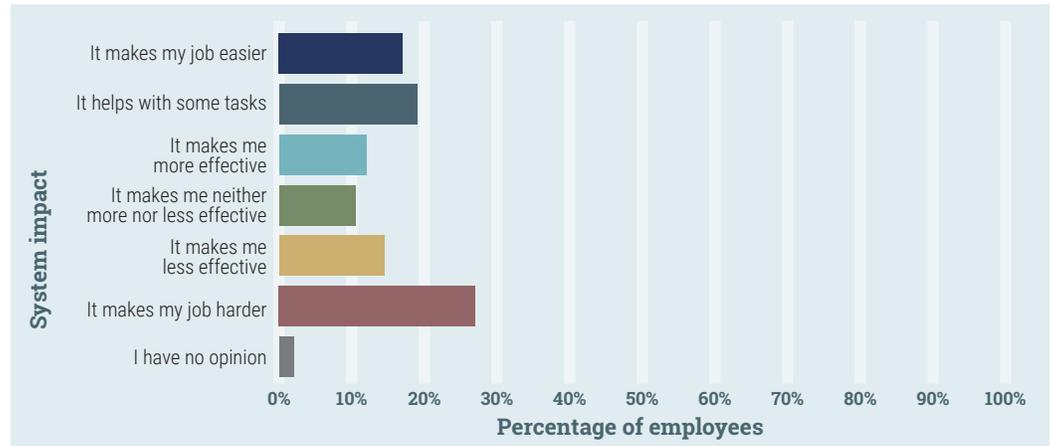
Majority don't feel satisfied with the IT that supports their work

"Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'I'm satisfied with the technology provided to perform my job.' "

Bar chart — Agree versus disagree (y-axis) vs Percentage of employees (x-axis, 0%–100%):
- Strongly agree: ~8%
- Agree: ~20%
- Slightly agree: ~12%
- Neither agree nor disagree: ~8%
- Slightly disagree: ~17%
- Disagree: ~18%
- Strongly disagree: ~21%

User experience at work pales beside personal customer experience

"Compared to the technology you use in your personal life, how do you view the acquisition system you use at work?"

Technology updates occur somewhat often

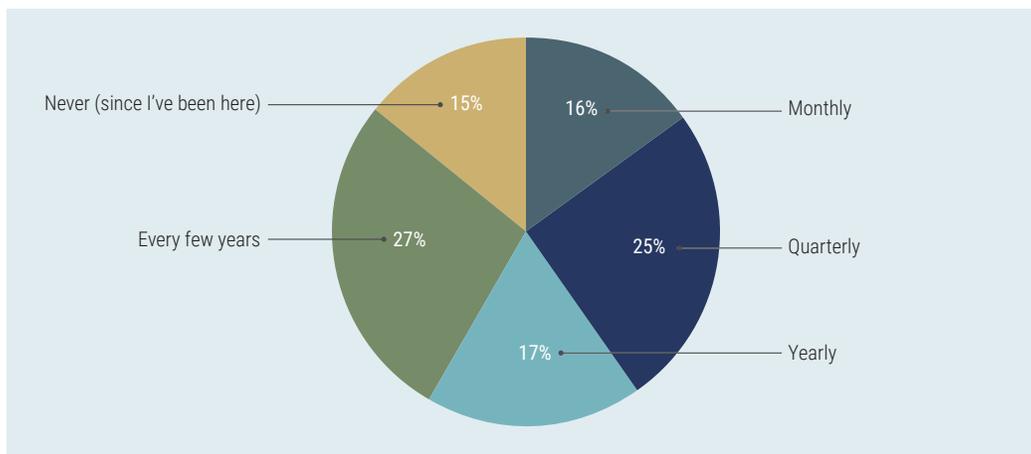"How often are new features added to your acquisition system?"
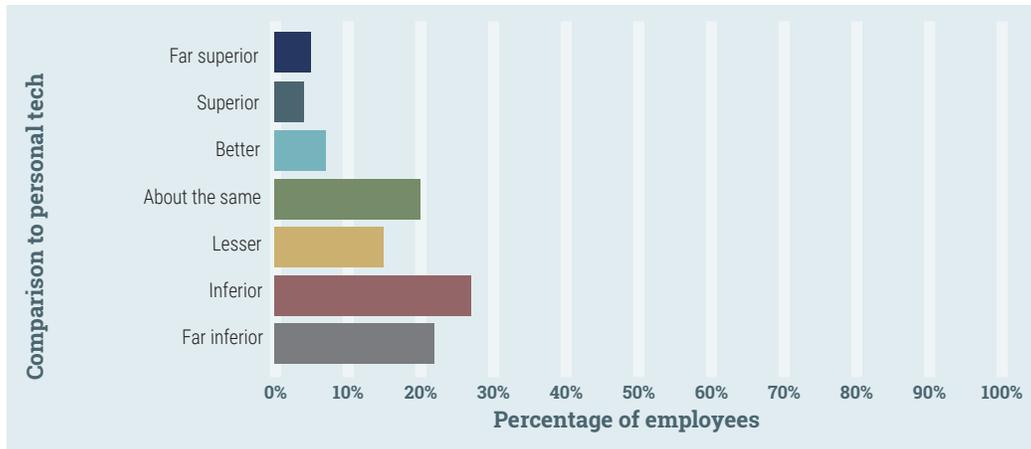
"I still see something that looks like a DOS screen while waiting for program to open, which takes three different login screens before you get to it."

"I've never had personal technology 'go out' where I'm unable to access it to take care of a task."

Varied features support federal contract writing

"Select the functions you're currently using in your contract writing system."*

* Multiple choices allowed
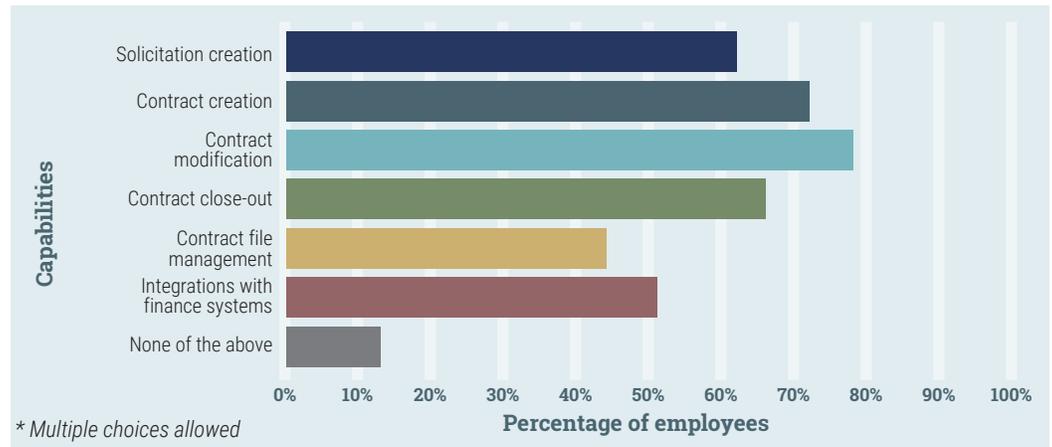
Heavy initial lift by contracting because of insufficient requirements info

"Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'The requirements packages my office receives are always complete and require minimal rework.' "
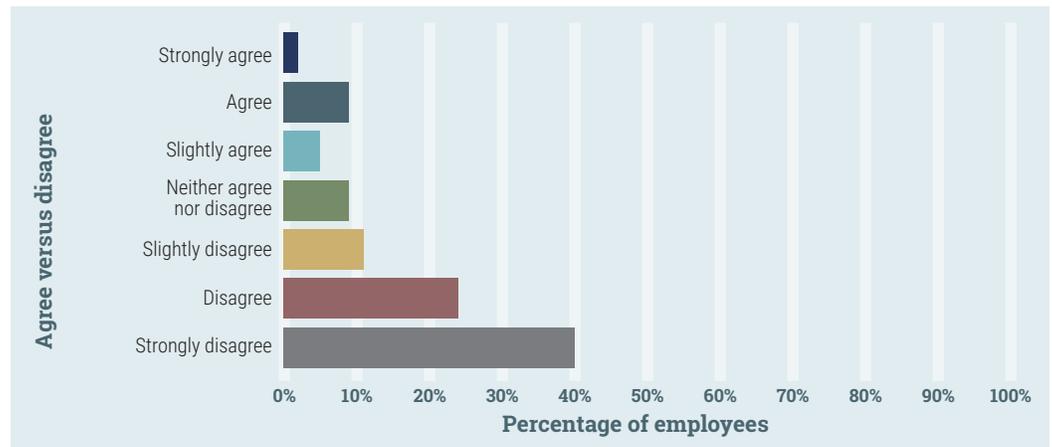
Most have access to some proactive features
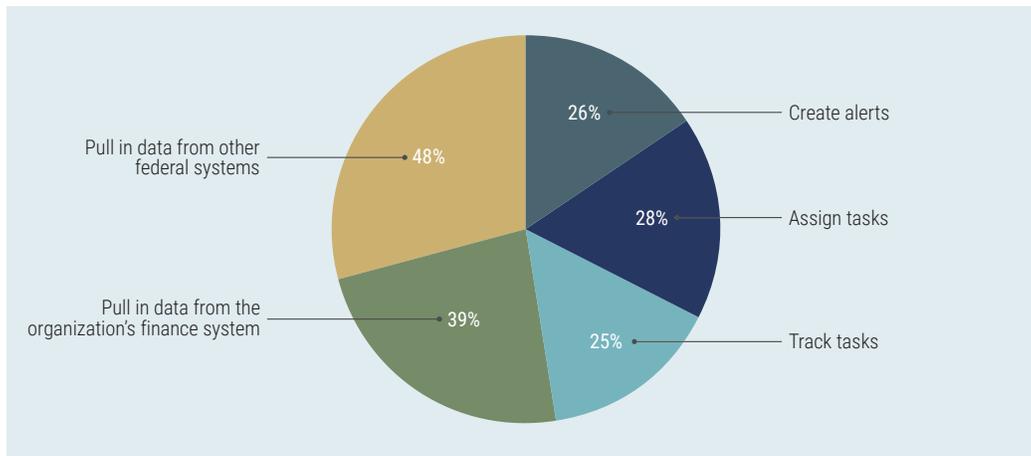
"Select the features in your system that allow you to proactively manage awards."*

Pull in data from other federal systems — 48%

Pull in data from the organization's finance system — 39%

Create alerts — 26%

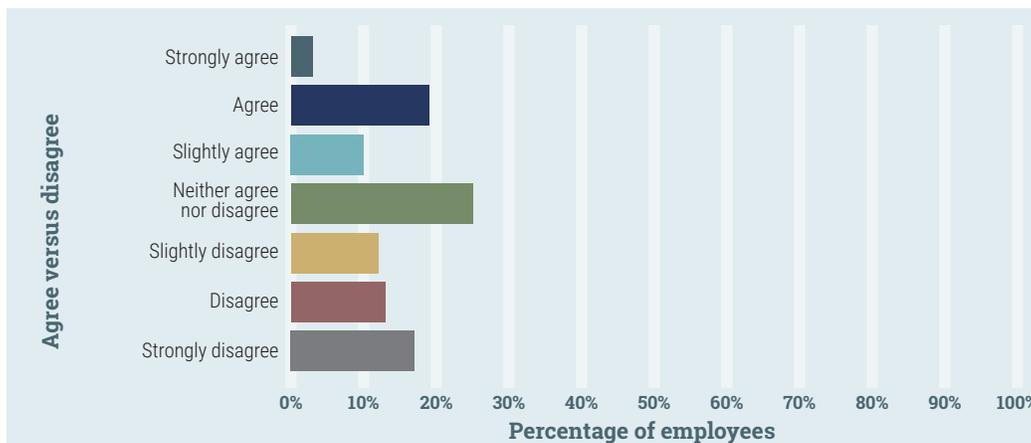Assign tasks — 28%

Track tasks — 25%

Features respondents said they'd like to have:

- "Better clause logic, new user interface that is more humanly design centered"
- "Accept and evaluate quotations electronically and not via email"
- "Integration with the financial system"
- "A close-out function"
- "Bots for option letters, purchase requests"
- "Tracking of period of performance end dates for items with option periods"
- "One system that starts and finishes the acquisition"

Source selection process remains a point of contention

"Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'Our source selection process is streamlined and efficient.' "

Agree versus disagree

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Slightly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Slightly disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

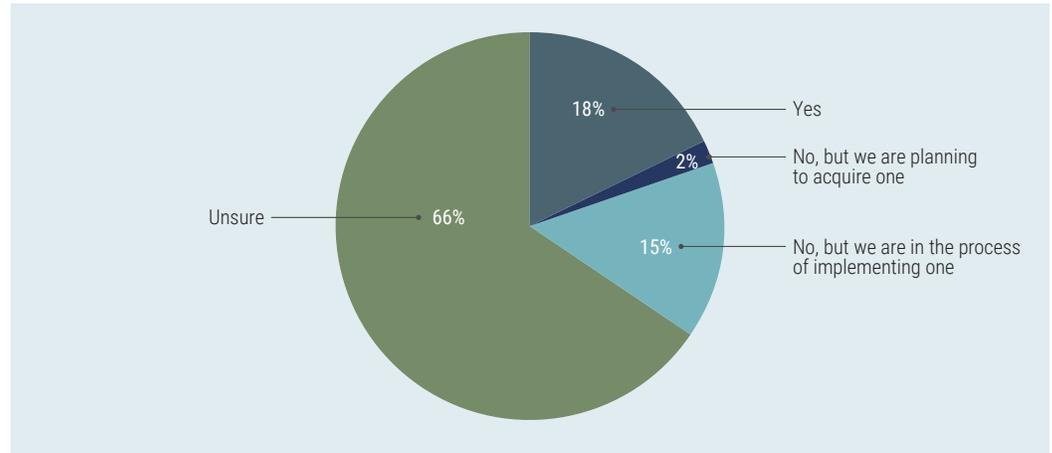0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Percentage of employees

"Everything is paper. We have no electronic tools to help document anything in the process."

"Tremendous amount of paperwork required for varying types of source selection. Also, my experience with training on source selection process was limited. I believe this is because the IT acquisitions team is understaffed and overworked."

Few have access to source selection technology

"Do you use a dedicated system for source selection?"

- Yes — 18%
- No, but we are planning to acquire one — 2%
- No, but we are in the process of implementing one — 15%
- Unsure — 66%

> "Some are within the financial system we use, and others must be added manually."

> "We start by using the clause logic system. Then, we compare it to the clause matrix system because CLS does not always pull in the correct clauses. Then, we comb through the clauses that were selected to see what needs to be deleted and added. Three days later, we may have a good clause set for the contract."

Mix of manual review and work, paired with some tech logic and automation

"How does your organization handle the selection of contracting clauses?"

- Manually — 35%
- Using spreadsheets — 7%
- Using automated templates — 24%
- Using questionnaire-based logic — 10%
- Other — 24%

Employees mostly trust security of vendor communications but would like more integrated options
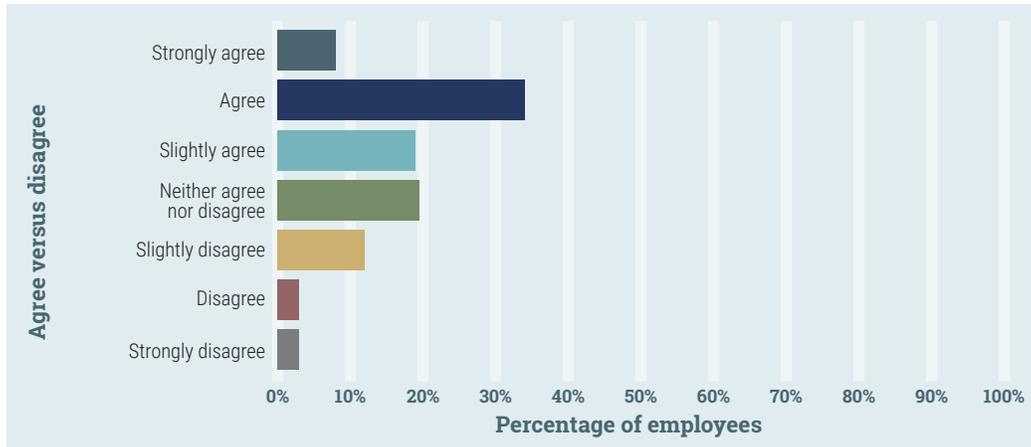
"Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'Our communication with vendors is efficient and secure.'"

Mostly positive view of ability to communicate with vendors

"Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'The tools we use to communicate with vendors encourage participation and facilitate engagement.'"

"Communication with vendors is via email or MS Teams. I 'assume' this is secure."

"Most communications are via email. When dealing with lots of vendors or contract holders, this is not very efficient."
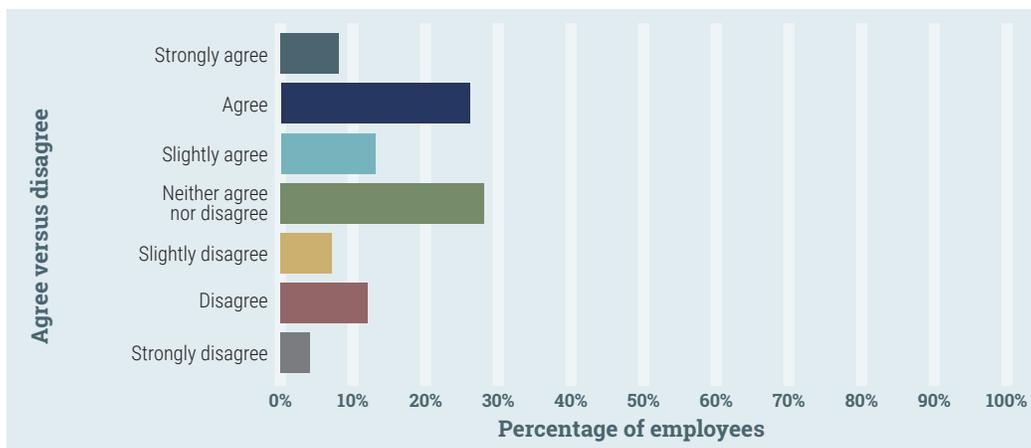
"Not all vendors will go out on SAM.gov to look for solicitations. If we post a 'sources sought' there, they may not respond to the posting. This makes our market research inaccurate."

"Need more ways to interact with vendors."

INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

Federal acquisition community frustrated by outdated, inefficient, disconnected systems — but it doesn't have to be that way

Ben Allen, Director for Acquisition Solutions, Appian

The federal acquisition community is largely underserved by technology. What's more: They know it.

This survey of federal acquisition professionals sponsored by Appian and conducted by Federal News Network reveals a deep undercurrent of frustration within the community. Time spent entering data into outdated systems or transferring data between incompatible systems is keeping them from more important work — and driving a great deal of this frustration.

In the survey, more than 50% of respondents said they were dissatisfied with their acquisition systems, and more than 40% said their systems actually make their jobs harder.

"We hear this on a daily basis, as we talk to customers. So I wasn't surprised by it. This certainly puts some bleak numbers around the problem," said Ben Allen, director for acquisition solutions at Appian. "It's tough having a mission-critical job like acquiring goods and services to support the mission of your organization, and feel that the systems you're using aren't helping you at all; they're actually making your job harder. It's incredibly frustrating for that group of users."

In their qualitative answers, respondents regularly characterized their systems as "cumbersome," "time-consuming" and "outdated," and they bemoaned the lack of interoperability. Some even referred specifically to DOS, the computer operating system most prevalent in the 1980s.

"You never want to see DOS mentioned in a technology survey," Allen said. "Or hear about users still interfacing with green screens."

At the root of the problem

He said acquisition systems generally fall into one of two categories. An organization either has older systems, or it has too many systems. Both tend to result in processes heavy on data entry, which is time consuming and also more error-prone. The result? Downstream ripple effects in the acquisition business.

All of these things make it very difficult to do accurate reporting on an organization's data, which makes it harder to plan for the future in terms of workload, acquisition planning and/or strategic sourcing, Allen said. Ultimately, all of that boils down to one thing: inefficiency, he said.

> "You need to have a system that's flexible enough to retrieve data from any number of systems and present it back to the users in a single modern interface."
>
> **— Ben Allen, Director for Acquisition Solutions, Appian**

> "If the solution hasn't been tailored specific to their job function and how they complete their work, if it doesn't seem natural to use it, that's a red flag."
>
> — Appian's Ben Allen

To rectify this situation, federal agencies need to prioritize modernization. There are a number of ways to connect disparate systems and even shield the users from them. It's possible to align multiple systems on the backend into one smooth, integrated interface on the front end, Allen said. If it's flexible enough to integrate with all of these systems, data can be pushed or pulled back and forth between them.

For more modern systems, that integration layer could be web services. Or an agency could use database connections and robotic process automation to link their systems.

"You need to have a system that's flexible enough to retrieve data from any number of systems and present it back to the users in a single modern interface," Allen said. "Data sharing between systems should occur without the manual swivel chair integration technique that many use today."

Focus needed on the users too

Respondents also noted a lack of continuous training on the systems they use. Many said they received upfront training, but that it was never updated or expanded upon. And while Allen said that it's important to offer a variety of training modes to accommodate everyone, he also noted that in today's era of technology, it's very rare for anyone to need formal training on specific applications anymore.

Most apps people use in their day-to-day lives don't come with instructions because they are intuitive. The fact that acquisition professionals struggle to use acquisition systems without ongoing training points to a lack of focus on user experience on the part of system builders.

"What often is highlighted when people say they need more formal training is they're using such an old, cumbersome, unintuitive application, that they require this training," Allen added. "If the solution hasn't been tailored specific to their job function and how they complete their work, if it doesn't seem natural to use it, that's a red flag."

To improve user experience, agencies could engage in journey mapping, a process that maps out the user experience while making note of needs and particular pain points. This would help identify the processes that are most ripe for automation to improve systems interoperability and ease the frustration of employees, Allen suggested.

"Acquisition, in general, is a continually evolving process. We have updates to regulations and policy changes, and we develop new best practices," he said. "If you're using an acquisition system that doesn't receive upgrades, except yearly, every few years — or 'never since the time I've been using it' — what hope do you have to reflect these changes and innovations into your application?"

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THE METHODOLOGY

Survey details and demographics

Federal News Network produced this survey about the role of technology in government acquisitions for Appian.

We received responses from 104 federal employees who work in acquisition, contracting and procurement. The survey was open for a three-month window, from mid-June through mid-September 2022.
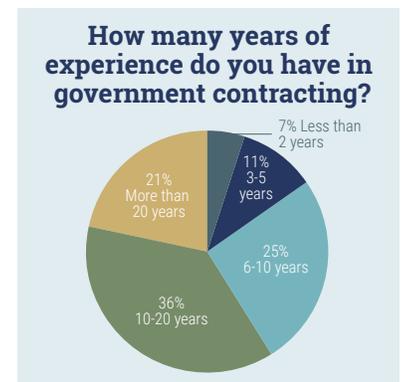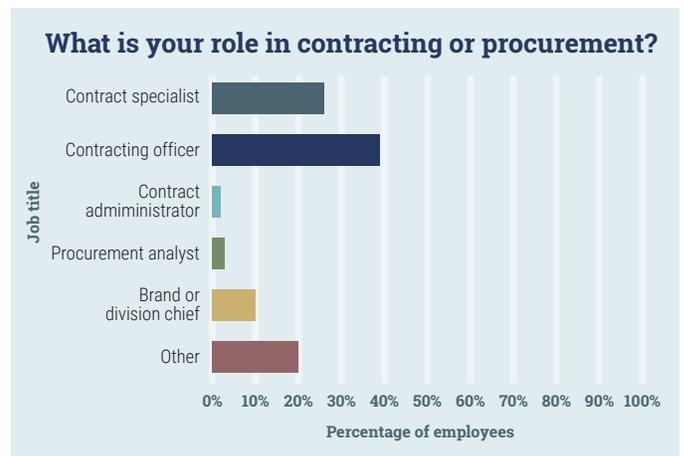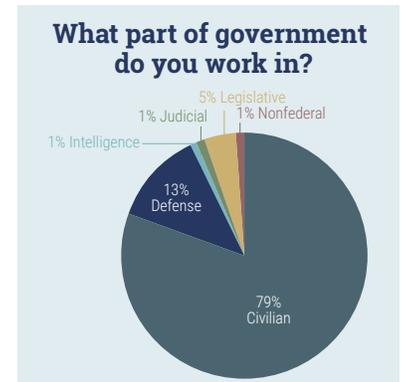
The majority of our survey respondents, 79%, reported working in civilian agencies. Only one person, an agency contracting consultant, does not work in the federal government.

For this survey, we sought to engage midtier federal employees such as those in General Schedule 1102 contracting roles, which range from Grade 5 through Grade 12 positions. According to the Office of Personnel Management, "Positions in the GS-1102 series advise and assist in developing acceptable specifications and evaluation criteria, determine the method of procurement, issue the solicitation document and conduct the contracting process."

Although 21 respondents selected "Other," when asked about their role in contracting or procurement, only seven of the 21 self-identified as senior managers or as working in nonacquisition jobs.

The respondents as a whole are experienced federal acquisition professionals, with more than half having 10 or more years of experience in their field and 21% having more than 20 years.

Although 39% of respondents reported working in Washington, D.C., Maryland or Virginia, the rest work at locations nationwide. No one identified as working in any of the following 21 states: Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia or Wyoming.

What part of government do you work in?

- 79% Civilian
- 13% Defense
- 1% Intelligence
- 1% Judicial
- 5% Legislative
- 1% Nonfederal

What is your role in contracting or procurement?

Job title:
- Contract specialist
- Contracting officer
- Contract admiministrator
- Procurement analyst
- Brand or division chief
- Other

Percentage of employees

How many years of experience do you have in government contracting?

- 7% Less than 2 years
- 11% 3-5 years
- 25% 6-10 years
- 36% 10-20 years
- 21% More than 20 years

THE APPENDIX

Comments from survey respondents

Below are anecdotal responses provided by survey respondents, sorted by question. Any references to specific agencies or federal acquisition systems by name have been removed.

Question: "Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'I'm satisfied with the technology provided to perform my job.' "

Comments:

1. Google Sheets is limited compared to other similar technology.
2. When it works properly. Some internal controls put on the system result in the job taking longer (i.e. posting).
3. Archaic contract management systems
4. Need to be able to accept and evaluate quotations electronically and not via email.
5. Financial system is horribly designed, cumbersome, with insufficient training provided.
6. If we are going to the cloud, then let's go to the cloud.
7. The system is outdated and takes much longer to complete acquisitions compared to PeopleSoft and other systems.
8. Currently, we have no "system." We have separate applications that do one function but do not communicate with one another.
9. Nonintuitive, fraught with problems
10. We don't use the system the way it's supposed to automate things (like including provisions), and things are drafted outside it. This makes no sense.
11. There should be a system in place that works more than 65% of the time and is more templated with many different types of contracts. Streamline the process, not put a product out there that is a big Jenga puzzle.
12. The department implemented a new system that is completely inadequate and wastes millions due to cost of system, ineffectiveness, thousands of hours spent figuring out problems and its negative impact on contractors getting paid.
13. Too much to thoroughly explain. But the system we use is not adequate at all. The final solicitation and award docs cannot be edited fully. There are fields that need to be filled in but cannot. We also have an electronic comment filing system, which is a "filing system." This system does not organize files in efficient files. Bottom line: We should have one system that creates docs and files. The [agency name removed] has such a system. In fact, every U.S. government agency should have one standardized contracting system.
14. I wish there was something that could tie in invoices and vouchers better. … The contracting officer's representative does not keep track of an expenditure log. If there was something that could produce an accurate expenditure log in the system that we could access, it would make de-obligating funds less tedious and time-consuming.
15. We have no choice but to use it, but it's slow, outdated and does not connect well with the separate financial software where the purchase requests are funded and does not connect at all with the contract filing software where we scan all docs, so we have to deal with three completely different programs not related to each other just to generate a PO, DO or TO. It's like a ping pong game between all three systems, and if one of them is out (not unusual) we can't move forward. The systems delay procurement action lead time.
16. Our contracting writing system has numerous technical issues throughout the fiscal year. I've

noticed that the recurring access issues seem to increase during the last quarter of the fiscal year.

17. The system is old and outdated.

18. My computer desperately needs an upgrade, and it is always a "poor month" when every other section gets one.

19. My agency brought in a new contract writing system and made it mandatory to use even though we are potentially years away from a training program to use it.

20. The contract writing tool was not developed by the agency and does not speak to all the systems we use. There should be one system for accounting not multiple for agency accounting.

21. The system is outdated and cumbersome.

22. Laptops are slow. Programs are outdated. Spend more time logging into systems than using them.

23. My organization doesn't use an acquisition system. It is a combination of Microsoft products and manual processes.

24. Our paperless file system is an electronic equivalent of a six-part folder. All file movement is manual with no dynamic upload.

25. All are cumbersome and not comprehensive. All fail repeatedly daily and go offline. Rarely can you do multiple tasks on one attempt.

26. Catalog is complicated to use inside Ariba.

27. As a COR for my agency, this is not my primary assignment. In the system, you cannot delete uploads. Many of the rules are not written and do not match the training I have taken.

28. The procurement systems used by the department are cumbersome and overly time-consuming.

29. It's a terrible system, doesn't work with the electronic contract management system.

30. Too many pages. Contract specialist has to get purchase requests thru their email rather than it going from client to financial management. CSs have too many duties from financial management. System doesn't calculate automatically or bring in line items. We need more bots for options and quarterly surveillance logs from the contracting officer's representative. We all need to be on same contract writing system. CSs positon

descriptions need to be upgraded to higher grade to keep up with extra work we are required to do in contracting system and with FM, especially with complex projects. Close-outs need to be automated or should be a duty of Finance. We spend too much time doing them. Clauses should be included automatically depending on type of contract rather than CSs having to add one by one and always checking to see if they are updated. This takes up too much time.

31. The system used is old and outdated. System is constantly being upgraded but needs to be replaced.

32. When it works

33. The system is difficult to navigate.

34. Separate systems to perform one contract award. Solicitation prepared separately.

35. The system is not a contract management tool. It is only a substandard data mining tool.

36. Some technology are work in progress, meaning there is no increase in efficiency in performing the task related and sometimes may take longer depending on whether the system is operational.

37. A one-size-fits-all mentality is NOT always beneficial.

38. Something is always not working. Either the internet is out or a database is out — every single month, sometimes for days at a time. And the databases go out at the most important times, like at fiscal year end or the end of the month when you're trying to make obligations. Updates are troubling because something always ends up not working. And there are more days than not when everything on the laptop operates slower than molasses.

39. I don't feel I can trust the systems used and wonder why we need so many different systems to do one contact action. It would be better to have all acquisition requirements from cradle to grave in one place and not have to transfer documents to another system.

40. Updates take too long to get accomplished.

41. The system we use is a financial tracking system that has been tweaked for us to use as a contract writing system. It just doesn't work as well as an actual contract writing system.

Question: "Compared to the technology you use in your personal life, how do you view the acquisition system you use at work?"

Comments:

1. 20-plus years old and primarily manual
2. Because of all the firewalls and security, many times we have issues accessing these systems.
3. It seems like every time an update is done, things are worse and more issues are caused. Many times an update that was pushed deletes or uninstalls a program or driver that was used on a daily basis. When trying to get the issues fixed, many times this takes months or no reply or communication about repair.
4. It's regressing our technology skills with a DOS-based program.
5. Working for the government, I expect our systems to be inferior to general technology — and rightfully so to a degree. However, too many of our systems are too outdated, not user-friendly and not tailored to our organization's needs.
6. It is very labor intensive and constantly changing, which makes the process very challenging.
7. Most acquisition writing systems are out of date and need to be more user-friendly. Technology has grown. Why hasn't it?
8. The system reminds me of programs I used in the late '90s. I still see something that looks like a DOS screen while waiting for program to open, which takes three different login screens before you get to it — very slow to get started.
9. My laptop is 7 years old.
10. Outdated, cumbersome, too many clicks to get to my desired endpoint

11. Repeatedly lose contract requests because the system does not have a good tracking mechanism. They supplement it with an Excel spreadsheet and rely on daily downloads for tracking, but it is not effective.
12. I'm not a big user of technology, but I do like some tools to keep calendars and keep in touch with others.
13. Some of the systems are very complex and not user-friendly, especially for contracting officer's representatives, where contracts are an add-on assignment.
14. Are you kidding?
15. Was great, then managed horribly
16. The system is slower, and technology is not as modernized.
17. Legacy systems still in use
18. Applications are not compatible, so I have to input same information in several applications.
19. Systems (plural) are constantly down or very slow.
20. It is obvious that either the appropriate planning or expertise is not the major/primary factor in the planning and development of some systems.
21. I've never had personal technology "go out" where I'm unable to access it to take care of a task.
22. Currently, it is hard to see all information when doing an action without having to leave what is being done and move to another area to see information.

Question: "Select the features in your system that allow you to proactively manage awards. Would you like to identify capabilities or features you'd like to have in your organization's acquisition system?"

Comments:

1. If each division would have one respective employee specifically assigned to (at a minimum) track specific software end users, provide specific technical requirements, manage software keys and possibly receive software for distribution to end users, this would greatly streamline the IT acquisitions process year to year.
2. Unsure
3. Better clause logic, new user interface that is more humanly design centered
4. Need to be able to accept and evaluate quotations electronically and not via email.
5. One system that starts and finishes the acquisition system. From what I need, how to pay, approvals and add to the property books. Then, turning in and getting stuff off the books.
6. Integration with the financial system
7. Capability to select provisions and clauses in simple, efficient manner; ease in understanding errors and ability to correct
8. Integrate with the financial obligation programs.
9. Make it easier to track tasks.
10. It has all these features but is a complete rubbish system.
11. At this point we are not really sure the full depth of the system's capabilities and limitations.
12. I wish we had close-out. I think it is crazy the contracting writing tool does not have a close-out function.
13. Streamlined, all-in-one tool with minimal or no downtime during working hours
14. I think there is a manual alert system, but I took training on this system 15 years ago, and I've never received any follow-up, even after the format changed.
15. I don't manage awards. I review data from a policy standpoint and to review the organizational health metrics.
16. Coordination between the contract writing and financial systems
17. Automatic close-outs, bots for option letters, purchase requests, etc. … Cut down on so many pages to fill out by CSs. Add clauses automatically rather than manually by CSs. Always needing to check for updates from FAR on clauses. Make de-obligations and realignments easier. Better calculations on dollars on fees for line items. Realistic procurement action lead times. Less outside spreadsheets required by CSs to fill in for site chiefs, branch chiefs and directors. … Contract writing system reports are not adequate for info they need. CSs are spending too much time doing outside duties.
18. That it works on a regular basis. Since early 2022, there are daily instances of inaccessibility.
19. Entity search in SAM.gov when a solicitation is created and when award is made. Upload to contract filing system should occur at the time a solicitation is created, a modification is created and at award.
20. Agency system is horrible. Would prefer a system that is multifunctional … adding a budget tracking system that flows into other systems.
21. I'd settle for any of the above. The agency system does not allow any of those actions. A completely separate (and far more useless) system is supposed to do these things, but it does not directly link to the contract management systems, and it is a total failure.
22. Generate contract documents that require little to no manipulation outside the system.
23. There is no contract writing system.
24. I just want it to work every day the way it is supposed to.
25. I would just like something that provides what I need and is user-friendly.

26. Google-like search capabilities
27. The system that I use is very limited and not always trustworthy.
28. Tracking of period of performance end dates for items with option periods
29. There is no management system. There is a process but no system.

Question: "Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'Our source selection process is streamlined and efficient.' "

Comments:

1. Tremendous amount of paperwork required for varying types of source selection. Also, my experience with training on source selection process was limited. I believe this is because the IT acquisitions team is understaffed and overworked.
2. Way to much redundancy
3. We are empowered to use techniques to lessen the burden on the source selection team while maintaining high standards and following policy, procedures and legal advice.
4. Too many changes all the time, and feedback from SME's is not considered.
5. Not automated
6. We are not sure how to get the system to create a solicitation, or at least one that a typical 1102 can understand once the system spits out the document.
7. The agency makes so much of source selection difficult, but with every vendor protesting I guess it has to be so stringent. The dollar value of the source selection dictates whether you use a dedicated system for source selection.
8. General lack in understanding when and how to apply streamlined source selection procedures
9. Everything is paper. We have no electronic tools to help document anything in the process.
10. It depends on the office and how willing they are to adapt to streamlined processes.
11. It would be nice to have more written protocols that I can read versus receiving emails. That is not acceptable.
12. Federal policies and regulations prohibit an efficient source selection process.
13. Legal requires the bid document to be so huge and include so many duplicate efforts and pages such as evaluations, solicitations info that can be found elsewhere. Acquisition plans take time and must be signed off from contracting specialist all the way up to director and commissioner. Innovation not allowed by contracting officers that come from other agencies — always require them to use templates from acquisition library. Too many contractors hired to help contracting officers, but they are too limited on what they can do. Need to hire government-experienced employees. CSs spend too much time training new CSs and contract office employees. New employees need to go to Washington for a boot camp training. Stop new managers from creating extra work for CSs like their spreadsheets outside contract writing systems, outside approval, etc. We need to be freed up to do our contract work (metrics) listed in our employee performance plans.
14. Do not use the system for source selection
15. The units conduct source selection with no contracting input.
16. Reviews that leave our office (local) for acquisition plans or anything else take months. Quality assurance is micromanaging minutia (including requiring font and formatting changes) before they will provide reviews.
17. Systemwise, there is no streamlined process.
18. Getting our customers on board with process requirements and not seeing it as an unnecessary step in completing their procurement requests

Question: "How does your organization handle the selection of contracting clauses? If you select 'Other,' please specify."

Comments:

1. Unsure how my organization handles the selection of contracting clauses.
2. Both questionnaire-based logic and manually
3. The contracting specialist does this. I am the contracting officer's representative.
4. Unknown. I am not involved in the clause determination other than reviewing to see what is in place.
5. Manually selecting clauses that are pre-loaded to the contract writing system.
6. Clause logic system
7. By creating a word document template
8. Templates that are constantly changing
9. Manually, guessing if something is applicable
10. The system is capable of templates, but it is such a bad system that many of us contracting officers create the clause logic outside of the system and then incorporate through an attachment.
11. We start by using the clause logic system. Then, we compare it to the clause matrix system because CLS does not always pull in the correct clauses. Then, we comb through the clauses that were selected to see what needs to be deleted and added. Three days later, we may have a good clause set for the contract.
12. Using the questionnaire but a lot of guessing and a clause logic system. To me this makes zero sense. Other systems were so good at clause selection.
13. Templates that are updated manually by the main office and housed on the agency intranet are downloaded for use.
14. Mostly the contracting officers use the copy and paste function from prior solicitations and awards. They typically do not review to determine if clauses or provisions need to be updated and often do not complete the fill-ins.
15. Clause logic — mostly adds clauses not needed — deletes required clauses when added — takes weeks to get the clauses right.
16. Clause logic system is TERRIBLE!!!!
17. Templates and more upon review
18. Not sure since I am not working in that capacity any more.
19. Mix of questionnaire, template and manual
20. It can be both manually or automated.
21. It varies — sometimes spreadsheets.
22. Some are within the financial system we use, and others must be added manually.

Question: "Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'Our communication with vendors is efficient and secure.' "

Comments:

1. Communication is often done through email, which can be archaic and requires tremendous time and energy to keep each package's emails organized. (There are hundreds of IT packages each year.) Also, I am a contractor without a work phone number, and vendors would have to reach out to my personal phone to contact me for urgent needs via phone. (It seems Google Voice might help with this issue.)
2. Sending and receiving encrypted messages from vendors (not many have PKI that our agency uses)
3. Email or phone only. No systems available.
4. Until awarded, I have no communication with the contractor.
5. It would be nice to be able to have all contracting officers create meetings in Teams. Currently, only some people have this option to invite others who are not within the agency. Many

times, contractors are not in the local area, and it would be nice to create a Teams meeting that contracting can send the invites and have control over the meeting, when needed.

6. The system needs to do more to prevent companies not being able to bid on contracts because they are not in the system.
7. Not all vendors have encryption or know how to use it.
8. Most communications are via email. When dealing with lots of vendors or contract holders, this is not very efficient.
9. I don't use anything but email and phone for vendor (lessor) communications
10. If we could have them communicate through one system, where partners can see the status applications, we wouldn't have to spend time answering individual questions.
11. Vendors are only contacted directly by contracting specialists or contracting officers.
12. We can communicate provided the communications take place outside of our acquisition system.
13. My communication is efficient because I make the effort to reach out to vendors.
14. Via email
15. It depends on the degree of information and contractor use prediction.
16. Communication with vendors is via email or MS Teams. I "assume" this is secure.

Question: "Rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'The tools we use to communicate with vendors encourage participation and facilitate engagement.' "

Comments:

1. I primarily communicate with vendors via email. Sometimes vendors are difficult to reach via email.
2. Until awarded, I have no communication with the contractor.
3. Need more ways to interact with vendors.
4. I don't use anything but email and phone for vendor (lessor) communications.
5. Not all vendors will go out on SAM.gov to look for solicitations. If we post a "sources sought" there, they may not respond to the posting. This makes our market research inaccurate.
6. Not automated
7. We can communicate provided the communications take place outside of our acquisition system.
8. Phone calls and emails
9. There is an evolution process happening here — working to change the forecasting process and procurement planning processes to have better information to communicate with vendors.
10. There is no degree or feedback by which to judge if it does.
11. Every contract vehicle uses a different system, some automated, some not. Competitive contracts often do not.