

In the late 2000s, as the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) focused on awarding contracts in support of critical warfighting missions, some of its agencies amassed thousands of contracts that needed to be closed after work had been completed. The U.S. Army alone had in excess of 500,000 contracts needing closeout.

In 2009, a team of experts from National Industries for the Blind (NIB) and the U.S. Army partnered to create the Contract Management Support (CMS) program to fill this growing requirement using a workforce of people who are blind. After a successful pilot period, the Army added the CMS Program to the federal Procurement List (PL).

NIB partners with the Defense Acquisition University to provide specific training for qualified candidates in contract closeout. Employees in the CMS program must be legally blind, have a four-year college degree or related experience, be highly proficient in using adaptive technology, and be able to obtain a security clearance.

The administrative services that CMS teams provide are not inherently governmental functions. Team members

review open federal contracts, verify government receipt and acceptance, identify any funds that should be de-obligated, and scan and index contract documents before delivering “ready-to-close” contracts back to federal agencies.

By focusing on these post-award activities, CMS specialists provide critical support to government contracting offices and free up time for federal employees to focus on critical, inherently governmental contracting functions.

Today, 13 associated nonprofit agencies across the country support dozens of DOD and other federal customers, either in the agency’s secure facility, or on-site at the customer’s location. The CMS program employs 126 people, including 83 people who are blind and 20 service-disabled veterans.

The CMS program is helping DOD and other federal agencies recoup billions of dollars, reduce administrative burden, and achieve financial audit readiness, while helping people who are blind build meaningful careers and achieve greater economic and personal independence.

CMS PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS

Data as of May 2017

\$2.2B

Total de-obligated funds identified



6.6M

Images scanned



317,808

Ready-to-close contracts provided to federal contracting officers



99.7%

Accuracy rate

58

People who are blind hired as contract specialists by federal agencies



CASE STUDY: U.S. ARMY CONTRACTING COMMAND – ROCK ISLAND

In 2011, the U.S. Army Contracting Command at Rock Island, Illinois, found itself with nearly 10,000 completed contracts from procurements related to military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Government contracting personnel partnered with the Chicago Lighthouse, an NIB associated nonprofit agency, to process the completed contracts and return the de-obligated funds to the U.S. Treasury. A team of six people who are blind worked on the contract on-site at the Army's location. By 2013, the team was performing with such high effectiveness and efficiency that the government increased its size to 13 contract specialists, allowing the Army Contracting Command to process its backlog of open contracts at a faster rate.

IMPACT:

- Received 9,000+ contracts
- Closed 8,000 contracts since Sep 2011
- De-obligated \$131.9 million
- Exceeded yearly close-out expectations

CASE STUDY: U.S. NAVY CONTRACTING NAVSUP - MECHANICSBURG

In fiscal year 2012, Defense Procurement Acquisition Policy (DPAP) made available funding for DOD activities to procure contract closeout services. Having a backlog of contracts to close, NAVSUP Mechanicsburg chose to take advantage of these funds and awarded a task order to NIB for contract closeout support. NIB established a team of five closeout specialists onsite in Mechanicsburg and began work to close more than 7,200 contracts. NIB's team has been so successful that NAVSUP has awarded follow-on task orders for closeout support in each year since.

IMPACT:

- Received 52,000+ contracts
- Closed 46,197 contracts since January 2012
- De-obligated more than \$7.1 million
- Exceeded yearly closeout expectations

CMS CUSTOMERS

U.S. Army: ACC, MEDCOM, ACOE

U.S. Navy: NAVSUP, NAVAIR, NAVMEDLOG, NUWC

U.S. Air Force: AFMC, AETC, USAFE, AMC, AFDW, AFSPC, ACC, PACAF, AFRL

U.S. Marine Corps: MCSC

Defense Logistics Agency: DLA Troop Support, DLA Energy, DCSC

Other DOD: DSCA, WHS, DCMA, DHRA, DMA

Other Federal: EPA

About National Industries for the Blind

NIB and its nationwide network of associated nonprofit agencies are the nation's largest employer of people who are blind. By procuring quality products and services through NIB, an AbilityOne® Authorized Enterprise, you provide meaningful employment for people who are blind.