



EVANGELINA TILLYROS

COMMAND/ORGANIZATION: Project Director Joint Services, Joint Program Executive Office for Armaments and Ammunition

TITLE: Acquisition manager

ACQUISITION CAREER FIELD: Contracting

YEARS OF SERVICE IN WORKFORCE: 13

DAWIA CERTIFICATIONS: DOD contracting professional

EDUCATION: B.S. in business management with a concentration in finance, Monmouth University

AWARDS: 2020 Gold Eagle Award for Contracting Excellence; Secretary of the Army Exceptional Support of AbilityOne Program award (2017); Civilian Service Achievement Medal (2015)

NEVER STOP ASKING QUESTIONS

Learning a new job is challenging, especially in the field of contracting—with a lot of new information to take in and process in a short amount of time. Much of what's learned is applied gradually, but it takes years of practice to achieve proficiency. After more than a decade in the field, Evangelina Tillyros can finally say she is completely comfortable navigating all the processes and finding solutions to complex contracting issues.

"A close friend of mine worked for the Army and often expressed how contracting was the most complex and sometimes painful aspect interfacing his job," she said. "I couldn't be more intrigued that my friend, who I think of as a genius, found a career field 'complex.'" She then applied for a contract specialist position at Army Contracting Command – New Jersey (ACC-NJ) at Picatinny Arsenal and joined the Army Acquisition Workforce in May 2010. "I didn't agree [with my friend] about the pain, but it was much more difficult than I thought," she said. "Once I started getting a feel for how to navigate through policy, I was hooked."

As acquisition manager for the Project Director Joint Services (PD JS) Business Division within the Joint Program Executive Office for Armaments and Ammunition (JPEO A&A), Tillyros is responsible for directing, developing and controlling the acquisition activities for a portfolio of over 150 active projects valued at \$3 billion in fiscal year 2023, and an estimated \$6 billion in programming activities through fiscal year 2028.

She also manages a team of four acquisition analysts, along with specialists deployed within multiple PD JS integrated teams, and ensures that they achieve the highest degree of effectiveness and efficiency for PD JS contracts. This, she said, enables the office to meet cost, schedule and performance goals in support of JPEO A&A as the single manager for conventional ammunition.

"I love that my work contributes to the sustainment and success of the AAPs [Army ammunition plants]," she said. "To me, it doesn't get more critical than that. My greatest satisfaction in being part of the Army Acquisition Workforce is that there are endless opportunities to grow and learn."

Tillyros said JPEO A&A offers a variety of lunch and learn training sessions that can be accessed at any time. "As our world changes, the laws and practices applied to federal contracting have to keep up. We are not in danger of running out of new things to learn anytime soon."

"People think I have the coolest job, and I do! I get to visit Army ammunition plants to see our projects in development and in completion," she said. "It's one thing to prepare documents discussing why a new acid facility is needed, but the experience becomes meaningful when you step inside a particular facility to experience actual conditions workers use to operate within. At Project Director Joint Services, we are blessed with the task to make those AAPs better. Better is safer for workers and much more efficient. I am genuinely so proud of the work my team executes at PD JS."



HANDS ON EXPERIENCE

Tillyros firing an M72 LAW Shoulder Launched Munition at Nammo Defense Systems in Mesa, Arizona, in October 2015. She said the experience becomes more meaningful when you can see firsthand how the product is developed and learn how it works. (Photo courtesy of Evangelina Tillyros)

Tillyros visited the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant this year to watch the load, assembly and packing process for the ammunition projectiles. “It was an incredible experience to travel the assembly line along with the ammo as it is filled with explosives and on to the next step,” she said.

An early and important point in her career was when she was asked to mentor someone for the first time on how to prepare and execute an undefinitized contract action for the LightGuard Mercury System (a threat-detection system). “The challenge was that I had to teach someone a contracting procedure I wasn’t educated on, either. I didn’t want to fail my team by saying I couldn’t do it, so I set out to gather as much research as I could to make sense of it to myself and to my mentee.” According to Tillyros, that mentee shaped how she trains people even to this day.

“They had a lot of questions as to why we would do things a certain way, so we looked up every question together and wrote down the references to back up our procedures.” Tillyros said it was a great experience for both her and her mentee because she learned procedures for contracting all over again in a more

thorough way by having to teach it to someone else. “My specialists would ask, ‘How do you know all of this?’ The answer was always the same, never stop asking questions and never stop seeking to understand.”

Training is another way Tillyros has been able to learn more by asking questions. She recently completed the Lean Six Sigma Green Belt Class and the Civilian Education System (CES) Advanced Part 1 training and describes CES as phenomenal because it discussed different types of teaming methods and management approaches. “Some I was aware of and others not as much,” she said. “I highly recommend it to everyone because the approaches discussed are relevant for all levels of the career ladder.”

She believes that in management, the road to success is not just the hands-on experience and training, it’s the ability to “put your people first.” Having been a team lead in multiple organizations, she understands the value of having a cohesive team that is comfortable together and asking questions of each other. “We all have questions, but we need to feel safe asking them,” she said. As a team lead, Tillyros’s primary responsibility is to support her team by encouraging them along their “roads to success.”

“My responsibility is to ensure my team can execute their work in the most efficient way possible,” she said. “To do this I provide dedicated training for tasks to be performed, on the tools we utilize, and to help them when they are stuck with a problem.”

Also, she said, as a team “we don’t resonate with what went wrong or where to place blame, we focus only on the solution. When my team is successful it leads to organizational success. Being able to motivate and develop the people we are blessed to lead is a great privilege.”

Tillyros said both in and outside of work she is known to be a perfectionist who goes overboard with small projects for fun like cooking, gardening or home remodeling. “I once was so determined to make croissants from scratch, I went through 10 pounds of butter before I got it right,” she said. “The commonality with my work is similar, I won’t give up until I get the result I am satisfied with.”

—**CHERYL MARINO**