



TEAM COORDINATION

By building a network of procurement analysts to decentralize the Procurement Management Review process, Army Contracting Command - Aberdeen Proving Ground can provide access to more empowered review teams and direct links to experts. Coordination between teammates can expedite processes and eliminate potential rework. (Photo by Thirdman, Pexels)

CHANGING CULTURE

The goal of a PMR is to evoke change, starting with the PMR process itself.

by David A. Chiola

In the fast-paced world of Army procurement, success hinges on a workforce that can adapt quickly, work smarter, learn faster and embrace automation. However, the ever-changing landscape of regulations, policies and personnel can be a significant hurdle. Enter the Army's Procurement Management Review (PMR) program, a potential agent of change that can uncover efficiencies and accelerate processes. But to be truly effective, the PMR program needs reformation—one that embraces open-mindedness and eschews traditional, rigid processes. The Army Contracting Command - Aberdeen Proving Ground (ACC-APG), has found the solution in the 5-I Model (see 5-1 Model, Page 56).

INSIGHT INTO THE 5-I MODEL

The PMR process can still achieve its primary goals but in a more productive, preventative, positive and educational manner. This is no small feat, but ACC-APG has developed the 5-I Model to change the culture—Inspection, Identification, Improvement, Iteration and Integration. The Army Materiel Command (AMC) believes an organization must be able to “see itself,” and ACC-APG uses “5-Is” to do just that.

INSPECTION

The first step in changing a culture often involves obtaining leadership buy-in. Explaining the motivational and educational benefits of the change can be a powerful tool. ACC-APG built a network of procurement analysts from each of its 16 buying divisions to decentralize the PMR process. By working together with leadership, the buying divisions could be trusted to conduct internal self-assessments and have their results validated. This decentralization provided access to more empowered review

teams and direct links to experts. Within a year, ACC-APG more than doubled the number of files it could review in PMR from 400 to 850 annually.

Additionally, ACC-APG harnessed the analytical nature of its acquisition professionals through discussions on the intent behind each PMR question. These discussions led to a better and more comprehensive understanding of the requirements, ultimately resulting in higher-quality files. As more people got involved, questions were vetted, fear subsided, people learned and the program matured. ACC-APG also increased the number of PMR volunteers it provided to its headquarters by 300% over the past year, continually developing its PMR knowledge base.

IDENTIFICATION

Personnel, time and energy are often scarce within organizations, so it's best to focus on the issues that have the largest impact. Tips include taking quality samples, mitigating double work and understanding the question.

Take quality samples. Results are more accurate when a proper sample size is selected. A sample cannot be so large that it drains the team nor so small that it increases the margin of error. Additionally, samples must be reflective of the universe they represent. Over the past five years, ACC-APG adjusted sample sizes up and down depending on mission requirements, never going below a statistically valid threshold, ensuring high-confidence rates and low margins of error.

Mitigate double work. Nothing derails team morale more than completing a review only to learn the file was added to the sample

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by error or didn't belong to the command in the first place. Double work distracts the review team and fractures the trust imperative to the process. The ACC-APG review team leads work diligently to ensure reviews are selected carefully and correctly before starting. Team leads study the full list of awarded files over a period of time and use simple random sampling to determine which files must be inspected.

Understand the question. Consistent interpretation and verification methods pay dividends. Ensure your teams know what the questions mean, what documents they typically appear in and how to verify what right looks like. Active coordination between teammates can minimize response variation, expedite the process and eliminate rework and response correction. ACC-APG developed verification methods for each PMR question to ensure consistent understanding and answers, significantly reducing the time it takes to conduct a file review.

IMPROVEMENT

In a large organization with high stakes, accountability matters. By drilling down to the root cause, corrective actions can be deployed to resolve future weaknesses, making accountability possible without overlooking what people do correctly. ACC-APG looks for what is right more than what is wrong, lifting morale year-over-year because a commendation goes much further than a finding and people want to repeat what works. Detailed review comments expedite root cause analysis and make for meaningful trend analysis. Future pre-award mitigation efforts are reviewed more favorably when not shrouded in negativity. As a result, ACC-APG has gathered 70 best practices over five years, all proven successful in driving risk, in various areas, to an acceptable level.

ITERATION

Iteration enables accurate and near-real-time trend analysis. Before variables diminish and degrade the reliability of the data, a team can truly see if their efforts are impactful. A corrective action plan (CAP) should do more than just track the implementation of the fix—it must also determine if anything improved.

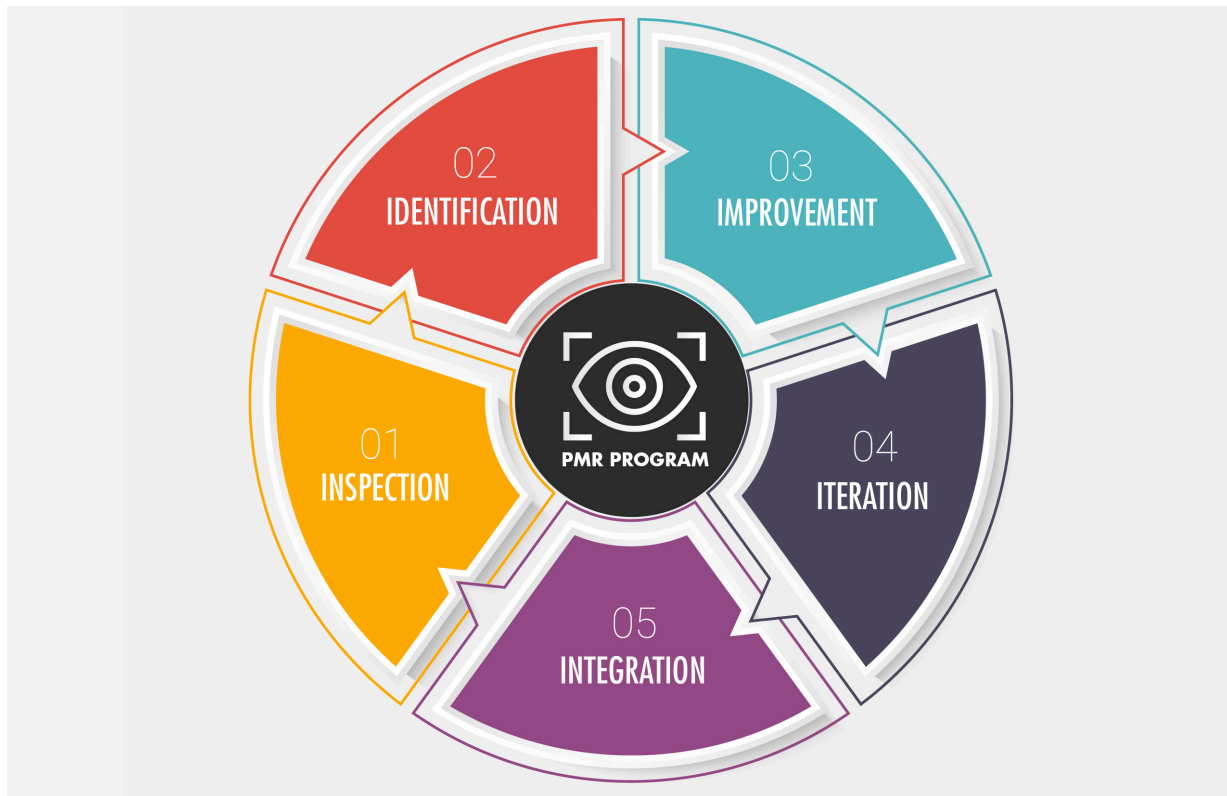
By using the same measurement tool, with the same scale, within a close proximity, the quantified data can speak to the action's success or failure. Overlapping file reviews and corrective action tracking facilitate an ongoing assessment process, producing near-real-time data that leaders learn from. Monthly or quarterly checkpoints can be established to give more frequent indications of success. These are predictive methods that go beyond the more typical year-over-year analysis. Additionally, a corrective action can be modified if a trend indicates a negative turn. Proven practices can be extracted from this analysis since there is now quantifiable data to support sustained success. Future pre-award mitigation efforts are more trustworthy when based on data-driven internal controls and proven statistics. In 2024, these concepts gave ACC-APG enough confidence to remove procurement analysts from the peer review and document review processes, freeing up over 15 full-time employees to concentrate on other priorities.

INTEGRATION

As the PMR program matures, it can be integrated into and with other internal controls across the organization, such as audit readiness, Risk Management Internal Control (RMIC) Program, talent management, resource planning, training, etc. The program will increase in speed and agility as this occurs and can even spin off customized processes, such as targeted reviews. These special reviews enable a surge capability because they include evaluation of areas not covered by the PMR questions. Basic rules can be predetermined, such as a severity of deficiency scale and how individual results are added to overall results. Ultimately, all of this connects back to creating value for the command. All risks can be integrated proactively into pre-award processes so they may be infused with measures of accountability. As data is generated, validated and verified, decisions can be made based on trends, thus increasing the return on investment. ACC-APG was able to eliminate 33% of its RMIC effort by determining synergy between PMR and RMIC criteria.

THE 5-I MODEL IN ACTION

Over the course of five years, ACC-APG used the 5-I Model to build a PMR program that reviewed more files, built a more



THE 5-I MODEL

To assist the PMR process in achieving its goals in a more productive, preventative, positive and educational manner, ACC-APG has developed the 5-I Model to address hurdles and create a positive change in the procurement process. (Graphic by David A. Chiola, ACC-APG and USAASC)

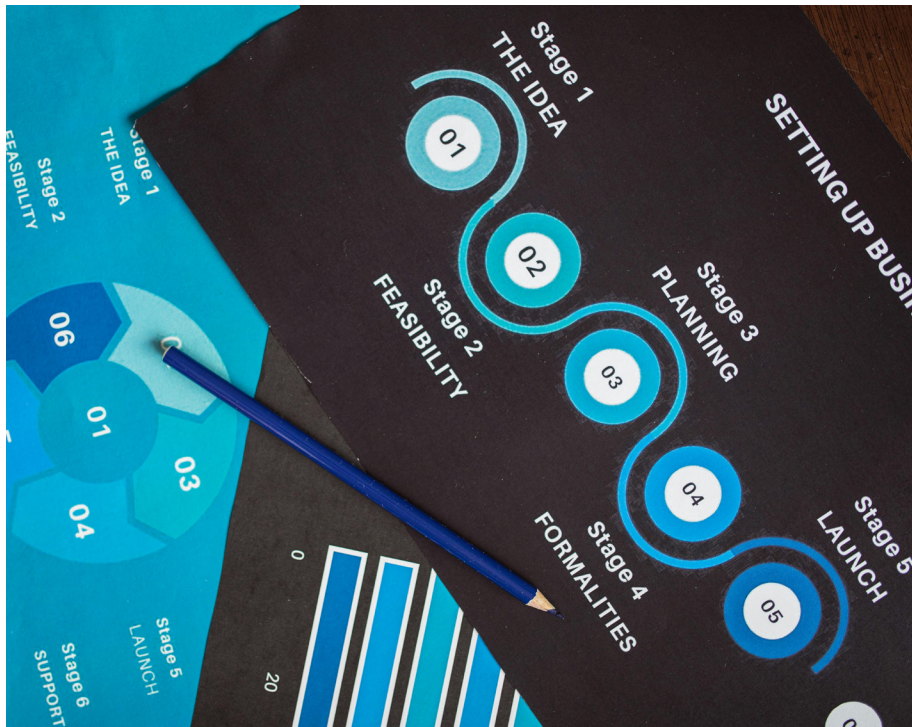
robust knowledge base, provided better support to its headquarters, improved morale, produced more comprehensive results and systematically drove center-wide risk from medium to low.

The 5-I Model has value beyond PMR. ACC-APG demonstrated the effectiveness of the 5-I Model once again when faced with three simultaneous inspections: a command inspection through the Headquarters Army Contracting Command's Organizational Inspection Program (OIP); a PMR as outlined in the Army Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (AFARS) Appendix CC; and assessments as part of the RMIC Program, as outlined in Army Regulation 11-2, "Managers' Internal Control Program." This time, however, the 5-I Model was used to show the similarities of each inspection even though each was guided by separate processes, rules, regulations and reporting chains. ACC-APG realized that each process, although different, included the same I's that the Model speaks to: Inspection, Identification, Improvement, Iteration and Integration. That realization allowed ACC-APG to distill each inspection into its simplest steps, align

them, uncover similarities, communicate requirements to all stakeholders and tackle everything as a unified team.

Taskers to the workforce, data collection efforts, briefings and meetings were all conducted once but had triple the impact, as the results could be applied to all three inspections. Reporting processes were combined so that a single point of contact could handle all inspection due outs. Additionally, best practices and lessons learned from all inspections could be integrated into pre-award processes to be mitigated early. The result was low-risk ratings in all three inspections and zero material weakness reported in the RMIC Program.

In 2023, ACC-APG shared these concepts with the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army – Procurement (ODASA(P)). Then in 2024, the ODASA(P) conducted "PMR Roadshows" to all its enterprise partners including the Army Contracting Command, Mission and Installation Command, the Army Corps of Engineers, the National Guard Bureau and



TAKING A STEP TOWARDS EFFICIENCY

By implementing and analyzing a step-by-step plan, proven best practices and areas of improvements can be more easily identified, resulting in a more efficient and timely procurement process. (Photo by RDNE Stock project, Pexels)

the Army Medical Command. The PMR Roadshows discussed the benefits of the 5-I Model and explained the changes the ODASA(P) made to incorporate it. One change was the rewriting of the AFARS Appendix CC to include inspection, identification, improvement and integration concepts.

These concepts were included by more clearly defining the types of PMRs. A PMR Type 1 now includes actions taken at the lowest level to ensure internal controls are considered. Actions like peer review, document review and legal review are now conceptualized as inspections. This is a positive thing because findings from larger audits can be integrated into these low-level inspections, creating opportunities to identify and improve early. A second change was the development of an

automated CAP process and the establishment of quarterly checkpoints for all enterprise partners. The CAP process and quarterly checkpoints included the iterative concept by establishing a mechanism and battle rhythm for trend analysis. Trend analysis is crucial to ensure improvement is sustained. Now the ODASA(P) and its enterprise partners can hold each other accountable via data. If data trends positively, proven practices can be extrapolated and shared amongst the enterprise. If data trends negatively, corrective actions can be adjusted early to change the trajectory of the issue.

CONCLUSION

The PMR program must evolve from a reactive after-award evaluation to a pre-award integrated process focused on near-real-time results. ACC-APG has

proven that the 5-I Model works, and the ODASA(P) is on the verge of reaping similar benefits. This reform must be carefully coordinated to ensure many stakeholders are included. It must be able to adapt to the rapidly changing modern acquisition environment. As AMC and the Army operationalize contracting, organizations must be better equipped to see themselves. More can be explored, such as rewriting AFARS Appendix BB to include some of these concepts and perhaps even merging it with Appendix CC. Other Army auditing programs could connect with each other to reduce redundancy and improve efficiencies.

Regardless of whether the process is related to PMR, OIP, command inspections, RMIC Program, etc., the 5-I Model can help distill steps and align them for efficiency and resource preservation. It is natural for people to resist change, mostly out of fear, especially if it is complex change. The simple framework of the 5-I Model can alleviate those fears and make change more impactful. At the end of the day, it's the mission and the warfighter that matter. Ensuring we get quality and timely products and services to meet Army priorities is paramount.

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