Integrated Acquisition Environment
IAE Quarterly

May 2007

LIST OF ARTICLES

WELCOME

Welcome to the May 2007 "IAE Quarterly," your source for information about the IAE (Integrated Acquisition Environment) E-Gov initiative. We hope you will find this issue to be of interest; our intent is to update everyone on the progress and achievements of IAE. Our lead-off article focuses on the importance of data accuracy in FPDS-NG. With his memo dated March 9, 2007, OFPP's Administrator, Paul Denett, has made all Chief Acquisition Officers responsible for the accuracy of this data. It is hoped that Mr. Denett's memo will hit home the seriousness of this problem and contracting offices will take steps to resolve it "for once and for all." Implementation of the new FFATA legislation makes this critical. Training on this issue will be offered at FACE and GSA Expo—please see the articles on all these topics for more information. In systems news, WDOL.gov is now official; CCR has a new home page and search screens as part of the CCR redesign rollout; and Systems Updates provides the latest systems' stats. Please check out our articles providing clarification and more information on FedTeDS, ORCA, and CCR. And we know you will enjoy reading the opinion piece offered by the new ORCA Program Manager, Mark Gaillard. We invite e-mails, comments, suggestions and articles for the newsletter. Please contact us at integrated.acquisition@gsa.gov.

<div align="center">###</div>

ABCs OF IAE

CCR - Central Contractor Registration
EPLS - Excluded Parties List System
eSRS - Electronic Subcontracting Reporting System
FBO - Federal Business Opportunities (Fedbizopps)
FedReg - Federal Agency Registration
FedTeDS - Federal Technical Data Solutions
FPDS-NG - Federal Procurement Data System-Next Generation
ORCA - Online Representations and Certifications Application
PPIRS - Past Performance Information Retrieval System
WDOL - Wage Determinations Online

###

CLEANING UP FPDS-NG DATA TOP PRIORITY

Paul Denett, the Administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) has announced that his top priority is timely, accurate, and complete data being input to the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS) database. In a memo dated March 9, 2007 (http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/procurement/memo/fpds_ltr_030907.pdf), he made all the Chief Acquisition Officers (CAOs) responsible for the accuracy of this data. Molly Wilkinson, the new GSA CAO, has stated that FPDS is her top priority as well.

FPDS is the chief repository for acquisition information. It is critical that the data entered into FPDS is totally accurate and dependable because it is used as the authoritative data source. It provides:

- an accurate accounting of how much is spent and how much is collected for agency managers
- timely and useful procurement data for federal agencies and contractors to make business decisions
- a reliable source of spending data
- public access to how the government spends taxpayers' money to ensure transparency

Agency decisions on organization, staffing, and training are dependent on correct procurement data as well. By ensuring FPDS data is accurate, CAOs will also be better able to meet the requirements of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, which requires a public website listing the government's contracting and grant information to be operational by January 1, 2008.

Mr. Denett hopes by making the CAOs accountable that steps will be taken to fix this problem "once and for all." He is requiring that CAOs validate and sign off on the data that their agencies submit to FPDS. To do this, CAOs must establish a routine verification process, assigning clear areas of responsibility for verifying the data, and annually certify the data's accuracy to GSA. Training should be offered when necessary. An interim FAR case, 2004-038 "Revisions to FPDS Reporting," which clarifies FPDS roles and responsibilities, has been sent to the DAR Council for review.

The quality of the data input to FPDS is dependent upon each agency; however, in order to "get the word out" about the importance of entering data correctly, the IAE Program Management Office (PMO) is working with the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) and the Federal Acquisition Institute to help agency users understand the importance of the data. The IAE PMO recently reviewed relevant DAU courses and provided information on changes needed to improve use of FPDS and the other IAE systems. DAU is in the process of preparing a training module specifically on FPDS and the importance of entering data correctly. Additionally, the IAE PMO is assisting in preparing training sessions on FPDS for the upcoming GSA EXPO and the Federal Acquisition Conference and Exposition (FACE)—see the article on these conferences for more information.

The IAE PMO hosts the Contract Writing Systems Round Table and in this forum focuses on the need for commercial contracting writing systems to improve their applications so the data goes in correctly the first time it is entered. The Central Contractor Registration (CCR) validates vendor data, ensuring that the government is recording data in a standard format. IAE is working to get as many systems integrated as possible because each time data is re-used and pre-populated a manual re-entry is eliminated reducing the likelihood of another error.

It is hoped that Mr. Denett's memo will hit home the seriousness of the inaccurate data input and ensure that contracting offices take decisive steps to resolve this ongoing problem. Agencies have until May 16 to establish procedures and policies needed to ensure the quality of FPDS data and submit that plan to OFPP.
###

SPOTLIGHT ON FFATA

On September 26, 2006, the President enacted the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act ("FFATA") to reduce "wasteful and unnecessary spending" by requiring that OMB establish a free, public, online database containing full disclosure of all federal award information. The bill's co-sponsors were Senator Tom

Coburn (R-Oklahoma) and Senator Barack Obama (D-Illinois). FFATA defines "federal award" to include "grants, sub-grants, loans, awards, cooperative agreements, and other forms of financial assistance" as well as "contracts, subcontracts, purchase orders, task orders, and delivery orders."

By January 1, 2008, FFATA requires reporting on entities that are awarded funds directly from the federal government. FFATA will include data sourced from FPDS, eSRS, and Grants.gov. The passage of this Act once again emphasizes the need to ensure that all data entered into FPDS and all the IAE systems is correct.

A proposed rule change to the FAR to allow for the FFATA pilot program was published in the March 21, 2007 Federal Register. In order to implement Section 2(d) of FFATA, the proposed rule will change FAR Part 4, with associated clauses in FAR Part 52, which addresses reporting subcontract awards. Exempted from the pilot are solicitations and contracts for commercial items issued under FAR Part 12 and classified solicitations and contracts. The pilot program is scheduled to begin July 1, 2007. This rule applies to contracts of $500,000,000 or greater and requires the awardees to report all first tier subcontract awards exceeding $1 million to the FFATA database at www.federalspending.gov.

<div align="center">###</div>

FACE AND GSA EXPO PROVIDE IAE TRAINING SESSIONS AND CLPS

The Federal Acquisition Conference & Exposition (FACE) is back! FACE 2007, the premier conference to train acquisition professionals, provides networking opportunities, dynamic speakers, and vendors with a variety of information on acquisition products and services. FACE 2007 will be held June 19-20, 2007, at the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, DC. In addition to learning about important issues and emerging trends in acquisition, attendees also have the opportunity to earn 10.5 Continuous Learning Points (CLPs).

FACE will include a panel addressing the issue of data entry into FPDS. The Panel, entitled, **"***Data Roundup: Using the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS) as a Management and Market Analysis Tool"* will discuss who uses the information in FPDS, common mistakes in data entry, and how FPDS reporting can provide valuable market research information to help you design your next acquisition. Information discussed will include:

- Understand who uses FPDS data
- Identify common data entry mistakes to avoid
- Learn how to access various FPDS reports as market research and management tools
- Understand the potential impact of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act on FPDS reporting.

FACE 2007 is sponsored by the Chief Acquisition Officers Council, the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI), and the Department of Defense. To register or obtain more information about FACE, visit the website at www.fai.gov/face. For questions or comments regarding FACE, contact Ivy Alston at 703-284-6984, toll free at 866-908-6324, or send an e-mail message to face@sra.com.

The GSA Expo, to be held at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida, May 15-16, 2007, will also hold training sessions on IAE. *"Effective and Efficient Utilization of the Federal Procurement Data System"* will highlight the many uses of the information in acquisition management including the emphasis on transparency and visibility, ensuring data accuracy and accountability in reporting, and the impact this information has on each agency's goals. It will provide attendees with detailed knowledge about the extensive resources in FPDS and up to the minute tips on using many of its features to help manage and ensure accurate reporting of each agency's performance. A standard IAE overview, providing a high level review of all the IAE systems, will also be provided in another session. For more information on GSA Expo, or to register, go to www.expo.gsa.gov.

<div align="center">###</div>

IAE SYSTEM UPDATES

ACQUISITION REQUIREMENTS TEAM
- Agency comments have been resolved
- Document undergoing final review to ensure consistency with Core Financial System

- Public Comment Period targeted for this summer

CCR AND FEDREG
- Recompete in process
- Search Screens updated and redesigned; entry screen changes in process
- 432,492 active vendors currently in the database

EPLS
- Released version 2
- Added DUNS validation
- XML interface planned
- Approx 8 million hits in March 07

ESRS
- Continuing to offer government training
- New release scheduled to bring DOD on board
- Building real-time interface with FPDS-NG
- 38,000 vendor reports filed
- 8,000 registered users

FBO
- Recompete in process
- 732,851 vendors registered to receive e-mail notifications re: procurement opportunities that match their profile
- 27,513 registered buyers
- 49,245 active opportunities (synopses, solicitations and combined synopses)

FedTeDS
- Over 46,000 users

FPDS-NG
- Migration of DOD FY 06 data into FPDS-NG completed and offices are now reporting to FPDS-NG
- OFPP issued memo stressing data accuracy
- Version 1.3 with SBA re-representation is in process
- Informatica version of Small Business Goaling Report released
- FY2006 – Over 8 million contract actions totaling over $4B
- Over 100,000 registered users

ORCA
- Proposed FAR Case 2006-011 published in Federal Register with new reps and certs questions for tax violations
- SF 330 reauthorized through 2008
- 57,000 registered users

PERFORMANCE DATA
- Meeting to review 200+ public comments on draft Best Practices Guide for "Contractor Performance in the Acquisition Process"
- FAR change still in committee

ONLINE PROCUREMENT SERVICES (OPS)
- Survey planned for reverse auction users and providers
    - Notice in Federal Register for public comments on the survey

WDOL
- Final rule published on 3/22/07 in FAC 2005-16
- Over 1 million hits in Dec 06

<div align="center">###</div>

FINAL FAR RULE MAKES WDOL.GOV OFFICIAL

Wage Determinations Online.gov (www.wdol.gov) is one of the IAE systems most appreciated by Contracting Officers (COs). Back in "the day" COs used to have to write to the Department of Labor (DOL) to obtain a wage determination. After typing up the Standard Form (SF) 98, and sometimes an SF 98a, the CO had to mail in the forms, sometimes waiting six months or longer to receive the wage determination. Many times contracts had to be amended AFTER award to include the correct wage determination. But thank goodness those days are over! Since 2005, under authorization by a DOL memo, COs have been using the WDOL.gov website, which makes Service Contract Act (SCA) and Davis Bacon Act (DBA) wage determinations and contractor labor standards information issued by DOL available online, easily accessible to the contracting community. An interim FAR rule making WDOL.gov the source for SCA and DBA wage determinations issued by the DOL, was published in the Federal Acquisition Circular June 28, 2006. As of March 22, 2007, FAC 2005-16 amends the FAR to make the interim rule final. The WDOL.gov and e98 processes replace the paper SF 98 and 98a. In addition, SF 98, 98a, and 99 are deleted from FAR Part 53. This final rule also incorporates new geographical jurisdictions for DOL's Wage and Hour Regional Offices and eliminates FAR references to the Government Printing Office publication of general wage determinations.

As with other IAE systems, the government is taking advantage of current electronic communication and information sharing technologies to streamline the federal procurement process. Rather than waiting for a response from a paper request, contracting officers, as well as the public, can now go directly to WDOL.gov and access the appropriate wage determination for a contract action. WDOL also provides guidance on how to select the correct wage determination. To view the Final Rule go to http://acquisition.gov/far/fac/FAC_16%20Looseleaf.pdf. Go to www.wdol.gov for more information.

<center>###</center>

CCR REDESIGN ROLLOUT UNDERWAY

The IAE PMO is happy to announce that the CCR homepage and search screens have been upgraded and redesigned to have more of the "look and feel" of the other IAE websites. A new logo reflects the "IAE branding" and the screens are simplified and better organized with more of a basic design. CCR is the central point for contractors to enter all common business information, including bank account information for electronic payments, and this information is deployed across the IAE space from CCR. Contractors must register in CCR to do business with the government. It is hoped that this screen redesign will make that process easier. This is just the beginning of the rollout of the screen redesign, so stay tuned for further upgrades. To check out the new CCR screens, go to www.ccr.gov.

<center>###</center>

WHAT IS FEDTEDS?

FedTeDS (Federal Technical Data Solutions) is a password-protected, web-based tool designed to safeguard the distribution of sensitive, unclassified, acquisition-related information for all federal agencies. Because business opportunities are inherently public, there is no monitoring or control over who has access to your solicitation information. When aggregated, the sensitive, acquisition-related data may pose a threat to national security if misused. FedTeDS, however, allows Contracting Officers (COs) to use the internet to disseminate sensitive information in a secure way and eliminate the need to create and distribute CDs or paper documents.

As a program under IAE, FedTeDS is designed to be a companion site with FBO, the single government point-of-entry for federal government procurement opportunities. FedTeDS also incorporates data from other sources, including CCR and the Defense Logistics Information Service's export controlled database, to authenticate vendor users and validate their access to sensitive acquisition information.

In order to know when to use FedTeDS, you must first be able to determine what is considered to be sensitive material. FedTeDS does not dictate what is considered sensitive, but some examples include: construction drawings of federal buildings; drawings of bridges and dams; command and control system specifications;

Continuity of Operations Plans; and schedules, work hours, and security clearance requirements. As a rule of thumb, sensitive data is any piece of information that you are not comfortable with just *anyone* in the world accessing and storing.

Because of the high importance of monitoring and controlling access to sensitive acquisition-related data, the Civilian Agency Acquisition Council and the Defense Acquisition Regulations Council mandated the use of FedTeDS in FAR 2004-007, Part V. The final rule amends the FAR to require Contracting Officers to make solicitation-related information that requires limited availability or distribution available to offerors electronically via FedTeDS, unless certain exceptions apply. If you are interested in learning more about the program, contact Mike Dalida at Michael.Dalida@bta.mil or visit www.fedteds.gov.

<center>###</center>

ORCA: E-GOVERNMENT AT ITS BEST
by Mark Gaillard

I joined the Federal Programs Team within the Defense Business Transformation Agency (BTA), (which is partnered with IAE), as the program manager for ORCA in February 2007 and had a vision. My vision was clear…what a great job to land! I thought to myself, "The use of ORCA is FAR mandated--so all of the contracting officers and contracting specialists must already be using it, contract writing systems must be incorporating it, Defense Acquisition University must be training it, and vendors must be chomping at the bit to register and renew in it. After all, the good book FAR mandates it! My job is already being done for me! What more could anyone ask with perfect golf weather approaching!" Well, fast forward to March 2007 and I have discovered the somewhat surprising reality that everyone is not following the FAR….

Let me begin this by providing a quick picture of what ORCA is and its purpose in life. ORCA is a web-based system that collects vendor representations and certifications ("reps and certs") of business information and stores that information in a common database. "Reps and certs" submitted by the vendor define them in such areas as business size, cost accounting standards, past debarments, and company ownership. A particular focus of ORCA is on capturing small business categories and information.   Submitting these "reps and certs" is a requirement in most government issued solicitations. ORCA was established by FAR Case 2002-024, Electronic Representations and Certifications, in order to continue to build toward a paperless contracting environment and streamlining of the contracting process. ORCA went live as part of IAE on January 1, 2005. It has grown steadily ever since with over 57,000 vendors currently registered.

ORCA use by vendors is mandated by FAR 4.1201 which states, "Prospective contractors shall complete electronic annual representations and certifications at https://orca.bpn.gov". Fairly clear guidance. ORCA use by contracting officers is mandated by FAR 4.1202 which states "Except for commercial items solicitations issued under FAR Part 12, insert in solicitations the provisions at 52.204-8 Annual Representations and Certifications." Fairly clear guidance. However, below are some responses regarding ORCA that I have heard while attending conferences and outreach activities in the past few months:

> -Isn't ORCA the same thing as CCR?
> -I excluded an offeror from competition because they used ORCA and did not submit the paper reps and certs in responding to the solicitation.
> -I heard about it but didn't know what it was.
> -I think the person in the next cube uses it.
> -Why do you have a dolphin as your logo?
> -I think I saw a movie about this once.

Now, I shouldn't take the humor in this too far. I have already encountered numerous contracting professionals and offices that know and use ORCA in their daily contracting operations as stipulated in the FAR. But I have been genuinely surprised to find there is such a large gap between what is stated as policy in FAR 4.12 and what reality is.

ORCA is not a frilly system with many bells and whistles. It is a work horse, no nonsense application that efficiently accomplishes its mission day in and day out. Collecting the "reps and certs" information in one place

streamlines the solicitation and contract award process for both vendor and government. ORCA eliminates the administrative burden for contractors of submitting the same information ("reps and certs") to various contracting offices each time they respond to a solicitation.   And ORCA establishes a common source for "reps and certs" information to procurement offices across the government so that any government office can access identical information. ORCA is truly a system that streamlines the procurement process for vendors and government contracting officers.

We have many requirements in the government that create reams of paper with few repetitive and efficient processes; ORCA is a system that abolishes that paradigm. The old process was for a vendor to submit approximately 25 pages of information which was required to be completed and submitted to the contracting officer with each proposal.   This process was cumbersome and bulky for both vendors and contracting officers. A vendor had to submit the same 25 pages with each proposal. So much for going paperless!   Again, ORCA abolishes that paradigm.

Some facts about ORCA that the user community should know:

- ORCA maintains a live interface with CCR to automatically populate basic vendor information based on the DUNS number.

- ORCA has the ability to perform an archived records search for inactive records associated with a specific DUNS number.

- DFARS clauses/provisions were added to ORCA in December 2007; ORCA is capable of being updated with any agency specific acquisition regulations or clauses to improve overall agency contracting operations.

There are multiple advantages for both industry and the government when using ORCA:

- Contracting officers and specialists have access to over 57,000 vendors

- Representations and Certifications at the click of a mouse.

- Vendors are required to update their "reps and certs" in ORCA annually or if there is a change in their reporting status so this data is always accurate.

- Contracting officers and specialists can use ORCA to produce Section K (Representations and Certifications) of the contract in a PDF format for easy insertion or attachment into the contract document. The PDF format can also be uploaded to the electronic contract file in many of the contract writing systems.

- ORCA's interface with CCR ensures consistency in vendor data for contract documentation such as company name and address.

- ORCA XML function allows a direct feed of "reps and certs" data directly into a customer's contract writing system.

The ORCA XML is a terrific feature of the system. XML, a Business-to-Business web application, receives user customized requests for ORCA information from a customer's contract writing system, on one or multiple records and returns the requested data in real-time using the XML format. ORCA XML also allows customers to do a real-time user-customized request for information on a single or a small set of ORCA records for each transaction, and return that information back to the user in only a couple of seconds. For example, an end user could use ORCA XML to retrieve the most current "reps and certs" information for a particular record of interest.

In a recent briefing to leaders in the Government acquisition community I concluded by identifying the three following challenges ahead for ORCA:

- Increase contracting community training and awareness to increase DoD and federal use of ORCA

- Increase vendor awareness of FAR policy to complete electronic representations and certifications

- Improve visibility of ORCA data in contract writing systems

No small feat considering the many personnel and companies out there that could be categorized under one of my "challenges!"

So my early vision of this job didn't really pan out, but what has evolved is going to provide me the opportunity to truly advance a work horse, or that is a work whale, application to actively enhance business in the E-Government environment and greatly improve business efficiency and business transformation across the entire federal government, which will be a lot more fun than just sitting back and having my job done for me!

For more information contact: Mark Gaillard, ORCA Program Manager, Program Executive Office for Sourcing Defense Business Transformation Agency, at mark.gaillard@bta.gov.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CCR AND ORCA?

CCR is the central registry that enables the government to easily find procurement and business information on vendors seeking to do business with the government. CCR collects overall company information to include who the registrant is, the market area they perform in, and the financial data that is used to facilitate the electronic payment process via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).

ORCA collects only the legal business representations and certifications that certify it for all FAR-based contracts at the time of solicitation used by the government to determine, among other things, that a company is eligible for a small business set-aside, if they follow the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission rules and if they provide products that contain material from countries outside the United States. (For more details see the article on ORCA.)

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. Comments, suggestions and feedback can be e-mailed to integrated.acquisition@gsa.gov.