Contract Management Competency in the USMC
An Assessment of MCSC, ECP/RCOs and LOGCOM

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Background

- In October 2020, DoD implemented the new Back-to-Basics (BtB) talent management framework.
  - Established a new Contracting Competency Model for the contracting workforce.
  - New competency model based on the National Contract Management Association's (NCMA) Contract Management Standard (CMS), a third-party accredited standard (ANSI).

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Research Purpose

- Conduct a competency assessment on the USMC contracting workforce (MCSC, ECP/RCOs, LOGCOM) using the new DoD BtB Contracting Competency Model (based on the NCMA CMS).

Research Questions

- Based on the competency assessment, what are the USMC's contracting workforce's buyer proficiency ratings and seller knowledge ratings for the contracting competencies?
- What recommendations can be made based on the results of this contracting workforce competency assessment?

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- Auditability Theory
  - Organizations need to have an established and effective knowledge management system supporting its governance processes and practices (Power, 1996).
  - A knowledge management system includes competent people, capable processes, and effective internal controls (Rendon & Rendon, 2015).

- Competency Theory
  - Individual and organizational performance is based on the essential competencies related to job tasks. Competency in performing job tasks is critical for effective performance in the workplace. (McClelland, 1973).

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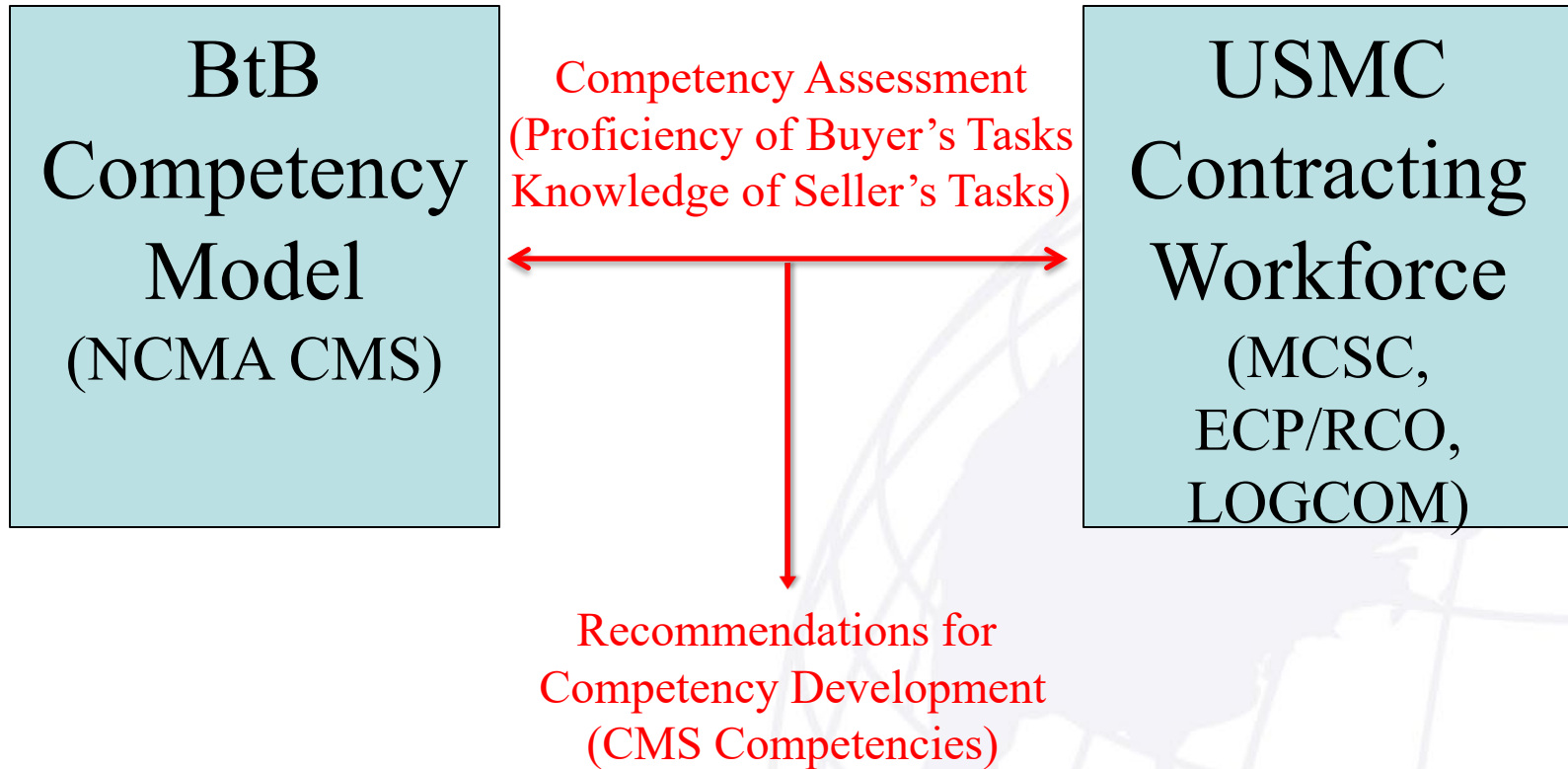
Proficiency in Buyer's Tasks

- Plan Solicitation
- Request Offers
- Price & Cost Analysis
- Plan Negotiations
- Select Source
- Manage Disagreement
- Administer Contract
- Ensure Quality
- Manage Changes
- Close Out Contract

Knowledge of Seller's Tasks

- Plan Sales
- Prepare Offer
- Plan Negotiations
- Select Source
- Manage Disagreement
- Administer Contract
- Ensure Quality
- Manage Subcontracts
- Manage Changes
- Close Out Contract

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Buyer Proficiency Ratings

Proficiency Rating	Definition
(1) Aware	Applies the competency in the simplest of situations and requires close and extensive guidance.
(2) Basic	Applies the competency in somewhat difficult situations and requires frequent guidance.
(3) Intermediate	Applies the competency in difficult situations and requires little or no guidance.
(4) Advanced	Applies the competency in considerably difficult situations and generally requires no guidance.
(5) Expert	Applies the competency in exceptionally difficult situations and serves as a key resource and advises others.
N/A	Not applicable/not needed in my job

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Seller Knowledge Ratings

Knowledge Rating	Definition
(1) None	I am not aware of this contractor competency.
(2) Aware	I am aware, but have no knowledge of this contractor competency.
(3) Basic	I have some basic level knowledge of this contractor competency.
(4) Intermediate	I have intermediate level knowledge of this contractor competency.
(5) Advanced	I have advanced level knowledge of this contractor competency.

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- Survey sent to 220 contracting professionals.
- Survey completed by approx. 52 contracting professionals.
- 23% response rate.

DAWIA Level			CM Years of Experience	
None	1		3 or Less	5
Level I	3		4 to 8	5
Level II	5		9 to 13	21
Level III	41		14 to 18	4
			19 or more	17
PCO	21			
Professional Certifications			Years in Organization	
CFCM	2		3 or Less	20
CCCM	0		4 to 8	10
CPCM	1		9 to 13	13
Other	7		14 to 18	4
			19 or more	4

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Marine Corps Systems Command
Contract Management Competency
Buyer Proficiency

	Plan Solicitation	Request Offer	Price & Cost Analysis	Plan Negotiations	Select Source	Manage Disagreement	Administer Contract	Ensure Quality	Manage Changes	Close Out Contract
Proficiency Rating	3.82	4.20	3.99	4.05	4.11	3.34	3.93	3.63	3.89	3.59

Proficiency Rating (y-axis)

5: Expert
4: Advanced
3: Intermediate
2: Basic
1: Aware

Marine Corps Systems Command
Contract Management Competency
Seller Knowledge

	Plan Sales	Prepare Offer	Plan Negotiations	Select Source	Manage Disagreement	Administer Contract	Ensure Quality	Manage Subcontracts	Manage Changes	Close Out Contract
Knowledge Rating	3.33	3.13	3.68	3.56	2.95	3.54	3.30	3.12	3.23	3.21

Knowledge Rating (y-axis)

5: Advanced
4: Intermediate
3: Basic
2: Aware
1: None
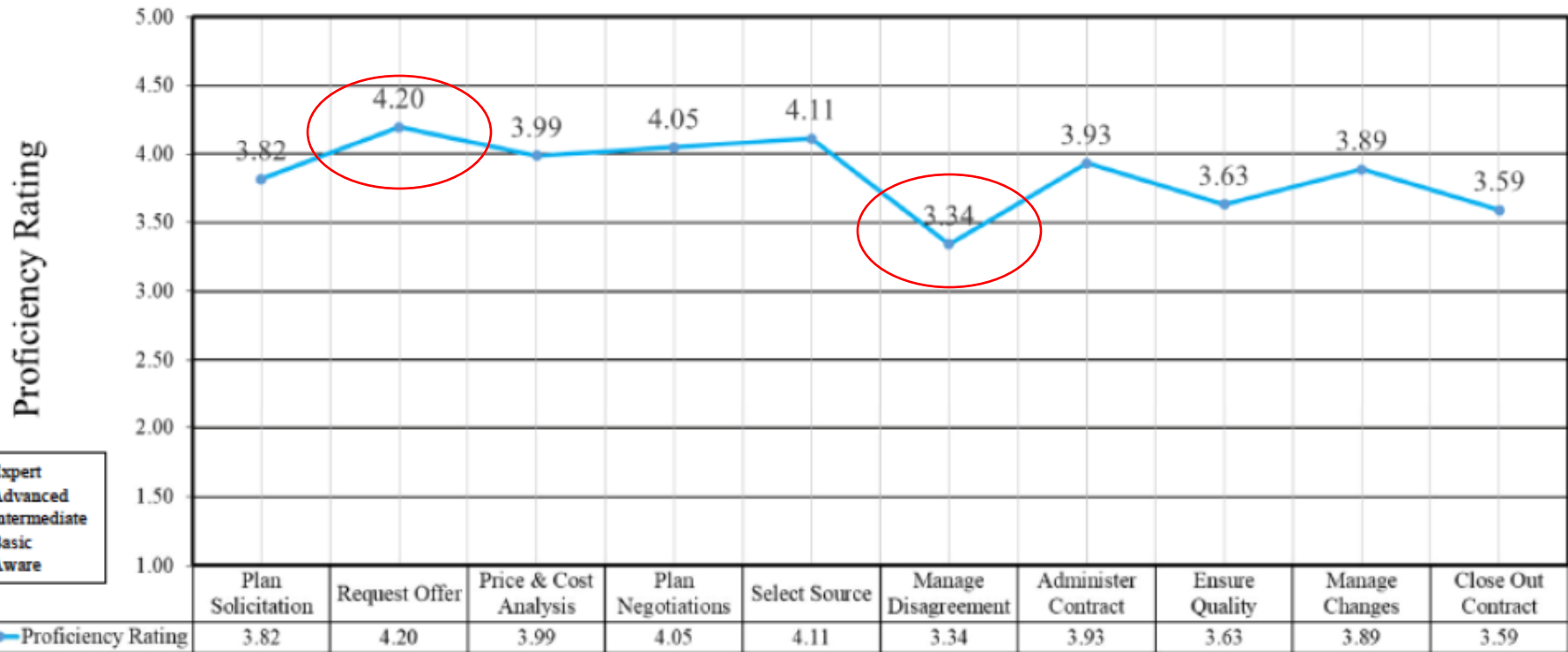
- Survey sent to 100 contracting professionals.
- Survey completed by approx. 41 contracting professionals.
- 41% response rate.

CM Years of Experience			Years in Organization	
3 or Less	15		1 or Less	15
4 to 8	19		1 to 2	6
9 to 13	5		2 to 3	6
14 to 18	2		3 or More	12
19 or More	0			
			PCO	22

DAWIA Level Certification			Other Professional Certifications	
None	8		CFCM	0
Level I	11		CCCM	0
Level II	16		CPCM	0
Level III	6		Other	0

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Expeditionary Contracting Platoons/Regional Contracting Offices Contract Management Competency
Buyer Proficiency

Proficiency Rating	Plan Solicitation	Request Offer	Price & Cost Analysis	Plan Negotiations	Select Source	Manage Disagreement	Administer Contract	Ensure Quality	Manage Changes	Close Out Contract
Proficiency Rating	3.36	3.47	3.08	2.74	3.20	2.09	3.01	2.83	3.02	3.16

Legend:
5: Expert
4: Advanced
3: Intermediate
2: Basic
1: Aware

Expeditionary Contracting Platoons/Regional Contracting Offices
Contract Management Competency
Seller Knowledge

	Plan Sales	Prepare Offer	Plan Negotiations	Select Source	Manage Disagreement	Administer Contract	Ensure Quality	Manage Subcontracts	Manage Changes	Close Out Contract
Knowledge Rating	2.92	2.84	3.04	2.73	2.35	2.72	2.68	2.48	2.66	2.79

5: Advanced
4: Intermediate
3: Basic
2: Aware
1: None
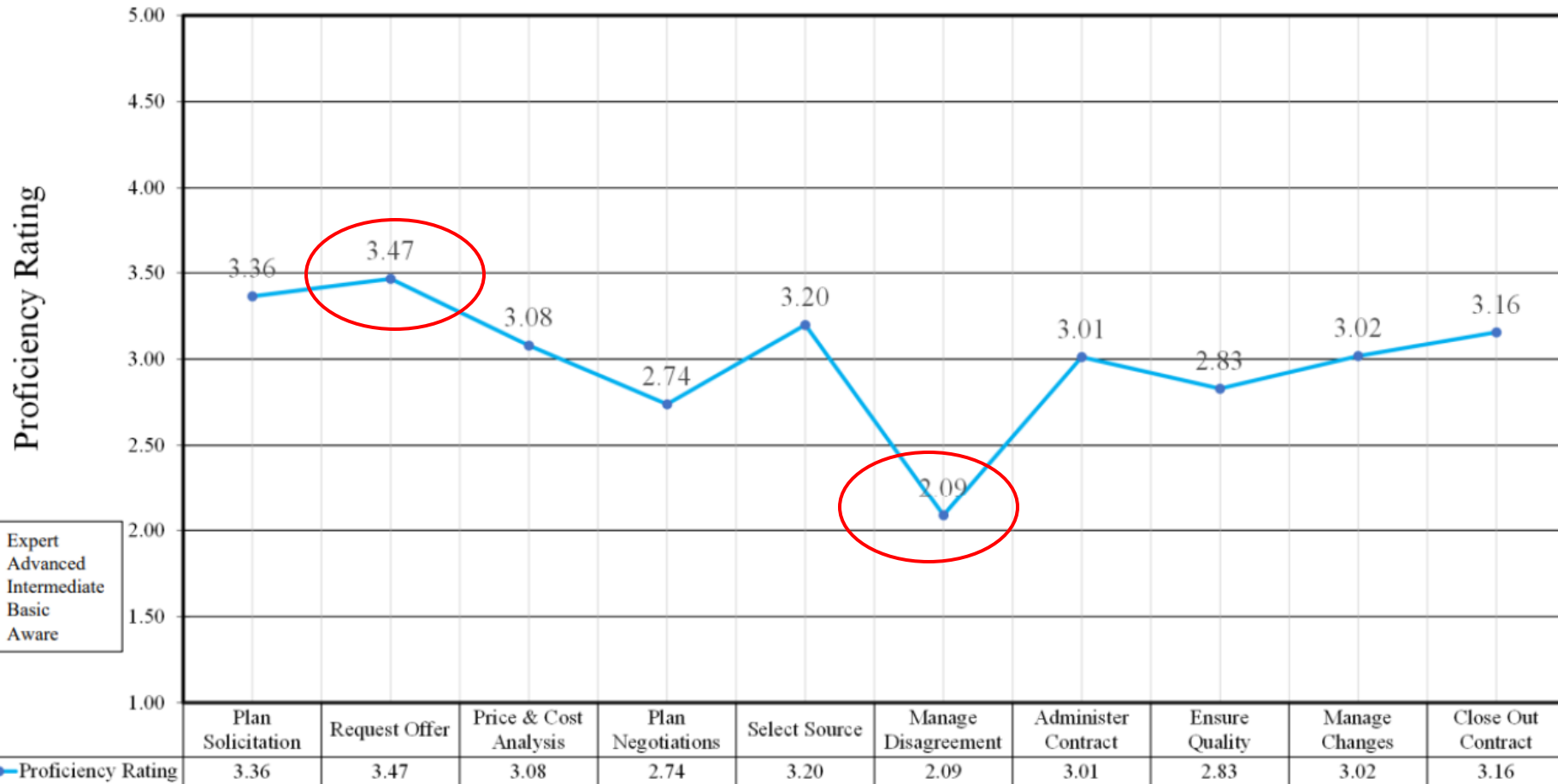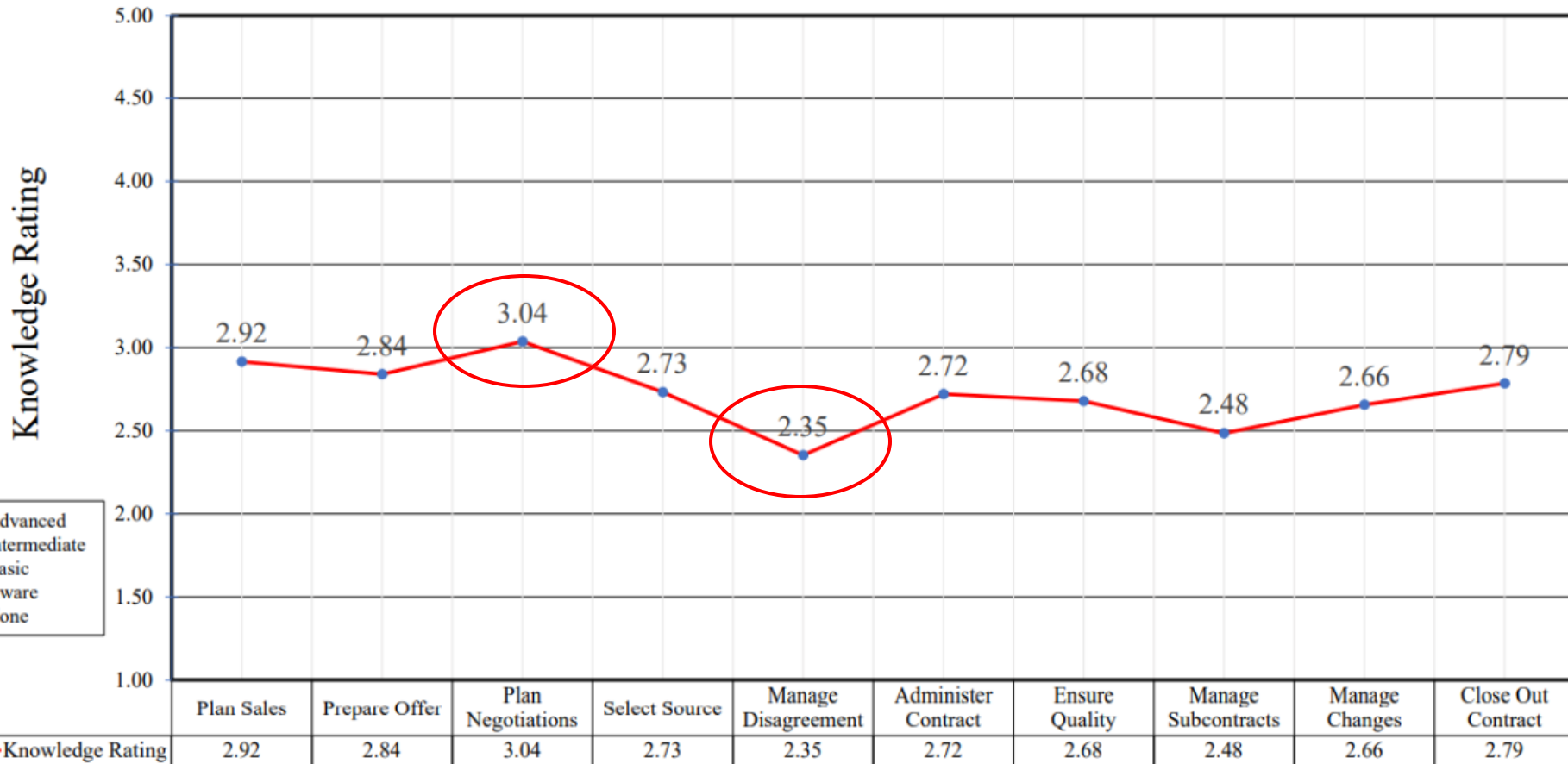
- Survey sent to 28 contracting professionals.
- Survey completed by approx. 15 contracting professionals.
- 54% response rate.

CM Years of Experience			Years in Organization	
3 or less	5		3 or less	7
4 to 8	1		4 to 8	3
9 to 13	1		9 to 13	1
14 to 18	3		14 to 18	1
19 or more	5		19 or more	3
			PCO	6
DAWIA BtB Certification			Professional Certifications	
None	5		None	13
Contracting Professional	10			
			CFCM	0
			CCCM	0
			CCPM	0
			Other	2

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Logistics Command
Contract Management Competency
Buyer Proficiency

Contract Management Competencies
(Buyer Competencies)

	Plan Solicitation	Request Offer	Price & Cost Analysis	Plan Negotiations	Select Source	Manage Disagreement	Administer Contract	Ensure Quality	Manage Changes	Close Out Contract
Proficiency Rating	3.56	3.68	3.45	3.12	3.48	3.07	3.54	3.27	3.49	3.41
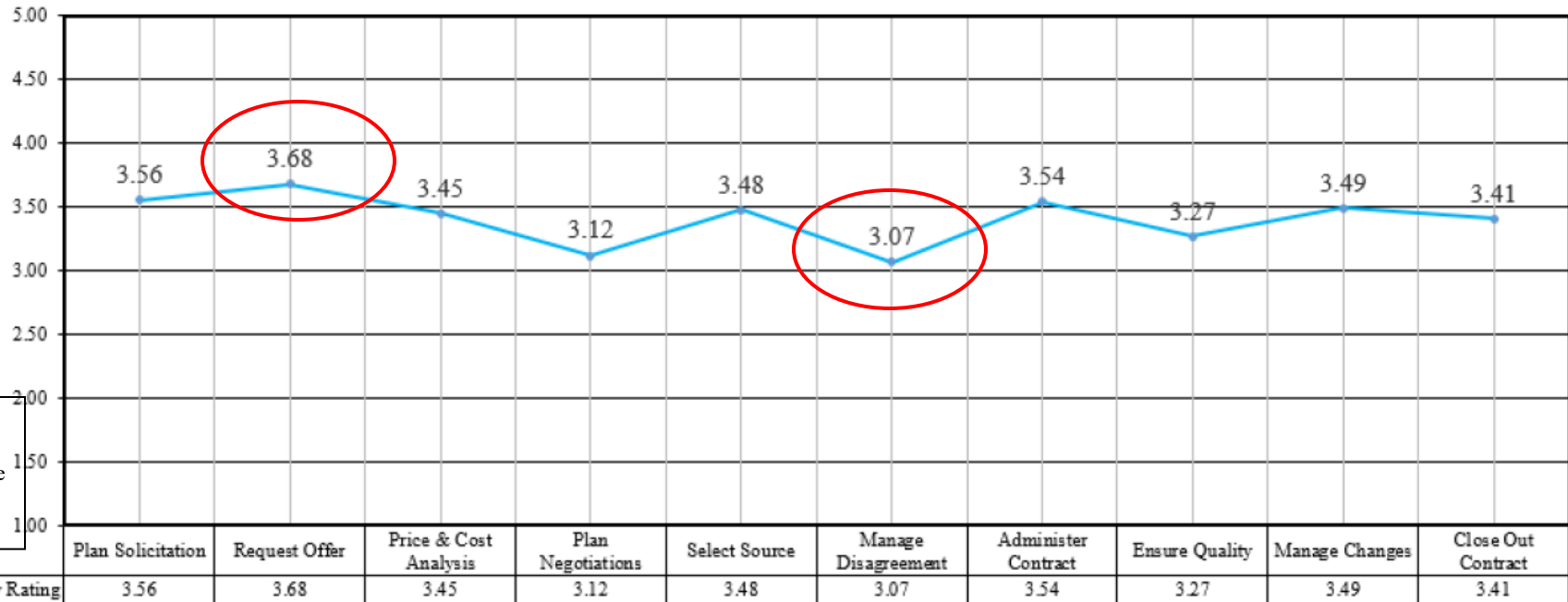
5: Expert
4: Advanced
3: Intermediate
2: Basic
1: Aware

Logistics Command
Contract Management Competency
Seller Knowledge
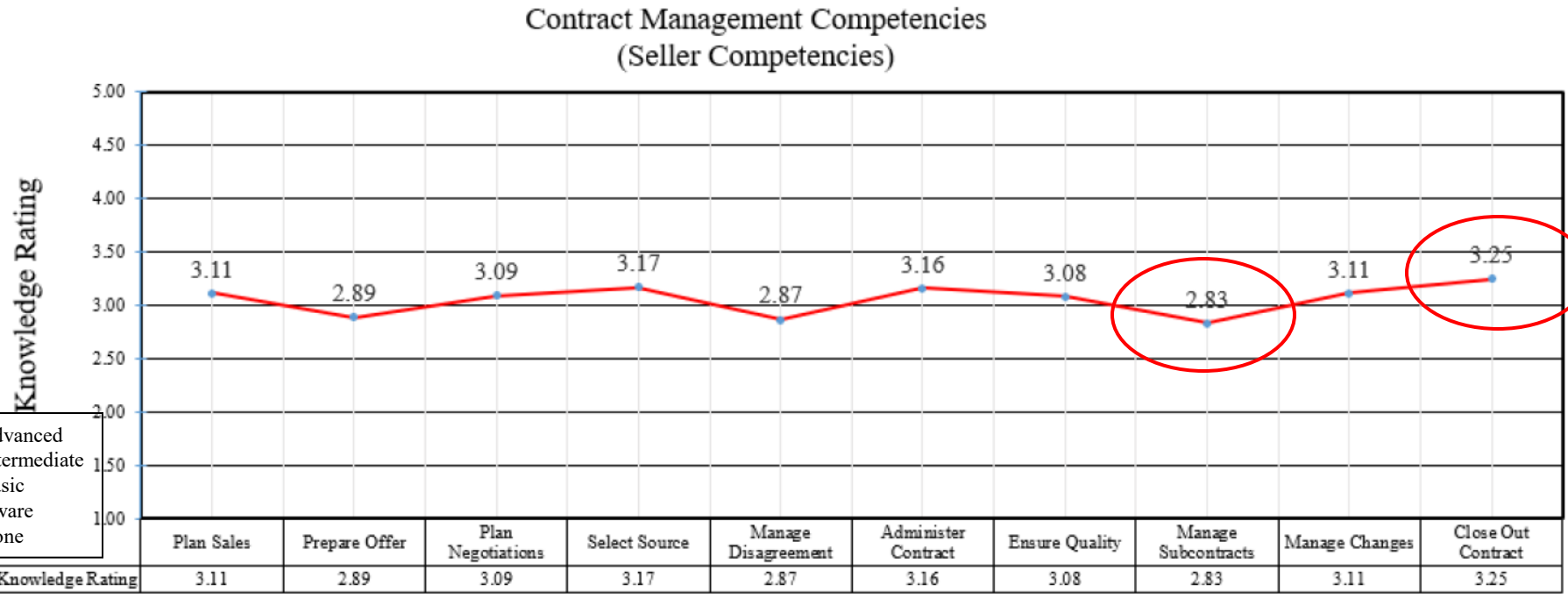
Contract Management Competencies
(Seller Competencies)

	Plan Sales	Prepare Offer	Plan Negotiations	Select Source	Manage Disagreement	Administer Contract	Ensure Quality	Manage Subcontracts	Manage Changes	Close Out Contract
Knowledge Rating	3.11	2.89	3.09	3.17	2.87	3.16	3.08	2.83	3.11	3.25

Knowledge Rating (y-axis)

5: Advanced
4: Intermediate
3: Basic
2: Aware
1: None

- Proficiency levels for the buyer competencies are higher than the knowledge levels for the seller competencies.

- Most of the buyer competencies are at the Intermediate level.

  - Only three were rated at the Advanced level (Request Offer, Plan Negotiations and Select Source, all at MCSC)

  - Only three were rated at the Basic level (Plan Negotiations, Manage Disagreement and Ensure Quality, all at ECP/RCO).

- Request Offer was the highest buyer competency, whereas Manage Disagreement was the lowest buyer competency.

- Pre-award buyer competencies are higher than the award and post award competencies for MCSC and ECP/RCO.

  - The buyer competencies for LOGCOM seem to be consistent throughout the contract life cycle.

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- Knowledge levels for the seller competencies are lower than the proficiency levels for the buyer competencies.

- All of the seller knowledge competencies are at the Aware or Basic levels.

- Plan Negotiations was the highest seller competency for MCSC and ECP/RCO, while Close Out Contract was the highest competency for LOGCOM.

- Manage Disagreement was the lowest seller competency for MCSC and ECP/RCO, while Manage Subcontracts was the lowest seller competency for LOGCOM.

- A distinct pattern did not appear in terms of which life cycle phases were the highest or lowest in terms of seller competency levels.

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- Emphasize training to increase knowledge of the seller competencies and job tasks. Incorporate the seller competencies and job tasks into the required training courses.

- Emphasize training on the buyer competencies and job tasks that were rated at the Aware and Basic levels.

- Improve training on the Manage Disagreement competency to improve skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making related to managing contract disagreements.

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– Bute, M. (2024). Analysis of the Marine Corps Logistics Command Contracting Workforce Competency Assessment [Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School]. https://www.dair.nps.edu/bitstream/123456789/5305/1/NPS-CM-25-251.pdf

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– Hoover, B. (2021). Analysis of the Marine Corps Expeditionary Contracting Workforce Competency Assessment [Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School]. https://dair.nps.edu/bitstream/123456789/4522/4/NPS-CM-22-011.pdf

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Back-Up Slides

- Web-based competency assessment instrument
  - Competency items aligned with CMS framework.
  - Contract management life cycle (pre-award, award, post award).
  - Both buyer and seller domains.

- Assessment conducted on MCSC, ECPS/RCOs, and LOGCOM
    - Voluntary, anonymous assessment.
    - Respondents self-assessed for each competency item.
    - Assessment results analyzed.

- Recommendations for competency development.

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- Contract Management Standard (CMS)
  - CMS was established through a job task analysis, peer review, and public comment validation ensuring consensus, openness, lack of dominance, and balance of interests (ANSI accredited).

  - Contract life cycle includes separate and distinct processes for pre-award, award, and post award phases.

  - Life cycle phase processes include both buyer and seller domains (competencies and job tasks).

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The Contract Management Standard™

1.0 Guiding Principles

1.1 Skills and Roles
1.2 Contract Principles
1.3 Standards of Conduct
1.4 Regulatory Compliance
1.5 Situational Assessment
1.6 Team Dynamics
1.7 Communication and Documentation

2.0 Pre-Award
3.0 Award
4.0 Post-Award

2.1 Develop Solicitation
2.2 Develop Offer
3.1 Form Contract
4.1 Perform Contract
4.2 Close Contract

2.1.1 Plan Solicitation
2.2.1 Plan Sales
3.1.1 Analyze Price or Cost
4.1.1 Administer Contract
4.2.1 Close Out Contract

2.1.2 Request Offers
2.2.2 Prepare Offer
3.1.2 Plan Negotiations
4.1.2 Ensure Quality

3.1.3 Select Source
4.1.3 Manage Subcontracts

3.1.4 Manage Disagreements
4.1.4 Manage Changes

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The *Contract Management Standard*™ Publication

1.0 Guiding Principles

2.0 Pre-Award
3.0 Award
4.0 Post-Award

2.1 Develop Solicitation
2.2 Develop Offer

2.1.1 Plan Solicitation
2.1.2 Request Offers

Buyer Job Tasks

.1 Shape Internal Customer Requirements
  .1 Perform Needs Assessment
  .2 Perform Requirements Analysis
  .3 Identify Measurable Outcomes and Incentives
  .4 Verify Availability of Funds
.2 Conduct Market Research
  .1 Identify Potential Suppliers
  .2 Evaluate Requirement Achievability
  .3 Conduct Pre-Offer Conference
.3 Perform Risk Analysis
  .1 Make or Buy Assessment
  .2 Supply or Services Determination
  .3 Develop Delivery Schedule
  .4 Determine Owner-Furnished Property/
    Equipment/Information Management
.4 Formulate Contracting Strategy
  .1 Select Proper Contract Type
  .2 Select Proper Contract Method
  .3 Determine Appropriate Business and Regulatory
    Requirements
  .4 Formulate Offer Evaluation Plan
.5 Finalize Acquisition Plan

Buyer Job Tasks

.1 Execute Solicitation Plan
.2 Prepare Solicitations
  .1 Respond to Questions from Potential Offerors
  .2 Incorporate Proposed Contract Terms
  .3 Determine Need for Pre-Offer Review
.3 Issue Solicitations
  .1 Determine Need to Publicize Solicitations
.4 Amend Solicitations

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The Contract Management Standard Publication.
Source: NCMA (2019)

The *Contract Management Standard*™ Publication

1.0 Guiding Principles

2.0 Pre-Award | **3.0 Award** | **4.0 Post-Award**

2.1 Develop Solicitation | **2.2 Develop Offer**

2.2.1 Plan Sales

Seller Job Tasks
.1   Conduct Pre-Sales Activities
    .1   Assess Customer Relationships
    .2   Develop Marketing Strategy
    .3   Assess Competition
    .4   Determine Supply Chain Support
.2   Evaluate Solicitation
.3   Conduct Offer/No-Offer Analysis
.4   Finalize Sales Plan

2.2.2 Prepare Offer

Seller Job Tasks
.1   Execute Sales Plan
.2   Develop Execution Plan
    .1   Understand Unique and Special Requirements
    .2   Assess Capability to Satisfy All Solicitation Requirements
.3   Develop Risk Mitigation Plans
    .1   Develop Pricing Strategy
    .2   Develop Terms to Manage Risk
    .3   Develop Technical Approach
    .4   Develop Offer Evaluation Strategy
.4   Assess Teaming Options and Partners
    .1   Negotiate Nondisclosure Agreements
    .2   Negotiate Agreements
    .3   Make Teaming Decisions
.5 Participate in Pre-Offer Conference
.6 Finalize Offer
    .1   Submit Offer and Verify Receipt

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The Contract Management Standard Publication.
Source: NCMA (2019)

The Contract Management Standard™ Publication

1.0 Guiding Principles

2.0 Pre-Award — **3.0 Award** — **4.0 Post-Award**

3.1 Form Contract

3.1.1 Price or Cost Analysis

Buyer Job Tasks
- .1 Comprehend Offer
- .2 Evaluate Seller Terms & Their Impact on Risk
- .3 Determine Reasonable Pricing
  - .1 Perform Price Analysis
  - .2 Perform Cost Analysis
- .4 Document Analysis Results

3.1.2 Plan Negotiations

Job Tasks
- .1 Clarification Requests
  - .1 Prepare[B]
  - .2 Respond[S]
- .2 Document Negotiation Objectives[J]
- .3 Conduct Discussions[J]

3.1.3 Select Source

Job Tasks
- .1 Review Compliance of Offer(s)[B]
- .2 Source Selection
  - .1 Evaluate Offer(s) in Accordance with Evaluation Criteria[B]
  - .2 Withdraw Offer[S]
- .3 Conduct Negotiations[J]
- .4 Finalize Negotiations[J]
- .5 Final Offer Revision
  - .1 Request[B]
  - .2 Prepare[S]
- .6 Prepare Contract Document
  - .1 Document Basis for Award[B]
  - .2 Review/Approve Contract[J]
- .7 Finalize Contract Award[B]
  - .1 Award Contract
  - .2 Notify Unsuccessful Offeror(s)
  - .3 Debrief Offeror(s)
- .8 Document Outcome of Offer[S]

3.1.4 Manage Disagreements

Job Tasks
- .1 Submit Protests and Appeals[S]
- .2 Respond to Protests and Appeals[B]

B = Buyer
S = Seller
J = Joint Responsibility

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The *Contract Management Standard*™ Publication

1.0 Guiding Principles

- **2.0 Pre-Award**
- **3.0 Award**
- **4.0 Post-Award**
  - **4.1 Perform Contract**
  - **4.2 Close Contract**

4.1.1 Administer Contract

Job Tasks

.1 Execute Contract[B]
.2 Conduct Post-Award Conference Meeting[J]
.3 Maintain Contract Documentation/Files[J]
  .1 Track Project Funding and Contract Value
  .2 Manage Contract Payment Process
  .3 Manage Key Personnel Changes
  .4 Administer Owner-Furnished Property/ Equipment/ Information
.4 Provide Cost Information[S]
.5 Establish/ Maintain Communications[J]
  .1 Internal Stakeholders
  .2 External Stakeholders
.6 Evaluate Interim Contractor Performance
  .1 Assess and Document Interim Contractor Performance[B]
  .2 Reclama or Rebut Interim Performance Assessment[S]
.7 Manage Deliverables[J]

4.1.2 Ensure Quality

Job Tasks

.1 Plan for Contract Performance Delivery[S]
  .1 Allocate Resources
  .2 Execute Schedule
  .3 Manage Costs
  .4 Manage Risk
  .5 Control Quality
.2 Plan for Contract Performance Monitoring[B]
  .1 Conduct Performance Reviews
.3 Inspect and Accept Contract Performance[B]

4.1.3 Manage Subcontracts

Job Tasks

.1 Determine Supply Chain Requirements[S]
.2 Issue Subcontracts[B]
  .1 Pre-Award
  .2 Award
  .3 Post-Award

4.1.4 Manage Changes

Job Tasks

.1 Manage Contract Changes[J]
  .1 Prepare Contract Modifications[B]
  .2 Issue Contract Modifications[B]
.2 Conduct Contract Interpretation[J]
  .1 Submit Contract Disputes[S]
  .2 Resolve Contract Disputes[J]
.3 Determine Contract Termination[B]
  .1 Execute Contract Termination[J]

B = Buyer
S = Seller
J = Joint Responsibility

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The Contract Management Standard Publication.
Source: NCMA (2019)