



Feds Seek Gig Economy Aid To Help Provide Services To Veterans

Insights

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The growth and benefits of the gig economy are well documented. By some accounts, more than 31 million individuals in the U.S. workforce derive their primary income from the gig economy, and businesses continue to provide platforms for this kind of work given the fact that it serves as easy access to a scalable source of labor, skills, and other professionals, not to mention the reduced start-up costs and the elimination of common hiring barriers. Up until now, however, you did not hear the gig economy mentioned in the same sentence as the government sector. It seemed to be confined to private sector employers only. However, it should not come as a surprise that the federal government wants to cash in on the benefits of hiring gig workers.

The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs is one of the many departments in the federal government that does not always quickly adapt to change. However, the powers-that-be at the VA have decided that its information technology department needs a boost in order to keep pace with private sector IT departments. The only way to do that is to make widespread changes. The VA's first step will be to launch a new cloud-based platform. The platform will coordinate development of software tools that would enable web applications to communicate with each other. It will serve as a gatekeeper between the VA's IT systems and the outside world. The VA intends to post dozens of micro-purchase work statements for development and support services in an effort to partner with the open source developer community.

So what does this have to do with the gig economy? Individuals and businesses who specialize in IT development will be given a chance to compete for federal contracts. These individuals are effectively on-demand workers vying for short term "gigs." In order to reduce the chances of problems, each potential developer will be subjected to a risk assessment. The VA will select gig workers from the pool of developers, with each developer selected receiving up to \$10,000 per job. The VA department plans to release a request for proposal during the third quarter of 2018. If the program goes according to plan, it will be the federal government's most expansive crowdsourcing initiatives to date.

If this program is successful, it could permanently change the federal government's traditional work model, and could lead other agencies to dip their toes in the gig economy world.