



# NEWS RELEASE

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Afghanistan Engineer District—South

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## Army Reaches Out to Vendors in Herat



Approximately 140 businessmen and businesswomen attended vendor day in downtown Herat. The contracting conference had the theme, "U.S. forces partnering with Afghan contractors for a better and safer tomorrow." (USACE Photo)

Approximately 140 businessmen and businesswomen, representing 72 Afghan small businesses, attended Herat Vendor Day on Dec. 13 in downtown Herat. The event – with the theme "U.S. forces partnering with Afghan contractors for a better and safer tomorrow" – was sponsored by the Regional Contracting Center (RCC) at Camp Stone.

Herat Chamber of Commerce and Herat business officials also attended.

RCC invited the Afghanistan Engineer District – South to participate because of the district's volume of contracts in the Herat Province. Also participating was the non-governmental organization, Peace Dividend Trust (PDT). Speakers focused on what Afghan firms need to do to obtain U.S. government contracts.

Fortunato “Sonny” Sapida, deputy chief, AES Contracting Division, said that these types of conferences are important for helping Afghanistan businesses understand the U.S. government’s contracting requirements.

He thanked the audience for attending the conference and told them that the Corps of Engineers is committed to helping Afghanistan rebuild and helping Afghan firms be successful on Corps of Engineers contracts.

AES speakers followed PDT and RCC presenters.

Both RCC and AES officials emphasized how Afghan firms should complete their paperwork when competing for solicitations issued by the U.S. government. RCC and AES presenters showed slides with examples of U.S. government forms and explained areas that must be completed for firms to be competitive when seeking federal contracts.

Richard Horton, AES contracting officer, told vendors how to submit a successful proposal package and provided handouts and a compact disk for an open solicitation limited to firms that qualify under Afghan First requirements. Afghan First is an initiative created through Public Law 110-181, which limits competition in awarding contracts to Afghan-owned firms. AES’s interim program guidance focuses on developing this broad-based group of contractors by creating the capability for them to succeed in small-dollar-value federal construction contracts.

“We have set aside a project at Shin-dand as an Afghan First proposal,” Horton said. “The project consists of two buildings – one for an office and one for billeting. We want to work with Afghan companies on these small projects to teach them how to work with the Corps of Engineers. When they are able to complete these projects successfully, it sets them up to be competitive on the more complex projects.”

The project is valued between \$100,000 and \$250,000.

He told vendors that they must do their part by completing the proposal requirements as prescribed. “You must complete all the technical evaluation criteria and the price information. We will also review your past performance information.

“Each time you submit for a Corps of Engineers project, review the request for proposal in detail,” Horton said. “The proposal criteria changes with each project.” He also emphasized that proposals must be submitted by the due date, and they won’t be accepted afterwards.

Horton encouraged firms to register as an Afghan-owned business with the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency, which supports the Afghan First vendor registration process.

“When Afghan firms have questions about submittal requirements, we encourage them to communicate with us via email,” Horton said. “That’s the most reliable method for getting questions answered.”



Rick Horton, contracting officer, explains how to complete Standard Form 1442, Solicitation, Offer and Award. (USACE Photo)

Horton said efforts like Vendor Day help support the counterinsurgency (COIN) contracting guidance. "These locally awarded contracts give the work to Afghan firms and help build their capacity."

RCC presenters discussed the requirements to register in the Joint Contingency Contracting System, preparation of technical and price proposals, Defense Base Act insurance, and Synchronized Predeployment and Operational Tracker (the U.S. Defense Department program for tracking deployed contractors).

The PDT official talked about services that their organization offers to "buy local and build Afghan capacity" to strengthen the Afghan private sector, such as training in procurement-related topics including proposal preparation. PDT is a non-profit organization with offices throughout Afghanistan. According to a PDT fact sheet, the organization has "facilitated the award of over 730 contracts worth over \$577 million to Afghan-owned businesses."

Several Herat business leaders thanked PDT, the RCC, and AES for making presentations at Vendor Day and for bringing business to Herat. A consistent theme was the desire to have Herat businesses participate in construction in this province.