

Competitive Sourcing plans move ahead

**By Bernard Tate
Headquarters**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' leadership is moving ahead to develop an implementation plan for the competitive sourcing effort required by the Presidents' Management agenda, and executed by the Office of Management and Budget.

"Last September, we submitted a competitive sourcing plan to OMB as part of our civil works budget request," said Ray Navidi, the Corps' competitive sourcing program manager. "In our plan we proposed reviewing about 20 percent of the workforce."

The plan currently falls below the target that OMB provides agencies. "With the President's budge announced, we must show progress toward implementing our plan. At the same time, we are working with the Army on the Third Wave," said Maj. Gen. Robert Griffin, Director of Civil Works. The Third Wave is the Department of the Army's effort to divest itself of as many of the Army's non-core functions as possible.

According to a directive issued by the Secretary of the Army on Oct. 4, 2002, the thrust of the Third Wave initiative is to free resources for fighting the war on terrorism.

"While we have a commitment to OMB to start competing a number of our positions in fiscal year 2003 (FY03), as we indicated that we would in our report, we did not want to start implementing our competitive sourcing plan until we developed our Third Wave plan and presented it to the Army leadership."

Original schedules called for presenting the Corps' Third Wave plan to the Army leadership in February or March. But the milestone dates are changing, and at this time the briefings are scheduled to begin in June, possibly later.

"This delay created a dilemma for us," said Griffin. "If we wait until we present a Third Wave plan to the Army, and then start implementation of our competitive sourcing plan, we would be non-responsive to OMB. Therefore, the Corps is now proceeding with development of an implementation plan for competitive sourcing in accordance with the plan submitted to OMB, which calls for competing about 7,500 Civil Works and Military Programs funded positions during the next six years, starting with 1,300 positions in FY03.

"It's important to remember that we're talking about spaces, not faces," said Navidi. "If you analyzed my job, you'd find that some of the work I do is governmental, and some of the work I do is commercial. That's true of most jobs in the Corps."

In the next several weeks, Corps Headquarters will hold a workshop with major subordinate command representatives to refine the competitive sourcing plan and to develop an implementation strategy. This group will address many issues - how best to

package the functions to be competed, the types of review and competition for various functions or business units, how the reviews will be conducted, resource requirements, and more. Once the Corps has a clear picture of the impact, we will consider a targeted freeze on recruitment.

"I want to emphasize that all we'll do in the next few months is develop a detailed implementation plan," said Griffin. "Once we have a detailed plan of execution, we can then begin implementation as we continue to coordinate with OMB and the Army. The Chief of Engineers remains committed to ensuring that our workforce is informed of any latest development."