**Role Play Activity: Stakeholder Influence Challenge**

**Objective:**This activity supports digital service acquisition professionals in practicing how to influence key stakeholders in legal, governance, and leadership roles. Scenarios reflect real-world, bureaucratic challenges that arise when advocating for non-traditional, user-centered procurement strategies. The emphasis is on developing strategies to navigate resistance and promote iterative, mission-aligned solutions.

**Roles Overview:**

* **Role A:** Digital service or acquisition professional with a specific goal/request.
* **Role B:** A key stakeholder with decision-making authority who may resist the request (e.g., OGC Attorney, Procurement Executive, IT Governance Lead). Ideally played by a facilitator or guest actor.
* **Role C:** Observers and debrief leaders who evaluate the scenario and provide feedback on the influencing strategies used.

**Activity Format: Student-Led Role Play (Preferred for In-Person)**

**Duration:** 60 minutes total (3 rounds + transitions)

**Group Size:** 3 to 6 participants per group, using in-person table groups or virtual breakout rooms.

### Activity Structure (Per Scenario)

* **5 minutes – Prep:**
  + Role A prepares their strategy.
  + Role B reviews their stakeholder stance.
  + Role C reviews the scenario and prepares to lead the debrief.
* **5 minutes – Role Play:**
  + Roles A and B engage in the conversation.
  + Facilitator may lightly guide if needed.
* **5 minutes – Debrief:**
  + Role C leads the reflection using a set of structured prompts.
* **5 minutes – Transition:**
  + Return to main room.
  + Share key takeaways.
  + Rotate participants and assign the next scenario.

### Facilitator Instructions

#### Step 1: Break into Groups

Assign 3 to 6 participants per group. For virtual sessions, use breakout rooms. Each group will rotate through different roles and scenarios across three rounds.

#### Step 2: Assign Roles

* Ask for a volunteer for Role A:  
  "Hi everyone! We need a volunteer to play Role A—the person trying to influence a key decision maker. Once you go first, you get to observe future rounds. Who’s ready to step in?"
* Assign Role B (can be a participant or a facilitator/guest actor).
* The remaining participants become Role C (Observers).

#### Step 3: Share the Scenario

* Share only the general scenario overview with all participants.
* Do not share the specific role sheets for A or B with the full group.
* If participants have trouble accessing the file, screen share or paste the text into chat.

#### Step 4: Start the Prep Time (5 Minutes)

* Use a visible or verbal timer.
* Encourage camera off/mute for focused prep.

#### Step 5: Run the Role Play (5 Minutes)

* Ask Roles A and B to turn on cameras and begin.
* Light facilitation is fine to prompt stuck participants.

#### Step 6: Facilitate the Debrief (Led by Role C)

"Thank you, Role A and B. Now it's Role C's turn to guide the debrief. You observed the full conversation—what stood out?"

Provide or screen-share the following prompts:

**Debrief Prompts for Role C:**

1. What was Role A’s ask?
2. What conflict did Role B introduce?
3. What strategies did Role A use to influence Role B?
4. What seemed effective or ineffective?
5. If you were Role A, what would you do differently?
6. How does this scenario reflect a real situation in your agency?

Encourage peer discussion. Invite others in the group to build on responses.

### Between Rounds

1. Return everyone to the main group.
2. Have 1–2 groups share highlights from their Role C debrief.
3. Rotate participants into new groups or assign new roles.
4. Provide the next scenario.

Repeat for 3 rounds or as time allows.

**Optional Extension / Homework:** Ask participants to write their own agency-specific influencing scenario, describing:

* Role A’s challenge
* Role B’s concerns
* What kind of strategies they would use to move the conversation forward

This can be used in a future class session or submitted as a reflection.

**Facilitator Notes:**

* Prioritize realism and relatability over performance.
* Be encouraging but firm with time.
* Capture powerful strategies or themes from each group to share at the end.

Let participants know that there is no perfect script—this is practice for messy, human conversations that require empathy, clarity, and confidence.

Alternative Activity Set up:

**Roles Overview:**

* **Role A:** Played by a facilitator. A digital service or acquisition professional with a specific goal/request.
* **Role B:** Played by a facilitator or guest actor. A key stakeholder with decision-making authority who may resist the request (e.g., OGC Attorney, Procurement Executive, IT Governance Lead).
* **Role C:** All participants. Observers and debrief leaders who evaluate the scenario and provide feedback on the influencing strategies used.

**Activity Format: Facilitator-Led Role Play (Ideal for Short Sessions or Hesitant Participants)**

**Duration:** 60 minutes total (3 rounds + transitions)

**Group Size:** Full cohort watches the role play, then breaks into small groups (3 to 6 participants) for debrief and discussion.

### Activity Structure (Per Scenario)

* **5 minutes – Live Role Play:**
  + Facilitators act out the scenario in front of the full group.
* **10 minutes – Small Group Debrief:**
  + Participants are assigned to breakout groups.
  + Each group discusses what they observed using a provided set of prompts.
* **5 minutes – Full Group Share-Out:**
  + Select groups report back key takeaways before the next scenario begins.

### Facilitator Instructions

#### Step 1: Introduce the Format

"In this version of the activity, facilitators will act out each influencing scenario for you. As observers, your job is to analyze the strategies used, reflect on what was effective, and think about how you would handle similar challenges in your own work."

#### Step 2: Perform the Scenario (5 Minutes)

* Facilitators play out the scripted exchange between Role A and Role B.
* Keep it realistic and grounded in agency experience.

#### Step 3: Break into Debrief Groups (10 Minutes)

* Send participants into breakout groups (3–6 people per group).
* Assign a notetaker or rotating speaker to capture key points.
* Display or distribute the following prompts:

**Debrief Prompts for Participants (Role C):**

1. What was Role A’s ask?
2. What conflict did Role B introduce?
3. What strategies did Role A use to influence Role B?
4. What seemed effective or ineffective?
5. If you were Role A, what would you do differently?
6. How does this scenario reflect a real situation in your agency?

Encourage each group to consider how these strategies could be adapted to their own context.

#### Step 4: Regroup and Share Insights (5 Minutes)

* Bring everyone back to the main session.
* Ask 1–2 groups to share highlights.
* Optionally, facilitators can add brief reflections on what they modeled and why.

### Repeat for Scenarios 2 and 3

* Continue with the same structure for the next two scenarios.
* If time is limited, one or two scenarios may be sufficient.

Scenarios:   
  
**🔹 Scenario 1: Gaining Legal Approval for Agile Procurement Language**

**You (Role A)** are a Contracting Officer preparing a new solicitation for a modern digital platform using Agile methods. You’ve written performance-based language that allows for evolving requirements, iterative delivery, and government involvement in prioritization. You know it’s essential to retain this flexibility to get a working product that meets user needs. However, the Office of General Counsel (OGC) has returned your draft and insists on rewriting it in a traditional, fixed-scope format due to perceived legal risk.

**Role A (Contracting Officer):** **Conversation Goal:** Your objective is to get approval for the Agile-supportive solicitation language.

You want to preserve the iterative delivery model and performance-based outcomes in the final document. You’re prepared to offer fallback options, like adding milestone checkpoints, referencing examples from other agencies, or using more structured acceptance criteria—but only if you can retain flexibility where it matters most.

**Role B (OGC Attorney):** You’re responsible for ensuring the solicitation is defensible and limits risk. You’re worried that vague or iterative language could open the agency to bid protests, create audit challenges, or conflict with your department’s precedent. Your hidden motivation is to avoid being held responsible if something goes wrong—but you’re open to alternative formats if Role A can show examples of success, provide clarity around evolving scope, and demonstrate alignment with procurement law.

### 🔹 Scenario 2: Making the Case for Procuring an Open Source Solution

**You (Role A)** are a Contracting Officer supporting a digital modernization effort for an internal self-service portal. The program team has requested a flexible, user-centered solution, and after conducting thorough market research—including RFIs, vendor demos, and product comparisons—you've determined that an open source platform best meets the agency’s needs. It allows for customization, avoids vendor lock-in, and has a strong support community. However, the IT Governance Board and Acquisition Policy Office are raising concerns because the solution is not a turnkey COTS product.

**Role A (Contracting Officer):** **Conversation Goal:** Your objective is to gain approval to proceed with the acquisition of the open source platform.

You want to demonstrate that this solution qualifies as COTS under the FAR definition—it is commercially available, broadly adopted, and supported through integrators and commercial services. You must argue that, while it is not turnkey, it functions similarly to many COTS tools that also require configuration, integration, and support contracts. You’re prepared to propose mitigation steps like:

* Procuring commercial integration/support services,
* Documenting precedent from other federal agencies, and
* Offering a limited-scope pilot to demonstrate feasibility.

Your fallback is to secure conditional approval to issue a limited pilot or prototype contract while continuing to evaluate governance concerns.

**Role B (Governance Board Representative):** You are responsible for ensuring the agency’s technical environment is secure, maintainable, and compliant. You’ve had past experiences with poorly supported “build-your-own” systems that became unsustainable. You believe open source introduces potential risk and administrative burden, especially when no formal vendor is accountable. You’re not opposed to open source on principle—but you are skeptical. If Role A can demonstrate that the solution is truly COTS, outline a robust support strategy, and provide a clear plan for meeting ATO and lifecycle management requirements, you could support the decision to move forward.

### 🔹 Scenario 3: Making the Case for a Discovery Sprint

**You (Role A)** are supporting a Program Manager charged with modernizing a legacy benefits eligibility system. You propose using a 2-week Discovery Sprint, awarding several small contracts to vendors, who are subject matter experts in the respective fields of AI/ML, Human Centered Design, Data Engineering, and Development/Operations who will explore user pain points, co-design prototypes, and help shape the final requirements before a broader implementation. You believe this will reduce long-term risk and increase your chances of success—but your Contracting Office Director is unsure about the method and its perceived fairness.

**Role A (Contracting Officer):** **Conversation Goal:** You want approval to conduct a multi-vendor two–week Discovery Sprint, using micropurchase methods, to build a team of disparate Subject Matter Experts and advisors.   
  
You are prepared to explain how this aligns with FAR Part 10 market research rules and show how it can lead to a more competitive, informed RFP. You’re willing to reduce the number of vendors or the timeline and make the evaluation criteria transparent, if needed. Your fallback is at least getting approval to fund one short-term design engagement to generate user research.

**Role B (Contract Office Director):** You’re focused on fairness, optics, and cost control. You’re worried this Discovery Sprint approach could raise questions about competition and favoritism. You’ve never seen this used successfully in your agency, and your hidden concern is whether your team has the capacity to support the contracting process if this doesn’t work. You’d be open to it if Role A can show compliance with acquisition rules, how this leads to better pricing/outcomes, and how risks are managed up front.