Fifty Questions* Every Budget Analyst Should Be Able To Answer

Professor Gregory Martin
Defense Acquisition University
703-805-3007
gregory.martin@dau.mil

* Not counting sub-questions

Workshop # 35  PDI  2017
Outline

A. Situation awareness
B. Getting Budget Authority
C. Spending Budget Authority
D. Tracking Budget Authority
E. Keeping Budget Authority
F. Relationships
One Interchangeable Word

Program
= account
= weapon system
= project
= department
= cost objective
= whatever my budget is for
Outline

A. Situation awareness
B. Getting Budget Authority
C. Spending Budget Authority
D. Tracking Budget Authority
E. Keeping Budget Authority
F. Relationships
A. Situational Awareness

1. Do I know enough about my program or projects to adequately describe them to someone who has a voice or interest in its budget?

2. Have I physically seen or touched or visited or used it or (pick your verb) it, e.g., Can I visualize it when I talk or teach about it? (if not, why not?)

3. How do I personally feel about my programs or accounts – do I badmouth it or passionately support it?
A. Situational Awareness

4. Do I know enough about the basics of appropriation law to raise a hand if I see something that could cross a line?
   • Do I have the courage to ask the question out loud to the right person?

5. Do I know enough about government ethics to raise a hand if I see something that might cross a line?
   • Do I have the courage to ask the question out loud to the right person?
   • How will current events impact my program?
A. Situational Awareness

6. What happened in the world/Congress/White House last day/week/month to my program/area of interest which will impact the budget?

7. What do the tea leaves say about what could happen?
   • Have I thought about any impact and my response or reaction?

8. If my boss asked me what training I need the most, do I have an answer?
   • Do I have enough information to pull the trigger on it today?
9. How much budget authority do I have?
   • Do I know all of its characteristics, e.g., fenced, life-span?

10. How much do I need?
    • What validates that requirement?
    • Do I understand the method of validation to be able to explain it convincingly?

11. How much do I have left?

12. What does the NDAA say about my program/office/command?
    • Does it keep me on or take me off plan?
A. Situational Awareness

13. I’m operating under a CR? (of course you are!)
   • How much do I have?
   • Does the CR address my program specifically? What does it say and what does it mean?
   • Does it support the budget’s obligation plan/approved acquisition strategy?
     • If not, what needs to change?
   • When is the CR over?
   • Any programmatic impacts because of the CR?
   • Do those impacts affect the input into the budget, e.g., change in unit costs?
   • Does the CR have any language specific to my program?
   • Am I ready to answer the next “How much do you need for a follow-on CR of X days/weeks/months?”
A. Situation awareness
B. Getting Budget Authority
C. Spending Budget Authority
D. Tracking Budget Authority
E. Keeping Budget Authority
F. Relationships
B. Getting Budget Authority

14. What do I know about my command’s mission statement and my program’s relationship to it?

15. Would I ace a quiz on my program’s acquisition strategy or acquisition program baseline?

16. Where does my program fit right now into its approved acquisition strategy?
   - What is the next activity?
   - What could go right or wrong with that activity that could affect the budget?
     - How would I/could I respond that that effect?
B. Getting Budget Authority

17. What is in my programs’ C, P, R, O, M budget exhibits?

- Do they completely and accurately tell my budget/program’s story?
- Who gets them and do I have a relationship with the individuals in those offices?
- How is the calendar relative to the BES, POM, and PRESBUD submissions?
  - What do I know that may result in adjustments from the last submission?
18. What is basis for the program cost estimate, e.g., historicals, engineering estimate?
   • If the program has more than one estimate, how close are they? What are the drivers for any significant differences?
   • If my program has an Acquisition Program Baseline, where does the cost estimate of key performance parameters fall with threshold and objective?

19. Do I have a capability-based budget plan, i.e., tiered levels of service or delivery at tiered levels of cost?

20. Does my piece of the apportionment have any conditions?
Outline

A. Situation awareness
B. Getting Budget Authority
C. Spending Budget Authority
D. Tracking Budget Authority
E. Keeping Budget Authority
F. Relationships
C. Spending Budget Authority

21. Is my Command/Service policy regarding “currency” of funds more restrictive than the legal definitions of the appropriations, e.g., current for two year but command treats as one year?

22. How reconciled am I for current funds?

23. With whom should I be reconciled?
   • Program executers?
   • Up the financial chain/across to DFAS?

24. What has happened in the last day/week/month to my program/area of interest which will impact the budget?
25. What are OSD’s/SYSCOM/MAJCOM/ISIC’s budget obligation goals?
26. What are their expenditure goals?
27. Is my budget consistent with those goals?
28. Is my execution consistent with those goals?

- If not, **WHY NOT?**
- If not, what is my get-well plan?
  - If I don’t think I will get well or get back on plan, does my boss’s boss know?
    - What is my preemptive position with my SYSCOM/ISIC?
- If not, what is my SYSCOM/ISIC’s view of the situation?
- If my program is off plan, what is the threshold relevant to my command comptroller?
C. Spending Budget Authority

29. How is my program doing relative to my plan?
   • If my program is off plan (either ahead or behind plan), am I keeping my comptroller in the loop. Think politically: is it better for my comptroller to hear it from me OR from me to hear from my comptroller about it?

30. Do I have enough to get me from here to there, - the right amount at the right time?

31. If not, how can I fix it?
   • Relative to “time-now:” midyear review, year-end sweep

32. Will I have too much? How much too much?
   • What is my plan if it looks like I will either underobligate because I am behind plan OR because I actually have too much?
33. How has my program historically been the subject of contract modifications?
   • What was the financial impact of those mods?
   • How connected am I with the people who might know if other mods are coming?

34. If asked if I need more funds during the execution year, do I have an answer ready?
   • How much of what color?
   • When?
   • What specifically would I use it for?

35. Do I know that it is executable? (Hint: the engineers will always say “yes,” but whose credibility is on the line?)
Outline

A. Situation awareness
B. Getting Budget Authority
C. Spending Budget Authority
D. Tracking Budget Authority
E. Keeping Budget Authority
F. Relationships
36. Who is my official accountant?

37. How often are my periodic validations?
   • How’d my program do during the last validation?
   • What am I doing to move anything open/unliquidated toward closure?
   • What is the situation of anything funded with now-expired funds?
     • How do I get anything closed out before the funds cancel?

38. Do I get an annual DCMA indirect rate true-up?
   • Why do I think the rate may go up or down?
     • How am I preparing for that rate change?
     • What would be the Impact of current budget authority?
     • How will I solve that problem?
39. Anything unliquidated obligations or open contracts funded with now expired funds that will move next year into cancelled status?
   • What about DCAA contract audits?
   • How am I involved in moving contracts toward close-out?

40. Do I know the operational/delivery status of all current and expired unliquidated obligations?
   • Do I have a sense when those unliquidated obligations be liquidated?
   • Do I know that the lines of accounting will be sufficient?
Outline

A. Situation awareness
B. Getting Budget Authority
C. Spending Budget Authority
D. Tracking Budget Authority
E. Keeping Budget Authority
F. Relationships
41. Does my program require use of EVM?
42. Do I understand enough about EVM and its quantitative output, e.g., CPI, SPI, EAC, to anticipate any impact on my budget?
   • What is the magnitude of that impact?
   • How will I/my program deal with that impact?
      • Will the default position be “find me more money”?
      • What do I know about possible fixes besides “get me more money”?
         • Descope, reduce quantity, push schedule, redesign, movement between threshold and objective
43. Has my comptroller ever used me as a billpayer?
   • Why did she pick me?
   • What can I do to preemptively mitigate or minimize the risk?

44. How would I respond if she comes to me to be a billpayer? (How’s my execution vis-à-vis plan?)

45. Can I quantify any reductions?
   • Who has the answer to “What is operational impact” question?
   • Do I have multi-tiered responses?
Outline

A. Situation awareness
B. Getting Budget Authority
C. Spending Budget Authority
D. Tracking Budget Authority
E. Keeping Budget Authority
F. Relationships
F. Relationships

46. Who provides me information?
   • Am I getting it in a way most useful to me or the process?
   • Can I affect this?

47. Whom do I feed?
   • Am I providing it in a way most useful to the receiver or the process?
   • How can I make it more useful?

The first time you have personal contact with them IS NOT when you have a problem!
48. What is the difference between a budget mechanic and a budget analyst?

- A mechanic knows:
  - What
  - How much
  - How to state a problem

- An analyst knows:
  - Why/Why not?
  - What if . . . ?
  - Implications
  - How to develop solutions

49. Which one are you?
Professor Greg Martin, CDFM
703-805-3007
gregory.martin@dau.mil