

CAO CORNER by Emily Murphy

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Update on the Acquisition Workforce

When I came on board this past February, I stated that I wanted to focus on three areas which I affectionately call the three Cs: Compliance, Competition and Capacity. The third C is all about the acquisition workforce – making sure that you have every necessary tool at your disposal to succeed in your careers and provide the best solutions to our customer agencies. These tools run the gamut from providing clear policies and guidance to making sure that there is a solid career path available to GSA’s acquisition workforce.

Capacity also means focusing on our own capabilities as a workforce and as individuals. Over 97% of GSA’s 1102’s participated in Phases I and II of the Applied Learning Center (ALC) so I know you are all familiar with the ALC and its objectives: assessing skill gaps and competencies, providing opportunities to earn college credit, and providing opportunities to obtain a permanent GSA-wide waiver to Clinger-Cohen’s affirmative education requirements. For more information on the ALC, please visit www.alc.gov. With Phase III --the full assess-

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|---|----|
| From the Desk of the Editor | 2 |
| Hurricane Relief: Great Lakes Volunteers find Success and Heartache in Hurricane Relief | 3 |
| 2 nd Procurement Conf. of the Americas | 5 |
| How will the Acquisition Advisory Panel Impact You? | 6 |
| “Getting it Right” with APW v3.0 | 9 |
| Awards and Professional Development | 11 |
| Mid-Atlantic Region Associates Honored | 11 |
| Acquisition Center Honored | 11 |
| Suzanne Jetton Receives Negotiator Award | 12 |
| Enhancing Project Management Skills | 12 |
| NCMA 24 th Annual Government Conference | 13 |
| “One GSA” | 13 |
| New England Region 2nd Customer Conf. | 13 |
| Getting it Right at GSA! | 14 |
| Getting it Right with GWAC Training! | 14 |
| Small Business Corner | 15 |
| 2005 “Above and Beyond” Awards | 15 |
| Heartland Region Hosts Veterans Conf. | 15 |
| Greater Southwest Region Hosts SDVOSBs | 16 |
| Matchmaking Held for SDVOSBs | 16 |
| Great Lakes Region Hosts SDVOSBs | 17 |
| Green Procurement | 17 |
| New England Region Participates in EPP Conference | 17 |
| IAE Corner | 18 |
| EPLS: Identifying Suspended and Debarred Companies and Individuals | 18 |
| Buy Accessible Wizard Update | 19 |
| GSA/JWOD Strategic Alliance | 20 |
| NCR Hosts Disability Awareness Program | 20 |
| NIB Partner in Excellence Award | 21 |
| Nominations for E.R. “Dick” Alley Career Achievement Award Sought | 21 |
| Strategic Sourcing | 21 |
| Federal Strategic Sourcing Kicks Off | 21 |
| Acquisition Learning Seminar Focuses on “Strategic Sourcing” | 22 |
| Strategic Sourcing of Software | 22 |
| Did You Know? | 24 |
| EVM—Establishing a Project Performance Management System | 24 |
| Check It Out! | 27 |



ment—now available, I want to share with you what the ALC has shown us so far, and what that means to the acquisition workforce.

As an agency we should be very proud that during Phase II, the objective assessment, the workforce as a whole demonstrated a significant mastery of customer service, the evaluation of contracts, and the ability to make decisions related to contract costs/price. This shows that we are focused on helping our customers get the best solution, and that we exercise critical thinking in many of the decisions related to our contracts.

Phase II also gave us greater insight into where we can improve. We found the two competency areas that need increased support among all services were in the areas of the GSAM and contract administration, planning and implementation. With these findings, the Office of the Chief Acquisition Officer (OCAO) is committed to making the acquisition workforce stronger by providing increased internal training and policy support in these areas.

One important step will be a comprehensive update of the GSAM. As I've visited the regions many of you have told me that portions of the GSAM are simply not useful because they are out of date or don't address issues you feel are important to your daily work. Therefore, starting early next year we are going to begin a multi-year review of the GSAM, and we are going to need your help as we work towards ensuring that all GSA regulations and policies are clear and explicit throughout the GSAM. The OCAO is also continuing to enhance internal training programs, specifically in contract administration, through developing courses to meet the needs of our associates. Through our increased efforts and commitment to improvement, we will grow stronger as an acquisition workforce.

Every day I see numerous examples of how hard GSA's acquisition workforce is working to provide the best services and products with the American taxpayers in mind, and it is my job to support you in every way possible. With each of us making resolutions for the New Year, I encourage you to look at the results of your individual assessment and then choose continuing education courses that will help with your own professional development. In the coming months, courses will be identified at the sub-competency level as well as the competency level, so I hope you'll revisit the site throughout the year. Most importantly, please continue to let me know how the OCAO can be a better resource for you as you fulfill GSA's mission.

Best wishes for a joyous New Year!



From the Desk of the Editor

by Judy Steele

During these frigid winter months why don't you take advantage of this time to curl up with some good reading—like this edition of the “Forum!” This edition begins with a compelling article on hurricane relief provided by Realty Specialists and other volunteers from the Great Lakes Region—this is also our first article on Realty Specialists. Several in depth research articles are provided on topics ranging from the Acquisition Advisory Panel, the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS), and Earned Value Management (EVM) to Strategic Sourcing of Software, another in the series from Tom Kireillis at SmartBUY. Congratulations are in order for all the awardees spotlighted in our articles on “Awards and Professional Development.” Reports are provided from several conferences including the most recent National Contract Management Association

(NCMA) Contract Management Conference and a number of customer conferences and those hosting service disabled veteran business owners. Since the "Forum" has truly developed into a research journal, we hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about the many facets of the acquisition profession discussed in these pages. We also want to wish a fond farewell to Jim Adams, who retired this month after 34 years of government service. Jim has been the main "reviewer" of the "Forum" since it began--he will be missed!

We welcome any comments, suggestions and articles for the newsletter. The "Forum" is here to meet the needs of the GSA acquisition community and we can't do that without your input! We also welcome any individually authored articles on acquisition issues that would be of interest to the GSA acquisition audience. Please contact the Editor, Judy Steele, at judy.steele@gsa.gov with comments or suggestions.

HURRICANE RELIEF

"You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along'... You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

-Eleanor Roosevelt



Volunteers interviewing Hurricane Rita victims at a temporary FEMA DRC--Foto by Joe Pfammatter, R5



Trailers used at a FEMA site--foto by Greg Tran, R5

Great Lakes Volunteers find Success and Heartache in Hurricane Relief

by Bruce W. Hall, Region 5

With one of the largest GSA contingents in the nation, Great Lakes Region PBS sent 17 associates to Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas to assist in Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita relief efforts over the past few months. The volunteers included realty and contract specialists from both regional headquarters and field offices. Realty specialists serve as subject matter experts for realty services activities throughout the region, including site acquisition, out-leasing, leasing, realty activities, etc. They also provide technical direction, management and coordination for realty programs and coordinate and review the lease audit process and monitor and track all space requests.

The acquisition efforts involved leasing space for 22 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Relief Centers (DRCs) and contracting for emergency housing trailers and the parking lots and empty fields on which to place them. "In one instance I had three Disaster Relief Centers that I had to put in place," said Realty Specialist Tina Church, working with Region 7 in Louisiana. "There was so much adrenalin that you would go out, get the deals done, and come back and have those completed in one day. Three deals in one day? You could never do that in Chicago."



Foto by Kyle Neime, U.S. Coast Guard

The DRCs were set up quickly to house all varieties of federal government agencies, giving hurricane victims a “one-stop-shop” for government assistance programs, money and information. After putting the DRCs in place, the leasing team Church worked with turned its attention to acquiring vacant buildings with kitchens and restrooms—buildings that could serve evacuees as emergency shelters. They found temporary housing for nearly 8,000 people, including 7 nursing homes and hospitals, a complex of 50 efficiency apartments, and a 180-room hotel convention center.

Described as “a triage of leasing” by Realty Specialist Paul Rodriguez, setting up the DRCs was only the first step. Back in Chicago, one team of contract specialists procured a lease on a downtown building to house a 500-seat FEMA Call Center partly staffed with 27 GSA trainees. Meanwhile, the Region’s Katrina Acquisition Team was in the process of contracting for 5,513 travel trailers, totaling nearly \$108 million, as part of a national effort that would eventually house nearly 29,000 hurricane survivors. Rodriguez and Church now had to lease the space on which to park those trailers. “We would typically put 20 trailers on an acre, and a playground in New Orleans might be four acres with a baseball diamond, soccer field, maybe a utility shed,” said Rodriguez. “They would have to set up utilities...in some cases they would actually tap into sewer lines and water lines and electricity...it was a logistical nightmare.”

Meanwhile, Rodriguez, Church and fellow Realty Specialist Jerry Helland also needed to find space to get federal agencies back in business. “We were able to locate a site the Corps of Engineers had identified in Magnolia, Mississippi,” said Helland, who was assisting Region 4. “It wasn’t the greatest facility, but at that point in time anything dry, anything above water, anything not damaged, became very sought after.” At one point, to find undamaged property, Rodriguez even took to the air, hitching a ride aboard a helicopter to do a market survey over New Orleans. Buildings that looked usable enough from the ground revealed roofs “peeled back as if they’d been opened by a can opener” from the air.

Then Hurricane Rita hit. After the second hurricane, Rodriguez found one emergency shelter, the Lake Charles Civic Center, with three inches of water covering the mattresses, discarded clothes and missing person’s photos from Katrina evacuees who had fled once again. In Mississippi, the cruise ship used to house still other Katrina victims had to be moved quickly to another dock from the one Helland had leased. In fact, disappointment seemed to follow on the heels of many of their successes. Helland’s contract on a 40-acre parcel eventually fell through when the lessor raised the price too high and 30 of the 62 leases drawn up by Rodriguez’s team were eventually cancelled. Six other contracts were saved when Paul and two fellow GSA volunteers camped out in a city government office for six hours one Friday evening to push the deal through, but with ten times that amount needed (approximately 300 sites), even that victory seemed small. In fact, most of what they considered victories were even smaller accomplishments—passing out water to homeless victims wandering the roads, filling a car with gas for a stranded family, and just listening to stories of heartache and loss.

The hurricane relief effort continues. Several Great Lakes associates are still there, and

two recently reported additional breakthroughs. As part of their respective leasing teams, Senior Acquisitions Manager John Fitzgibbon signed leases to house more than 1,200 families, and Regional Account Manager Diana George signed the first no-cost private property lease, offered by an 80-year-old resident of one of Louisiana's poorest parishes, St. Bernard. Through it all, the volunteers continue to have nothing but praise and admiration for their Region 4 and 7 hosts. "I worked with the greatest people in Region 7... they were just wonderful to me as well as to Paul," said Church. "They were so thankful to have us there helping them because they felt stressed and strapped for people in trying to keep their regular operations going while trying to get these locations resolved... I just think they are amazing people to be able to stand and continue from the beginning until now." For more information on this article, contact Bruce H. Hall at bruce.hall@gsa.gov or 312-353-2605.



2nd Procurement Conference of the Americas

GSA's OCAO hosted the 2nd Annual Procurement Conference of the Americas October 31 through November 3, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia at the Westin Peachtree Plaza Hotel. The co-sponsors of the event were the Organization of American States (OAS), the Canadian Commercial Corporation, and the Public Works of Canada.


Keynote speakers and honored guests who were able to give perspectives on U.S. and

Latin American procurement initiatives welcomed the attendees. Keynote speakers included Acting GSA Administrator David Bibb; El Salvador's Vice President, Ana Vilma Albanez de Escobar; Small Business Administration (SBA) Administrator Hector Barreto; and the Office of Federal Procurement Policy's (OFPP's) Acting Administrator, Robert Burton.

The theme throughout the conference was to **improve processes** and **access** by discussing issues in efficacy, efficiency, and transparency in government procurement activities. Each workshop session reflected this theme and allowed attendees to network with one another and explore new ideas in government procurement. The workshop sessions and speakers throughout the week covered a variety of topics including e-procurement, training of government employees and government contractors, free-trade agreements, small business opportunities, and tips on doing business in another country. Simultaneous translations in English and Spanish were provided to facilitate communications.



Vice President of El Salvador Ana Vilma Albanez de Escobar addresses the Conference



Senior Procurement Officials from throughout the Americas held private sessions before the conference formally began and at its conclusion. During these sessions discussions took place addressing issues of common concern, as well as issues raised during the conference workshops. The conference provided many opportunities for participants including those for firms considering doing business in another country. Participants benefited from access to market and business intelligence through direct contact with top level government procurement officials within the Americas and exposure to the trade show venue. Attendees included public and private sector executives interested in doing business with governments both domestically and within the Americas. This year the conference attracted over 296 participants and 32 vendors.



Vice President of El Salvador and Emily Murphy

If you were unable to attend this year's conference, the 3rd Annual Procurement Conference of the Americas will be held in Lima, Peru, hosted by the OAS. For more information, contact Michael Berkholtz at Michael.berkholtz@gsa.gov or 202-208-1806.

How will the Acquisition Advisory Panel Impact You?

By Laura Auletta, Designated Federal Officer (Executive Director), SARA Panel

Many of you have heard of the Services Acquisition Reform Act (SARA) Panel or the 1423 Panel. Have you wondered what they are up to or if they will change how you work? While the panel's work is not complete, this article will provide you with some of the panel's preliminary findings and recommendations that may be of interest to you. But first, some background...

The federal advisory committee known as the Acquisition Advisory Panel was established under statute to review and recommend changes to acquisition laws, regulations and policies, with a particular focus on commercial practices, performance-based contracting, performance of acquisition functions across agency lines of responsibility, and interagency contracting. Also known as the "Section 1423 Panel" or "SARA Panel" because it was authorized under Section 1423 of SARA in 2003, the Acquisition Advisory Panel began holding public meetings and receiving witness testimony in February 2005. Since that time, the panel has met publicly once or twice a month. The panel is comprised of fourteen experts in acquisition and/or procurement law from the public and private sectors as well as a member from academia:

Government

- Frank Anderson, Jr., President, Defense Acquisition University (DAU)
- David Drabkin, Acting Principal Director for Acquisition Operations, Integrated Technology Services (ITS), Federal Acquisition Service (FAS), GSA
- James "Ty" Hughes, Deputy General Counsel for Acquisition Policy, Air Force

- David Javdan, General Counsel, SBA
- Deidre Lee, Assistant Commissioner for ITS, FAS, GSA
- Tom Luedtke, Assistant Administrator for Procurement, National Air and Space Administration (NASA)
- Roger Waldron, Acting Deputy CAO, GSA

been impressed with the knowledge demonstrated by GSA associates appearing before it - Lisa Akers, Director of FEDSIM; Geraldine Watson, Director, Management Services Center, Auburn, Washington; and Matt Verhulst, Director, Contracts Division, Small Business Governmentwide Agency Contracts (GWACs) Center.

Industry

- Marcia Madsen, Partner, Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw (Panel Chair)
- Louis Addeo, President, AT&T Government Solutions
- Allan Burman, President, Jefferson Solutions
- Carl DeMaio, President, The Performance Institute
- Marshall Doke, Jr., Partner, Gardere, Wynne, Sewell
- Jonathan Etherton, Vice President, Legislative Affairs, Aerospace Industries Association

In order to accomplish its ambitious schedule, the panel is conducting its efforts through six working groups, each consisting of a subset of panel members:

- Commercial Practices
- Interagency Contracts
- Performance-Based Contracts
- Acquisition Workforce (cross cutting)
- Small Business (cross cutting)
- Appropriate Role of Contractors Supporting the Government

Academia


- Joshua Schwartz, Professor/Co-Director, Government Procurement Law Program, GWU

These working groups have reported their initial findings at public meetings; two have briefed their preliminary recommendations. While the working group recommendations have yet to be voted on by the full panel, some highlights from their presentations are particularly worth noting.

Each of GSA's three members brings a unique perspective to the panel. Appointed by OFPP, panel members are responsible for delivering a report of their recommendations to Congress and OFPP within one year of the panel's establishment. There is, however, legislation proposed to extend the duration of the panel.

Commercial Practices. Based on public testimony from companies such as Procter & Gamble, General Motors, Bayer, General Electric and others, the working group learned that commercial organizations depend on competition heavily to ensure fair and reasonable pricing. They also expend significant resources in defining their requirements, make early competitive range determinations, and then have an extensive exchange of information with those in the competitive range. They limit the use of time and materials contracts to situations such as the hiring of experts. Of particular interest are two pending findings--one on the adequacy of the definition of commercial items, and the

The panel has heard testimony from a variety of witnesses, including those from commercial organizations, government contractors both large and small, associations, professors of economics, agencies, a non-profit government watchdog organization, Inspectors General from Department of Defense (DoD), GSA, and the Government Accountability Office (GAO). The panel has



other on whether commercial services should be bought under FAR Part 12 absent competition.

Interagency Contracts. This working group's recommendations relate to GSA's Multiple Award Schedules (MAS) program, GWACs, franchise funds, assisting agencies (such as GSA's FEDSIM program), and other multi-agency contracts. Because the working group sees an emerging trend toward use of enterprise-wide contracts, the working group is also considering these contracts in their recommendations. Enterprise-wide contracts are those that operate much like GSA's MAS program or a GWAC but are for the use of a single agency, such as the Navy's SeaPort-e or Department of Homeland Security's Eagle contracts.


One of the working group's preliminary recommendations is to extend the application of Section 803 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2002 to civilian agencies. Section 803 imposed fair notice and consideration requirements on the award of DoD service orders over \$100,000 to improve competition. Most other preliminary recommendations focus on development of a consistent process for the creation of interagency contracts with an emphasis on agency accountability, transparency, and clear roles and responsibilities for all parties managing and using these contracts. The working group does not, however, envision establishment of a process requiring approvals external to an agency in order to award an interagency contract.

Performance-Based Contracts. This working group reported a number of recommendations under consideration; two, in particular, were described as "no brainers." The first of these is a recommendation to improve usage data and Federal Procurement Data Systems-Next Generation (FPDS-NG) reporting and analysis. The other

"no-brainer" recommendation is to conduct a study of the benefits of performance-based contracting, since the largely anecdotal 1998 OFPP study has never been updated. The working group believes clarification of when and how to establish performance-based contract vehicles is still needed. Other recommendations under consideration include highlighting and enhancing market research as well as post-award management in the online "*Seven Steps to Performance-Based Services Acquisition*" guide, providing guidance on how to use down-select procedures to drive innovation, and modifying the hard quota/goal for performance-based contracts to either a "sliding scale" or agency unique goal.

Acquisition Workforce. The working group finds that an effective procurement workforce of adequate size, training, capability and structure is essential to operation of an effective procurement organization. The group believes the acquisition workforce has not received the attention, resources, and qualitative and quantitative reinforcement described by the private sector as necessary to achieve success throughout the operation of the procurement system. They not only find that the workload has increased over the last 15 years but also that it has become more complex, due in part to the sophisticated nature of the services now acquired and in part to acquisition reform, which made low dollar procurements less complex but higher dollar procurements more complex. The data available currently on the acquisition workforce suffers from inconsistent baselining in terms of quantitative data and very few studies on qualitative measures exist.

Small Business. This working group's preliminary findings include a statement that there is no statutory basis for reserving prime contracts for small businesses in full and open multiple award procurements but that the practice helps mitigate the impact of contract



bundling. Also, the working group finds that there is no explicit guidance for applying small business preference programs to task and delivery order awards under multiple award contracts. The group observed that agencies do not effectively consider their small business goals when developing acquisition strategies and do not correctly follow and apply governing regulations on contract bundling. The group finds that the acquisition community is confused by the multitude of preference programs and is unsure of which has priority. Finally, the working group finds that agency flexibility in targeting small businesses under GSA's FSS program has afforded small businesses greater access to order awards.

Appropriate Role of Contractors Supporting the Government. Preliminary findings include that the government's civil service workforce is not sufficient to meet workload requirements. Therefore, agencies must increasingly rely on contractors to help them fulfill agency missions. The amounts and types of services performed by contractors is expanding, creating questions as to what work is truly inherently governmental. This has led to a greater occurrence of the blended workforce, which has raised issues related to personal services. The factors driving these issues, including the downsizing of the number of civil servants without a commensurate decrease in services required, appear to be increasing, making the situation permanent. Without greater clarity on the application and definitions of inherently governmental and personal services, we can expect continued confusion and problems.


Clearly, the panel's work will impact all of us here at GSA. You are strongly encouraged to keep up with the panel's progress, especially now as they begin discussing their recommendations. You are also welcome to submit written public statements on any topic the panel is currently reviewing. The panel is particularly interested in hearing any

comments you may have on their draft working group reports. They are being released in parts and posted to the panel website. Parts I and II cover Background and Issue Statements. Parts III and IV consist of Findings and Recommendations. Working group recommendations will be voted on by the full panel at subsequent public meetings. To read working group drafts and learn how to submit comments, visit the panel's website at <http://www.acqnet.gov/aap>. The panel posts an agenda before each public meeting and afterward posts all meeting materials including briefing slides. Most public meetings are held at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation basement auditorium, 801 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC. All meetings are open to the public and posted at the website under "Schedule." You are encouraged to attend even if you cannot stay for the entire day. For more information, contact Laura Auletta at laura.auletta@gsa.gov or 202-208-7279.



“Getting It Right” with APW v3.0

OCAO continues to refine the Acquisition Planning Wizard (APW) to make it an easier tool for associates to use. This article informs users of future enhancements and changes to the system. The maintenance release recently deployed (v2.3.5) addressed the top two user reported issues - clarifying the password reset process and downloading the Word document in an easier fashion. The APW has experienced huge growth since its launch and now supports 5,000 acquisition plans (over \$1 billion in “Approved Plans” with over \$1 billion more awaiting “Concurrence”) and over 2,000 active GSA staffers. As a result, the upcoming APW v3.0 will be moving from the current server to an enterprise infrastructure in January, 2006. You should notice a tremendous improvement in



performance at that time (a point we know many of you will appreciate!)

What will be in APW v3.0? The upgraded APW will still support the correct determination of acquisition plan type, approval authority, and provide best practice guidance. We have listened to your excellent comments and suggestions and designed the new version to support:

- Inclusion of agency partner (non-GSA) staff in your planning team as coordinators to help streamline the approval process and “Get It Right!”
- Improved plan summary screens, notifications and event tracking for your team and the ability to send notices to specific members of your team as needed, including a blackberry accessible plan.
- Improved ability for additional coordinators, concurrenors, and approvers to comment and sign-off on plans with the ability to mark optional roles not applicable.
- Improved ability to ensure complete concurrence before routing for approval.
- Improved ability for APW administrators and planners to transfer plans, with supervisory permission, during staff transitions and to mark plans as cancelled.
- Addition of examples, all briefings and an improved “Help” feature.

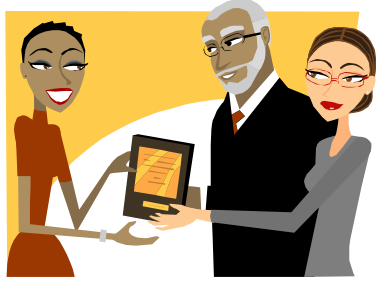
APW Tips:

- There are still a large number of users who have their browsers set to remember their passwords and this has caused numerous difficulties. We plan to post “Frequently Asked Questions” on the APW production site with instructions on how to turn this feature off in your browser and improve the security of your workstation.

- We recommend that users orient themselves with the computer-based training provided. We also recommend that everyone reviews FAR 7.105 and GSAM 507 Appendix to understand what should be included in the plans and what GSA’s guidance is.
- Remember, if the acquisition plan is not approved inside the APW you must e-mail the approved plan (with signatures) to acquisition_plans@gsa.gov within seven days of approval.
- To access the APW remotely you must have VPN/dial-up connection to GSA’s network.
- The production APW site is located at <http://apw.gsa.gov>. The new training module is located at <http://gsaapw.devis.com>. The APW Help Desk is available to assist you with system issues from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (EST), Monday through Friday at 703-525-6485, or e-mail APWHelp@devis.com.

OCAO has trained over 200 PBS associates and a handful of FAS associates since July 2005 in Regions 10 and 8 and NCR and hopes to continue training when travel restrictions are lifted. We are looking at other methods to continue live training during this intervening period.

For more information on this article and APW acquisition planning policy issues and training, contact Althea Kireilis at althea.kireilis@gsa.gov or 202-208-4724.



AWARDS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mid-Atlantic Region Associates Honored

Two associates from the National Furniture Center, Helen Zivkovic and Arthur Hackney, received awards at the 6th annual Excellence in Partnership Awards Banquet hosted by the Coalition for Government Procurement on November 8, 2005. Zivkovic received the Most Effective Contracting Officer Award for her excellence in contract administration and customer service to both federal agencies and



Paul Caggiano, Helen Zivkovic & David Bibb

industry partners. As one of 25 nominees considered, Zivkovic was selected by her peers from industry and government. The Coalition also recognized the National Furniture Center's former Director of Procurement Operations, Arthur Hackney, with the Government/Industry Partnership Alliance Award for his efforts in creating the National Furniture Center's Quality Partnership Council. Having recently retired, Hackney was acknowledged for his efforts as a tireless leader who worked diligently to provide



Paul Caggiano, Art Hackney & Larry Allen

consistent, high quality contracting and procurement expertise to the center's numerous customers. For more information, contact James (Skip) Duncan at james.duncan@gsa.gov or 703-605-9300.

Acquisition Center Honored


The Coalition for Government Procurement has named the Northeast and Caribbean Region's Office Supplies and Administrative Services Acquisition Center as the 2005 recipient of its Most Innovative Acquisition Center Award. The recognition is part of the Coalition's Excellence in Partnership award program. This award recognizes the acquisition center that has worked most closely with contractor partners to provide innovative solutions to customer needs. Regional associates Robert Streeter and Theresa Ramos received the award on behalf of the Center at a special ceremony held on November 8, in Washington, DC.



Paul Caggiano, Theresa Ramos & David Bibb

Theresa Ramos has been the Director of Operations for the Office Supplies and Administrative Services Acquisition Center since March 2002. Prior to this, she was the Director of the Office Supplies Division and oversaw the expansion of the Office Supplies





and Services, MAS 75, to include full catalog offerings. Ms. Ramos started her government career with GSA/FSS as a contract specialist trainee under the Outstanding Scholars' Program. She graduated from Long Island University with a Masters in Business Administration.



Paul Caggiano, Bob Streeter & David Bibb

Bob Streeter has been Director of the Office Supplies and Administrative Services Acquisition Center since late in 2001, with a brief interlude as Acting Deputy Assistant Regional Administrator for FSS in 2005. He started work with GSA as a contract specialist trainee in 1980. Most of his federal service has been with GSA/FSS in New York. For more information on this article, contact Theresa Ramos at Theresa.ramos@gsa.gov or 212-264-2690.

Suzanne Jetton Receives Negotiator Award

The Greater Southwest Acquisition Center is proud to announce that Suzanne Jetton was selected to receive an Excellence in Partnership Award as GSA's Best New Negotiator at the 6th annual Excellence in Partnership Awards Banquet. The Best New Negotiator award is awarded to the new contracting person who has made the biggest impact in terms of understanding the intricacies of the program and applying their newfound knowledge to the effective and efficient administration of schedule contracts. For more information, contact Kathy Colomo at Kathy.colomo@gsa.gov or 817-978-3434.

Enhancing Project Management Skills

The Greater Southwest Region FTS has been actively participating in various training programs to enhance associates' skills in project management. During the last two years, 54 regional FTS associates completed the University of Texas at Arlington Project Management Certificate Program by completing five core courses in project management including Fundamentals of Project Management, Defining Project Requirements, Estimating and Scheduling, Risk Identification, Statusing Your Projects, and two electives (Problem Solving and Team Dynamics).

Additionally, two regional associates received a Master's Certificate in Project Management through George Washington University as part of the national FTS Associates Project Management Certification Program. The Master's Certificate in Project Management recognizes professionals who have attained the knowledge and experience to oversee all aspects of project management, including initiation, scheduling, quality, procurement and communications issues. Finally, four regional associates have obtained the prestigious Project Management Professional certification through the Project Management Institute (PMI). To obtain the certification, an individual must satisfy education and experience requirements and pass a rigorous 4.5 hour examination. The certification is recognized worldwide as the standard for measuring an individual's core knowledge, understanding, and application of project management principles and practices. For more information, contact Jennifer Koranda at Jennifer.koranda@gsa.gov or 817-978-7135.



NCMA 24th Annual Government Conference

Below freezing temperatures and the season's first snowfall didn't put a damper on NCMA's 24th Annual Government Contract Management Conference, held December 5–6 in Vienna, Virginia. The culmination to a banner year for NCMA, the conference, themed "Improving the Procurement Process: Getting the Bang for the Buck," drew more than 500 attendees.

Conventioneers packed the Sheraton Premiere to network, get up-to-date industry news, share best practices for increasing the efficiency of contract departments, and listen to government leaders address topics such as acquisition and legislation. The conference kicked off with an inspirational keynote address delivered by Helen Greiner, co-founder and president of iRobot Corporation. The company began as a mere idea of Greiner's, who had a vision of creating a product that utilizes technology to free people from tedious and hazardous tasks. Little did she know that her idea would develop into a leading company whose products support the security of the nation.

Dr. Steven Kelman, Weatherhead Professor of Public Management at Harvard University; Robert A. Burton, Associate Administrator, OFPP, and Congressman Don Manzullo, Chairman of the House Small Business Committee also delivered keynote addresses. Interactive breakout sessions were held focusing on organizational conflicts of interest, small business and workforce issues, export controls to subcontract compliance, GSA schedules, intellectual property/software licensing, and competitive sourcing.

To view slide presentations from the conference, please visit the NCMA website at www.ncmahq.org/meetings/GCC05/agenda.asp. Mark your calendars to attend the World Congress 2006, April 10–12, 2006, at the Hyatt Regency in Atlanta, Georgia.

“One GSA”

Editor's Note: The “One GSA” initiative is receiving new emphasis in recent conferences and events. As the GSA website states, “GSA employees have the experience, knowledge, and creative expertise to meet customer's needs in ways that are responsive to all, yet appropriate to each. Whether providing office space, knowing how to obtain the best available products and services, or creating policy, GSA is a trusted resource customers can count on for guidance in making smart choices. GSA identifies, adapts, and champions best business practices and is a leader in shaping the work environment of the future. Responding every day to the demands of a dynamic democracy, GSA never forgets its role in serving the needs of all Americans.” Below we list “One GSA” forums.



Deidre Lee addresses the Conference

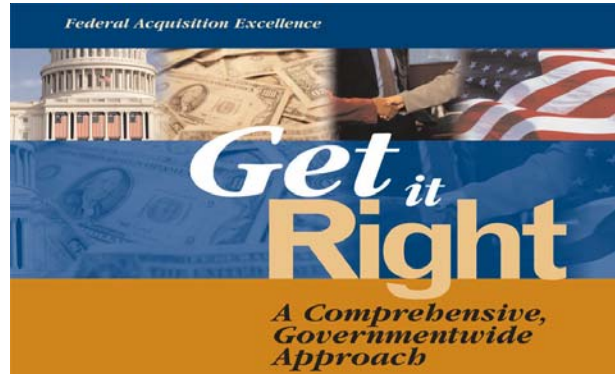
New England Region 2nd Customer Conference

On November 2, the New England Region hosted the second annual customer conference, “Tuning into One GSA – a Symphony of Solutions” at Hanscom Air Force Base, Hanscom, Massachusetts. Co-sponsored by the Armed Forces



Glenn Rotondo, Sharon Wall, Pam Horne & Dennis Smith

Communications Electronics Association, the conference began with a performance from the GSA Chorale and opening remarks from Regional Administrator Dennis Smith. Deidre Lee, FAS Assistant Commissioner, was the guest speaker. Dennis Smith, Sharon Wall, FAS Deputy Assistant Regional Administrator, and Glenn Rotondo, PBS Assistant Regional Administrator, presented Certificates of Appreciation to Client Advisory Board members. Workshops covering reimbursable services, e-Tools, wireless technology, information technology security, and telecommunications contracts were among the many sessions offered to the 100 customers who attended. Associates from PBS and FAS were on hand at the One GSA booth. In addition, customers had the opportunity to visit 50 vendor booths to learn more about the products and services available to them. This forum was coordinated by the Regional Alliance Council under the leadership of Director of Network Services Dennis Wholey and Customer Relationship Management and Sales Manager Pam Horne. For more information, contact Pam Horne at pam.horne@gsa.gov or 617-565-5692.



GETTING IT RIGHT AT GSA!

There are a number of efforts underway to “Get It Right” at GSA—we list one below. If your organization wishes to publicize a GSA “Get It Right” event or initiative, please forward the information to the Editor, judy.steele@gsa.gov.

Getting it Right with GWAC Training!

The GWAC Division of the Greater Southwest Acquisition Center recently teamed with the Small Business and Enterprise GWAC Centers to provide GWAC Ordering Training in Fort Worth and San Antonio, TX; Atlanta, GA; and Huntsville, AL. A total of 99 associates participated in the four interactive sessions. Every fiscal year the GWAC Centers coordinate training for our customer base within the GSA regions. This GWAC training is part of the OMB mandate to actively support the proper use of GWACs through training and education, as well as providing access to GWAC representatives while continuing to maintain and/or establish new relationships among the individuals who use our contracts. The GWAC training is intended to prepare the user on the proper use of these vehicles. For some participants, the training serves as a refresher or update to their existing knowledge base and provides a forum to ask specific questions related to ongoing activity. For more information, contact Shan Clark at shan.clark@gsa.gov or 817-574-2434.



SMALL BUSINESS CORNER

2005 “Above and Beyond” Awards

GSA’s Office of Small Business Utilization has selected recipients of the 3rd annual “Above and Beyond” awards. The awards honor outstanding and innovative GSA acquisition associates and/or teams who have contributed to the success of the GSA Small Business Program. These associates have shown a willingness to go “above and beyond” their traditional responsibilities to encourage small business participation in GSA’s procurement process. Their support and dedication has increased the availability of contracting opportunities for America’s small businesses. The awardees are:

Outstanding/Innovative Support for Small Business

Small Business GWAC Center Team:
Mary Parks, Matthew Verhulst, Jean Oyler, Howard Innis, Misty Claypole, Janna Babcock, and Tia Meredith-Ash
Heartland Region, FSS

Outstanding/Innovative Support for Small Disadvantaged Business

Enterprise Development Center Team:
Terry McNair, A. Tomas Barroso, Ron Mock, Ruth Starr, Antoinette Huff
National Capital Region, FTS

Outstanding/Innovative Support for HUBZone Business

Roxanne Gill
Northeast and Caribbean Region, PBS

Outstanding/Innovative Support for Service Disabled Veteran-owned Small Business (SDVOSB)

Thomas F. Brown
Heartland Region, Office of the Regional Administrator

Outstanding/Innovative Small Business Advocate

Subcontracting Pilot Team:
Jeffrey A. Koses, Barbara Miner, Doug Dubois, Nancy Provenzano, Noble Stemmons, Jasmine Glenn, Susan Lum, Richard Armstead, Willie Heath, Jr., Yvonne Knighton, Debbie Lague, Tracie Taylor, Lureen Deemark
Central Office, Northeast and Caribbean Region, Mid-Atlantic Region, Southeast Sunbelt Region, Great Lakes Region, Greater Southwest Region, and Pacific Rim Region, FSS


Yvonne Knighton Small Business Advocate Award for Excellence

Phyllis Carr
Central Office, PBS

Congratulations to all these recipients! For more information on the “Above and Beyond Awards,” contact Yolanda Johnson at Yolanda.johnson@gsa.gov or 202-501-0445.

Heartland Region Hosts Veterans Conference

The GSA Heartland Region, in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), hosted the Pathfinders 2005 Conference for Veterans and SDVOSBs. Approximately 400 people, including more than 50 exhibitors from public and private sector organizations, attended the November 7-8 conference at



Union Station, Kansas City, Missouri. Participants learned about legislation benefiting veterans and SDVOSBs, networked with other business owners, explored subcontracting opportunities, and learned about procurement opportunities within the government, as well as how to participate in renovations following hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Brad Scott, Heartland Regional Administrator, served as the Master of Ceremonies. A distinguished cast of speakers included Deidre A. Lee, Assistant Commissioner, ITS; Admiral Bill Owens, U.S. Navy (retired), Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Nortel Networks; and Scott Denniston, Director, Office of Small Business Center for Veterans Enterprise, VA. Presentations of “Pathfinder Awards” were made to Lee, Owens, and Chuck Saffell, CEO of Nortel PEC, in recognition of their efforts to lead the way for veteran business in the Pathfinder spirit. Pathfinders 2005 marked the second year that the GSA Heartland Region and the VA have collaborated to hold a SDVOSB conference. For more information, contact Jim Ogden at james.ogden@gsa.gov or 816-926-7217.

Greater Southwest Region Hosts SDVOSBs

The Greater Southwest Regional Office of Small Business Utilization hosted its first SDVOSB Conference in San Antonio, Texas, on November 9. More than 200 attendees were joined by Associate Administrator for Small Business Utilization Felipe Mendoza and Regional Administrator Scott Arney. Participants learned about procurement opportunities with GSA, Army and Air Force contracting as well as benefits and opportunities offered by the Texas Veteran Land Board. The SBA and Minority Business Development Agency also made presentations. For more information, contact Willie Heath at willie.heath@gsa.gov or 817-978-0800.



St. Simons Lighthouse near Jekyll Island

Matchmaking Held for SDVOSBs

On November 14, the GSA Southeast Sunbelt Region, in partnership with Senator Saxby Chambliss; Brunswick-Golden Isles Chamber of Commerce; Small Business Development Center (SBDC); and the Jekyll Island Authority hosted a Matchmaking session for SDVOSB owners in Jekyll Island, Georgia, in which participants learned about procurement opportunities with federal, state and local governments. Matchmaking sessions provided small businesses the opportunity to meet with larger contractors and federal agencies one-on-one (many small businesses use matchmaking events as a time to get important questions answered and to find out new information about federal policy). Approximately 75 small businesses and 11 agency partners participated in this event - the first in this area.

Mildred Quinley, Director of the Regional Office of Small Business Utilization, welcomed the participants on behalf of the Regional Administrator. Patrick Gartland, SBA Regional Small Business Advocate, was the keynote speaker. Senator Saxby Chambliss, in a welcome DVD,



Greta Carter, Dinora Gonzalez, Mildred Quinley & Jennifer Norfleet conduct matchmaking sessions

praised the participants for their military service and encouraged their entrepreneurship. Matchmaking appointments were conducted by GSA and its agency partners including Army Corps of Engineers, Homeland Security, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Agriculture, and state and local procurement departments. Lockheed Martin and Georgia Gulfstream also conducted matchmaking appointments. Participants learned about legislation benefiting veterans and SDVOSB owners; how to do business with the government; and information on the subcontracting program; as well as how to participate in renovations following hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The SBA and the local Procurement Technical Assistance Center also provided information on the SBA Certification process and marketing to the government. For more information, contact Dinora Gonzalez at dinora.gonzalez@gsa.gov or 404-331-3031.

for Service Disabled Veterans) and Gerald Zaffos, Director of the CAO's Contract Policy Division. The event offered 11 training sessions on acquisition regulations for the SDVOSB program, use of Multiple Award Schedules, GSA/AF Advantage!, and e-Buy. A discussion with panel members consisting of local contracting officials from the Air Force, EPA, and VA discussed how the MAS program has supported these agencies' procurement strategies. Overall, there were 30 GSA Schedule SDVOSB contractors exhibiting at this event throughout the day. Representatives from large business firms on GSA Schedule were also in attendance to network and promote subcontracting opportunities with the SDVOSB firms. This was the second SDVOSB Expo and Training Event in Region 5 this year. For more information, contact Sara Johnson at sara.johnson@gsa.gov or 312-886-8959.

GREEN PROCUREMENT



New England Region Participates in EPP Conference

Great Lakes Region Hosts SDVOSBs

The Great Lakes Region hosted 87 federal agency customers at a SDVOSB Expo and Training Event in Dayton, Ohio, November 15. Regional Administrator James Handley opened the all-day event and was joined in the opening ceremony by guest speakers William Truitt, CEO of Service Disabled Veterans Business (an arm of the Association

On November 2, New England Regional associates Jim Devir, Bob Wright and Dave Drevinsky joined representatives from the EPA and the VA at the 11th Annual Massachusetts Environmentally Preferable Products (EPP) vendor fair and conference in Worcester, Massachusetts, as part of a federal workshop focusing on biobased and green products. The conference is the largest of its kind in New England bringing together



environmentally preferred manufacturers and vendors with procurement specialists from federal, state and municipal entities. 155 vendors who provide environmentally preferred products were represented. For more information, contact Jim Devir at jim.devir@gsa.gov or 617-565-7902

IAE CORNER

EPLS: Identifying Suspended and Debarred Companies and Individuals



EPLS homepage: www.epls.gov


The Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) is one of the shared systems of the IAE (Integrated Acquisition Environment) for federal acquisition professionals, federal debarment and suspension communities, and government contractors to use in determining award and benefit eligibility. Since July 2001, IAE has developed a shared services environment that promotes competition, transparency and efficiency in the federal acquisition life cycle.

EPLS lists individuals and companies excluded from receiving and participating in federal contracts and prohibited from receiving benefits under certain federal programs. The debarment and suspension process protects the government from doing business with individuals and companies that have demonstrated poor performance, waste, fraud, violations, abuse, or have been identified as terrorists, drug traffickers, or those engaged in the sale of illegal weapons.

Guidance for agency debarment and suspension activities is provided by Executive Order 12549, "Debarment and Suspension," and Executive Order 12689, same title. For access to EPLS go to <http://www.epls.gov>. The FAR requires contracting officials to contract with responsible bidders only and further requires contracting officials to check EPLS before making contract award. The EPLS is the system designated and designed to assist contracting officers in performing verification and eligibility checks to ensure an award or assistance benefit is not made to an excluded or ineligible party.

Under Executive Order 13224 (<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/2002/16181.htm>) there are two additional lists that contracting officials need to check. The Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) list that identifies entities and individuals that have been designated as "terrorist" and the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) lists that identifies entities that have violated import or export regulations. The OFAC list is now fully integrated in the EPLS database with search and report capabilities. The BIS lists can be found at www.bis.doc.gov/dpl/Default.shtm.

A federal committee that is very active in suspension and debarment policy is the Interagency Suspension and Debarment Committee (ISDC). Executive Order 12549, Debarment and Suspension (<http://www.ucop.edu/raohome/certs/eo12549.html>), created the ISDC which monitors this order that mandates executive departments and agencies to participate in a governmentwide system for debarment and suspension involving federal financial and non-financial assistance and benefits. The ISDC also facilitates lead agency coordination, serves as a forum to discuss current suspension and debarment related issues, and assists in developing unified federal policy. When requested by OMB, the ISDC serves as a



regulatory drafting body for revisions to the governmentwide non-procurement suspension and debarment common rule.

The EPLS is currently being re-competed. The new EPLS will provide enhanced searching, reporting and downloading capabilities with additional features and functionalities as expressed by the user community. Primary among these will be making Dun and Bradstreet numbers mandatory to facilitate searches and allow interface with the Central Contractor Registration. Visit www.acquisition.gov to find out more about the EPLS and other IAE shared systems in the federal acquisition process. For more information on this article, contact Lisa Cliff in the IAE Office of Communications at lisa.cliff@gsa.gov or 703-872-8593.



Buy Accessible Wizard Update

The updated release of the Buy Accessible Wizard provides full support to federal buyers and program managers for any type of acquisition (micropurchases, larger value items, and services) for all steps in the acquisition process related to needs assessment: Section 508 relevance, applicability, finding sources for doing market research, and documentation for any exceptions being claimed.


The Buy Accessible Wizard is now one of three interrelated components comprising the Buy Accessible tools:

The Buy Accessible Wizard – for determining Section 508 relevance and identifying applicable provisions from the Access Board standard for electronics and information technology (E&IT) products and services. The Buy Accessible Wizard leads officials with requiring responsibility through a step-by-step process to document compliance with Section 508 effectively, consistently, and efficiently. The Data Summary Report produced by using the Wizard serves as a “compliance audit trail” documenting decisions made concerning relevance, applicability, market research, and exceptions, as a demonstration of due diligence for compliance.

The Buy Accessible Data Center – for vendors to provide information about the accessibility of their E&IT products and services that federal users can access using the Wizard as part of market research. The Buy Accessible Data Center brings together information about companies that produce E&IT products or deliver E&IT-related services, accessibility features and functions of E&IT products, and accessibility considerations for E&IT-related services. Industry vendors can use the Data Center to register and maintain their own marketing information about company commitment to accessibility and Section 508 and product conformance to specific technical accessibility requirements.

The Wizard Glossary – a set of standard terms and definitions related to Section 508 and the federal acquisition process.

Collectively, the Buy Accessible tools provide a unified resource—for the convenience of federal requiring officials—of information about the law, the Access Board standard, the FAR, the federal government acquisition process, and accessibility information for products and services registered by vendors in the Data Center.



Agencies can choose between two deployment options. Any federal agency can access these web-based applications hosted at GSA via the internet. This option does not support any local user data storage functionality, and application use must be completed within a single user session. Data Summary Reports, however, can be saved by using the “save as” feature provided by the user’s browser. This option is available through GSA at <http://www.buyaccessible.gov>.

Alternatively, agencies can opt to install the Buy Accessible Wizard component as an intranet application. This option supports users “save-pause-resume-review” functionality for session data, user data sharing, and, as a result, agency Section 508 acquisition management reporting. This configuration is centrally distributed and supported via a Wizard support website. Additional information about this option is available at <http://buyaccessible.aticorp.org/index.html>.

The Buy Accessible tools make Section 508 compliance easier by producing consistent and complete compliance documentation, in a standard manner, to satisfy program and agency E&IT acquisition requirements. For more information about the Buy Accessible tools, contact Terry Weaver at terry.weaver@gsa.gov or 202-501-4906.

GSA/JWOD STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

NCR Hosts Disability Awareness Program

On November 1, 2005, the National Capital Region hosted a program in commemoration of National Disability Employment Awareness. Associates had an opportunity to learn about captioned telephone conferencing via a demonstration of the Federal Relay Program, view a Computer Accommodation Program presentation, and visit a Javits-Wagner-O-Day (JWOD) Program exhibit. Highlights of the program were the personal experiences shared by NCR associates Gordon Pickering and Philip Ashley. Lori Grosz, a Business Development Manager with the JWOD Program, Pickering, and Ashley explained the JWOD Program and how GSA can employ more Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities both in the GSA work setting and in the awarding of contracts to JWOD-affiliated non-profit agencies. Pickering spoke about his experiences with emergency evacuation and how he introduced a public safety issue at the Maryland Governor’s Commission on Housing in the fall of 2004 that resulted in a State Senate bill that established a task force to study visual smoke and evacuation alarms for the deaf and hard of hearing. For more information on this article, contact Cherie McClung at cherie.mcclung@gsa.gov or 202-708-5110.



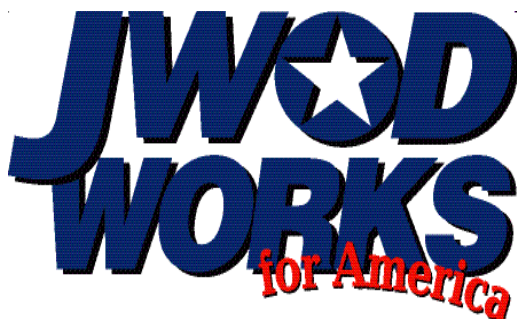
Gordon Pickering and Maryland State Lawmakers



NIB Partner in Excellence Award

The Mid-Atlantic Region received the Partner in Excellence Award from National Industries for the Blind (NIB). NIB is the national non-profit organization under the JWOD Program that helps federal agencies and non-profit organizations create jobs and training opportunities for more than 4,000 persons who are blind. JWOD Program employment enables many individuals to reduce dependence on government support, join the ranks of taxpayers, and contribute to the federal government's critical missions.

Mid-Atlantic Region Acting Assistant Regional Administrator for FSS, John Pitchford, accepted the award on behalf of the region. The ceremony celebrated 10 years that the Philadelphia Call Center, which processes orders for GSA's Global Supply, has been staffed with employees of the Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI), a JWOD participating non-profit agency in Chester, Pennsylvania. The partnership is truly a win-win situation: GSA provides employment opportunities for 15 people who are blind or visually impaired, and NIB and CBVI provide superior service to GSA and its customers. For more information on this article, contact Joseph Bojanowski at joseph.bojanowski@gsa.gov or 215-446-5080. For more information about NIB, visit www.nib.org. For more information on the JWOD program, visit www.jwod.gov or contact Stephanie Lesko at slesko@jwod.gov.



Nominations for E.R. "Dick" Alley Career Achievement Award Sought


The Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (the Committee), the federal agency which oversees the JWOD Program, is soliciting nominations for the E.R. "Dick" Alley Career Achievement Award. This is the highest award given by the Committee and is intended to recognize current federal employees who have provided **extraordinary, sustained** support for the JWOD Program and its mission of creating employment opportunities for people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. The most recent GSA employee to receive this honor was Donna Hutchens, Procurement Services Team Leader in the Northwest/Arctic Region of GSA's PBS, in 2001. Nominations must be received by **February 10, 2006**. Nomination instructions and forms can be found on the Committee's website at www.jwod.gov or by contacting Stephanie Lesko of the Committee staff at slesko@jwod.gov or 703-603-2146.



STRATEGIC SOURCING

Federal Strategic Sourcing Kicks Off

The Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative officially kicked off with a collaborative working group meeting on November 16. Robert Burton, Acting Administrator for OFPP and Acting FAS Commissioner Barbara Shelton opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and reaffirming OFPP's and GSA's commitment to and support of the initiative, which is a project of the CAO Council. Mary Davie, Acting FAS Assistant



Commissioner for Customer Accounts and Research, and Tom Sharpe, Senior Procurement Executive for the Department of the Treasury are jointly leading the initiative. Representatives from GSA, DoD, Treasury, Agriculture, Energy, and Health and Human Services Departments, the Social Security Administration, and the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) attended the meeting and established teams focused on strategically sourcing office supplies, direct delivery services, copiers, cell phones, and IT hardware. The multi-agency teams are led by GSA associates who are working to understand agency requirements, develop comprehensive acquisition strategies and leverage the government's buying power. For more information, contact Kristina Nelson at Kristina.nelson@gsa.gov or 703-306-6035.



Acquisition Learning Seminar Focuses on “Strategic Sourcing”

On October 25, 2005, the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) and DAU co-sponsored an Acquisition Learning Seminar on “Strategic Sourcing.” The speakers, Timothy Gavagan from the USPS and Linda Neilson from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, provided information on the steps both agencies have taken to adopt strategic sourcing. They focused on the goals their respective agencies have set. For those who didn't have an opportunity to attend, you can view the presentation at the FAI website at www.fai.gov under “Learning Resources and Tools.” This seminar and others are now available online. For more information on Acquisition Learning Seminars, contact Maria Hernandez at maria.hernandez@gsa.gov.

Strategic Sourcing of Software by Tom Kireilis, Senior Program Manager - SmartBUY

SmartBUY is a strategic sourcing of software initiative sponsored by OMB. This article discusses software sourcing strategies and methodologies to be used in undertaking targeted commodities for projected SmartBUY agreements.

First and foremost, strategic sourcing involves a thorough spend analysis of those goods and services being commoditized in an overall sourcing strategy. The first task for a strategic sourcing team is to gather as much information as possible about what, when and how the business buys. This means developing purchasing profiles for each business group, specific products and services, and even the vendors used by the business. This involves internal interviews, accounting reviews and in-house surveys, as well as marketplace surveys.

To accomplish this, we in the SmartBUY Program Office have segmented software categories into what we have identified as market segments. The market segment is a graphical representation of a marketplace at and for a specific time period. It depicts an analysis of how certain vendors measure against criteria for that marketplace, as defined by the SmartBUY Program Office. Some market categories include (but are not limited to): Information Assurance (IA) products, database management systems, Enterprise Resource Planning, Office Automation, Open Source, Network Management and Geospatial Information Systems.

For purposes of this article, the criterion is based solely on government spend and market share. SmartBUY does not endorse any vendor, product or service depicted in the market segment, and does not advise



technology users to select only those vendors placed in the market segment. The market segment is intended solely as a research tool, and is not meant to be a specific guide to action. The SmartBUY Program Office disclaims all endorsements, express or implied, with respect to this research, including any recommendations or fitness for a particular purpose.

A marketing analysis is the actual assessment of the target population, competition and needs for marketing that product or service. The marketing analysis process can be broken down into five steps:

1. Defining the problem – analyzing the targeted market sector.
2. Analysis of the situation – who are the competitors in that market sector?
3. Obtaining data that is specific to the problem – what are the products comprising that market segment?
4. Spend analysis and interpreting the data – dollar breakdown by product and by major agency for that product and aggregation of government spend.
5. Designing a plan – once publishers of software are targeted, identifying a strategy to maximize cost savings.

It is important to note that software publishers **do not have to** engage. However, that is not to say that they cannot be induced. This is the point where a thorough understanding of the market sector is imperative.


As an example, let us draw up a theoretical market sector – the processing of widgets. Let us also assume that the processing of widgets as a service is something that is common to all agencies to one degree or another. In your mind, substitute the widget function to be any common function, be it

payroll, human resources, conference management, web services, etc., which is handled by software. In this theoretical environment there may be ten publishers offering products with similar functionality. However, only five publishers figure prominently in the government market space which comprise 99% of the government spend for that software category. While each of the publisher's products may offer some unique features, by and large an agency's basic requirements are met by the five products. Then it simply becomes a matter of a price shootout.

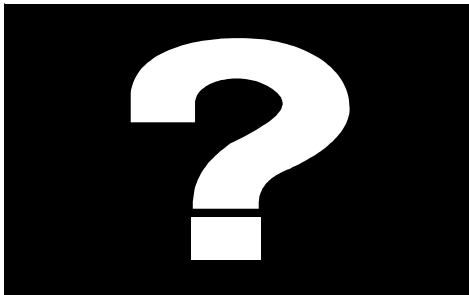
To further this discussion, let us say that the cost of a per seat license for this product is set at about \$100.00 on average for each of the publishers on the GSA Schedule. However, when buying in bulk, no ordering official should ever pay the individual unit price. Prices are discounted in relationship to the quantity ordered. The best deals generally are offered to those large agencies willing to commit to an enterprise license (unlimited use of the software throughout the enterprise—for example, if GSA owned an enterprise license for some item of software, every employee in GSA is entitled to use of that software). As they say in the software publishing industry – it is much cheaper to fill up the tank then pay by the drink. In doing our market analysis, we found that the money agencies were paying fluctuated wildly. Some agencies managed to negotiate deals in the range of 90% off GSA Schedule while others managed to negotiate only 30% off Schedule. Why the wide disparity? We found the disparity to be due primarily to a lack of research into what publishers were willing to discount their software to.

This is where understanding the market reaps huge dividends for the Government buyer. In SmartBUY, Blanket Purchasing Agreements (BPAs) have been negotiated at the lowest price offered to any agency.





As in the example discussed earlier, if a publisher offers their software at \$70.00 and another publisher has set the price of their software at \$10.00 for similar functionality, why would anyone want to pay the higher price? As stewards of the public trust we are duty bound to the taxpayer to spend wisely and judiciously. Publishers seeing their market share erode because of competition will be forced to bring their pricing in line with the competition or risk losing their government market space. For more information on this article, contact Tom Kireilis in the FTS Office of IT Solutions at Thomas.kireilis@gsa.gov or 703-306-7698.



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know there is a new “Quicklink” to access the “Forum” on the GSA homepage? Just go to www.gsa.gov/acquisitionletters and all the editions are posted.

Did you know the GSA FX Training Center provides a “Get It Right” class— “Building on Acquisition Excellence Workshop”? For more information call 703-605-2644.

Did you know that the CIO Council released guidance in December aimed at helping agencies develop an Earned Value Management (EVM) Program for major IT projects as the December 31 deadline approached for agencies to come up with an EVM implementation plan? The following article, an intergovernmental collaborative effort, provides more information on EVM.

EVM--Establishing a Project Performance Management System

It has been said that Earned Value Management (EVM) is “project management with an attitude” [Haupt, Eleanor and Wood, Susan, Earned Value Associates, LLC, 937-572-2586] It has also been said that EVM, as a tool or technique, can help deliver better performance (cost and schedule) on all projects [Fleming and Koppelman, *Earned Value Project Management* (Newton Square, Pa: Project Management Institute), Third Edition 2005]. EVM is designed to fundamentally change the way we manage. It provides project managers with tools, techniques and an established body of knowledge focused on the principles of Performance Based Management. This management system has been applied on thousands of projects over the past 35 years. The benefits are clear. The system provides Project Managers with tremendous project status visibility and an early warning mechanism that can signal problems and establish corrective active before they get out of control. Also, at any point in a project lifecycle, the system can answer the question, “How are we doing?”

EVM concepts can be applied to the management of a wide range of capital projects in any industry. Using Earned Value metrics, any project can more accurately monitor and measure progress and performance against an established set of technical, cost and schedule objectives. For example, performance based techniques can readily be introduced into construction projects because of the similarity of many of the existing practices, even though the term “Earned Value” is rarely used in that industry. Earned Value Management is equally suitable to more technical projects such as IT. In fact, this is how OMB wants complex IT projects to be managed in order to assure that they are



meeting the required functionality and business needs of the agency. Over \$12 billion was invested in IT projects in 2004 and that is expected to significantly increase in 2006. OMB wants to be certain that the projects that this money is going into are being well managed and that exceptional variances are monitored and examined. OMB is not the only agency interested in transparency into IT projects; GAO and the IG are also interested.

In an August 4, 2005 memo (Memorandum-05-23: Improving IT Project Planning and Execution, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/memoranda/fy2005/m05-23.pdf>) sent to federal Chief Information Officers, Karen Evans, Administrator of OMB's Office of Electronic Government and IT, wrote that OMB wants all agencies to implement an EVM System (EVMS) for IT projects no later than December 21, 2005. This is intended to ensure that EVMS is included in contracts, that EVMS meets established requirements, and performance goals are appropriate. Agencies will be required to meet American National Standards Institute/Electronics Industry Alliance (ANSI/EIA) Standards and this is expected to flow over to companies that contract with the government. OMB Circular A-11 requires the use of EVMS that meets the ANSI/EIA Standard 748 for both government and contractors. You can find the standards at http://www.ndia.org/Content/ContentGroups/Divisions1/Procurement/PDFs10/NDIA_PMSC_IntentGuide_Jan2005.pdf.

At the PMI's 17th Annual International Program Management Conference in November, 2005, Ms. Evans explained how the information affects capital planning and that she is looking at projects that show variance from plan to see if they are solvable problems, expected variances, or if the projects are actually not meeting their schedule and resource goals.

Good business decisions are made based on tracking and reporting good data, whether it is from the agencies directly or from their industry partners who are implementing IT projects. On April 8, 2005, a proposed rule was published in the Federal Register that aims to expand the use of agencies' use of an EVMS (www.acqnet.gov/far/ProposedRules/2004-019.pdf). OMB has been encouraging this but once it becomes a final rule in the FAR, it will be required by federal procurement rules.

In order to apply EVM, the project must have a clearly defined scope and a schedule which could range from a few months to many years. There must be a work breakdown schedule (WBS) that breaks the work into manageable pieces; an organizational breakdown structure (OBS) that defines the organizational structure; and a control account manager (CAM) who is assigned to manage the account where the work is done. The application of EVM is complex and government managers need to be trained in this methodology.

Some agencies are already utilizing EVM on their projects. PBS has utilized EVM since FY 2004 for tracking Construction on Schedule and Construction on Budget as part of the PBS-wide Linking Budget to Performance. The PBS Project Information Portal (PIP) has been the platform delivering this information. The earned value functionality is based on the formal process already in place for capital construction utilizing GSA Form 184, with actual progress posted on a monthly basis. Approximately 73 construction contracts with work-in-place valued at over \$1.7 billion were captured for FY 2005 in the PIP for this purpose.

Arnold A. Hill is a Senior Project Manager with PBS in the GSA PBS Property Development Division. He instituted GSA's fully integrated





cost and schedule performance management system for a construction project – a process that included establishment of an EVMS. Mr. Hill is project manager for a construction project that is building two large buildings that will serve as the headquarters for the Department of Transportation (DOT). His goal was to adapt the ANSI/EIA EVM guidelines and principles to fit in a fixed-price construction environment. The project management organization included the GSA Program Office, the developer, general contractor and several subcontractors. The relationship among all these entities was very important and complex so Mr. Hill wanted to use EVM tools to create a proactive management environment.

Mr. Hill used Commercial-Off-The-Shelf packages for the project’s core earned value system and he used integration tools to electronically interface contractor deliverables with the EVMS and to associate the payment schedule with the project schedule. He adapted the WBS to the way the contractor actually does their work. He was successful in minimizing the administrative burden to the contractor as well as to the government through electronic integration as well as centralizing system administration. Some significant changes from the established construction management system to an earned value management approach were using a WBS, developing an integrated time-phased budget baseline, applying the earned value concept for work performed, and implementing monthly performance analysis and reporting.

This approach proved to be very effective. If potential problems were to occur or if positive performance was achieved, it would be uncovered early. The fine level of detail improved understanding among all the entire project team; the team had a way to look at the big picture and drill down to see underlying drivers. This approach provided statistical and

graphical means for communicating costs and schedule status.

The DOT project is currently in the construction phase. Mr. Hill feels that this creative approach saved time and money through the administration, adaptation and automation techniques employed. Implementing an EVMS takes time, education, and effort. But the value of being able to measure progress in large projects is invaluable. If you have any questions on this article, please contact the “Forum” Editor, Judy Steele, at judy.steele@gsa.gov.



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We thank our guest authors for their contributions to this newsletter. Guest authors express their own views, which are provided for the information of our newsletter readers. We welcome any comments, suggestions, and articles. We also welcome any individually authored articles on acquisition issues that would be of interest to the GSA acquisition audience. Please contact the Editor, Judy Steele at judy.steele@gsa.gov with comments or suggestions.

CHECK IT OUT!

“Check It Out!” highlights upcoming conferences and events of interest to the GSA acquisition community. If you’d like to have your conference or event listed in this column, please send an e-mail to the Editor, judy.steele@gsa.gov with the pertinent information including a point of contact.

NCMA's World Congress 2006

Hyatt Regency Atlanta
Atlanta, GA
April 10 – 12, 2006
www.ncmahq.org

Knowledge Management Conference

Reagan Building
Washington, DC
April 19-21, 2006
www.fcw.com/events or 800-746-0099

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