

How CPARS Data Impacts Your Ability to Keep and Win New Federal Contracts



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In 1964, when Bob Dylan released “The Times They are A-Changin’”, it was widely recognized as a strong political message delivered under the guise of a captivating musical composition. Today in the world of federal acquisition, Bob Dylan’s composition might well be the theme song for the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) evolving process.

The Federal Government is rapidly changing the way in which it accesses, analyzes, and utilizes your contractor performance information and those changes will significantly influence your federal business. How you adapt to this sea change will have a major impact on your survival in the federal marketplace.

New Initiatives to Access and Utilize Your CPARS Data: You Will Need Highest Ratings to Win

Agencies are now initiating efforts (spearheaded by OMB/OFPP) and using AI technology (DHS CPARS AI Pilots) to modernize their access to all data. The Government will soon be able to search, find, analyze and rank your CPARS performance when making decisions. These changes increase the need for your company to ensure you get the highest ratings you earned on all CPARS evaluations in order to increase the likelihood of future awards.

Decisions Will Be Made Throughout the Acquisition Process Based on Your CPARS Data

The Government will rely more and more on CPARS performance data, not just for future source selection, but also during many other pre-solicitation, market research and acquisition planning and strategy phases. Your CPARS data may even be used during pre-solicitation to search for and invite contractors having the most relevant past performance to engage in due diligence. This one application itself could dramatically reduce the use of RFIs, and without having higher tier CPARS ratings, you will likely be prevented from participating. Your CPARS data may also be used as a down-select feature during the RFP stages for certain types of requirements where the ratings are essentially used to assign a technical rating. There is already existing case law supporting this strategy and having a more searchable CPARS database will likely increase the usage of this unique streamlining technique.

Exceptional CPARS Ratings Will Win Contracts – Satisfactory CPARS Ratings Won’t



However, as the importance of high CPARS ratings becomes more and more critical, the number of higher ratings given by the Government is significantly decreasing. Satisfactory ratings are now the most frequent rating given to contractors. Because satisfactory ratings will not ensure you maintain your incumbent contracts or win new ones, failure to act will adversely impact your win rate and bottom line. So, what should you do? Take immediate action to shape and ensure the quality and accuracy of your performance information contained in CPARS. This includes:

- Proactively assist the government in performance data documentation to support CPARS ratings;
- Initiate early and frequent communication and performance discussions with the government to ensure agreement that higher ratings are justified or identify areas for improvement so they may be corrected and thereby lead to higher ratings;
- Understand and utilize the CPARS process to carefully review CPARS when they are issued, provide additional information to support higher ratings you have earned and, as a last resort, rebut inaccurate or incomplete narratives in CPARS.

The Government is changing how it utilizes CPARS past performance data throughout the acquisition lifecycle. Without ensuring you have the highest accurate CPARS ratings you may not even be seen or given a fair chance to be heard. You must be proactive in the way you manage and shape your CPARS performance data or suffer the consequences for many years to come. Back to Dylan’s lyrics: “Admit that the waters around you have grown, and accept it that soon you’ll be drenched to the bone...and you better start swimmin’ or you’ll sink like a stone, for The Times They are A-Changin’.”