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## ***Gulf Region South District to Hold Contractors' Conference***

By BJ Weiner  
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**NASIRIYAH, Iraq**—The U.S. government's contracting laws and procedures require formality and not the informal oral contract or contracts sealed by handshakes prevalent in the Iraqi business world. To help Iraqi contractors meet and exceed the U.S. government's requirements on scopes of work, proposals and other aspects of the bidding process, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is holding a Contractors' Conference March 15 and 16.

"We see contract proposals all the time that demonstrate that [local] contractors do not clearly understand what we want them to provide in terms of the contract process," said Joanne Milo, chief, Program and Project Management Division, Gulf Region South district.

The conference will explain the bidding process and what USACE is looking for in proposals.

Contractors may register for via the Website at:

[www.baghdadbusinesscenter.org](http://www.baghdadbusinesscenter.org)

"They are not used to doing business the way we do business," she said. "Our system is very formal and structured and we have to be able to pass that along to potential contractors in order to build capacity; that is, to teach them how to be



(From left) Mamie Anderson, USACE contracting specialist, Joanne Mile, chief, Program and Project Management Division, Jae Parks, information technology specialist, an Iraqi interpreter and an Iraqi soldier, inspect space to be used for the upcoming contractor's conference on March 15 and 16. [USACE Photo by BJ Weiner]

successful when dealing with our contracting requirements. If they are successful, this contributes to the overall success of our mission, which is to provide quality projects for the reconstruction effort."

The conference will emphasize the information USACE contracting officials require from contractors in order to create viable bids. "We will offer sessions which will show people how to submit contract proposals and bids of quantity (BOQs)," said Mamie Anderson, contract specialist.

"We see a lot of proposals which have everything except what we need. We will go through the steps to ensure the attendees know how to put a proposal together from start to finish."

The conference will also ensure contractors know the difference between security and safety, she said. In Arabic, the translation for "safety" and "security" are the same, so the GRS safety officer Ralph Youins and a member of the security team will explain the differences.

"Ralph will show contractors what we mean by 'safety gear,'" she said, "and the security folks will emphasize how to make a site secure. This is just one example of something that can be confusing for potential bidders."

Another is the difference between past performance and experience, Milo said. "Experience is what they know how to do; what they've done in the past," she said. "Past performance is how well they did it, and how they were rated at it."

The conference is scheduled for one day with an extra day planned in case the number of attendees exceeds 300. "We should run about four hours each day, with a lunch break, and a question-and-answer session at the end," Anderson said. "We are getting registration requests from all over Iraq."

Milo added that the correct information is imperative for a smooth contracting process and will help facilitate better quality projects. "I have a feeling a lot of contractors – good ones – are not getting contracts with us because their proposals lack the information we need," she said. "This way, we all win."

Milo said the March event could be the first in a series of conferences. She said such meetings help USACE learn local contractors' "... techniques and processes ... so we can better understand their positions. It fosters goodwill and helps us work together effectively as a team. And it's all about working well together to build a better Iraq."

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