

GSA Advantage!™ – Vendor Start-Up Kit



Welcome Electronic Partner!

We are excited about our new partnership as we bring your GSA/VA schedule products and services to our Federal customers worldwide via the Internet! Now with more than two million products on-line, the GSA Advantage!™ online shopping service is the hottest e-commerce site in government. Sales are increasing dramatically! We invite you to join the thousands of schedule vendors already online!

We are pleased to bring you this GSA Advantage!™ Start-up Kit which explains how to get your products and services online. Your participation is extremely important to us, as we have accepted the challenge to employ electronic commerce and to simplify the acquisition process in the Federal Government.

We have also included guidance for those vendors wishing to submit their catalog using Electronic Data Interchange (EDI). If you need assistance, we have also provided points of contact.

We hope you are as excited as we are about making your products and services available to Federal agencies worldwide through GSA Advantage!™ - "where government shops!"

General Instructions - Submission of Your Schedule Contract Data

(Important: please read all instructions carefully)

What is GSA Advantage!™? GSA Advantage!™ (<http://www.GSAadvantage.gov>) is the Federal Government’s premier on-line catalog, information, and ordering system which gives Federal customers the ability to quickly search, compare and order those products and services which best meet their needs. Inclusion of your products and services on GSA Advantage!™ provides greater market exposure and increases potential for greater sales to Federal agencies and activities worldwide!

Quick Start - Getting your catalog on GSA Advantage!™

Step 1: GSA schedule contractors should **read** and become familiar with clause I-FSS-600, “Catalog and/or Price List” found in your Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contract. VA schedule contractors should **read** and become familiar with the applicable catalog and/or price list clause in their Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contract. Catalogs must be submitted electronically via Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) or via included Schedule Input Program (SIP) software no later than 45 days from receipt of this start-up kit. For your consideration, there are also a number of companies who will prepare and submit your catalog data electronically, however, there are costs associated with this service.

Step 2: Register! All vendors must register with the GSA Vendor Support Center (VSC) by calling 877-495-4849 (M-F 8:00-5:00 PM EST) or registering on-line at <http://vsc.gsa.gov> and (click on link called “Register (SIP/EDI)”). The VSC will provide you with a password, which is required on all catalog submissions. This password is used to protect your data. VSC personnel can also provide assistance with your SIP catalog submission.

Please note that a DUNS is required at registration. If you do not have a DUNS assigned for your company, you may obtain one without charge by contacting Dun & Bradstreet, Inc. at 1-800-999-3867 x7748.

Step 3: Decide which method you will use to submit catalog information, EDI or SIP. If your organization is currently utilizing EDI for your business transactions and you wish to submit your catalog via EDI, please see “Instructions for Vendors Using EDI” below. Further information about EDI requirements will be provided. If you have opted to use GSA’s SIP software instead of EDI, please see “Instructions for Vendors Using SIP” below. Further information about SIP installation and use will be provided.

Step 4: Submit and update your catalog. You may submit your catalog including updates and changes 24 hours a day! The data you submit (part numbers, description, prices, etc.) will be seen by your customers - the completeness and accuracy of the data submitted is your responsibility. Please ensure that your products and services are adequately described!

Questions?

- If you have questions concerning your schedule contract terms and conditions, please contact your GSA contracting program office at one of the numbers provided below:

GSA Contracting Program Office	Phone	3rd - 4th Position of Contract No.
IT Acquisition Center	703-305-6644	(35)
Automotive Division	703-305-6651	(30)
Office & Scientific Equip. Acq. Center	703-305-6321	(24, 25, 26)
Office Supplies & Paper Prod. Acq. Center	212-264-8348	(14, 15)

General Products Acquisition Center	817-978-8664 or 3672	(07)
GSA Contracting Program Office	Phone	3rd - 4th Position of Contract No.
National Furniture Acquisition Center	703-305-6338	(27, 28, 29)
Management Services Acquisition Center	253-931-7090	(10)
Services Acquisition Center	703-305-6112	(22, 23)
Hardware & Appliances Acquisition Center	816-926-6757	(06, 20, 21)
General Procurement Branch	215-656-3840	(03)
VA Contracting Program Office		
National Acquisition Center	708-786-5145	1 st position of contract number identifies Department of Veterans Affairs, while 2 nd – 4 th position of contract number identifies the National Acquisition Center

- If you have questions concerning the preparation and submission of your electronic catalog using SIP, contact the Vendor Support Center (VSC) at 703-305-6235 (M-F 8:00-5:00 PM EST), or FAX 703-305-7944, or e-mail vendor.support@vsc.gsa.gov.
- If you have questions concerning the preparation and submission of your electronic catalog using EDI, contact our EDI Help Desk at 703-305-7559.
- If you have general questions regarding the GSA Advantage!™ shopping system call 703-305-7359, or e-mail: gsa.advantage@gsa.gov.
- If you are a VA FSS contract holder, and have questions about the VA-GSA Advantage Partnership, call Ron Comtois at 708-786-5145 or ronald.comtois@med.va.gov.

Schedule mergers: GSA/VA has recently merged a number of its schedules into new or existing schedules.

- For those vendors using EDI, a table of the latest schedules and SINs can be found at the VSC website (<http://vsc.fss.gsa.gov>).
- For those vendors using SIP, SIP will reflect the most current schedules and SINs. The SIP program will prompt you when updates become available and will download and install automatically.
- To existing SIP users: If you had previously submitted a file to GSA under an old schedule or SIN using an earlier version of SIP (earlier than version 5.0), SIP will automatically convert your data to the new schedule and SINs.

How GSA identifies a product: GSA uniquely identifies each product using a combination of your contract number plus the manufacturer part number. Each product you submit must have a unique manufacturer part number - even if two or more manufacturers carry the exact part number. This may require a part number modification on your part.

How do I get photos of my products on GSA Advantage!™? Customers are always requesting that we add more photos to Advantage since photos make identification of products so much easier. Photos may be submitted via SIP or EDI. All photos must be in a .jpg format, must be no larger than 35k, and the photo filename must not exceed 30 characters. Also, do not use special characters in the filename. Please note that photos submitted that are not linked to a specific product will be deleted after approximately 90 days.

Assigning Product & Service Categories: Using either SIP or EDI, you may assign a product category to each product which will determine the placement of the product within GSA Advantage!. This will also make your products easier for customer to find and order and will also include your item among other similar items. Assignment of a category to each product is optional but recommended since it gives you the opportunity to effect categorization. If you choose not to assign categories to your products, GSA will determine a category for each product based on the descriptive information you provide (i.e. product name, description). Inadequate product descriptions will result in poor categorization and may make your products difficult for customers to find. Products having more complete descriptions will result in products more easily found and ordered!

How are purchase orders issued by GSA Advantage!™? GSA currently sends all purchase orders (to both GSA and VA contractors) by FAX or EDI depending on the vendor's capability.

What will my data look like in GSA Advantage!™? It is an excellent idea for you to sign-on to GSA Advantage!™ in a demonstration mode at <http://www.GSAadvantage.gov> and get a first hand look at how the system operates and more specifically how your products and services will appear to Federal customers. Once you have reached our website, click on the GSA Advantage!™ logo which will take you to the sign-on screen. Recommend that you sign-on using demo credit card number 471600000000005. This demo card number gives you total access to the shopping functions without actually processing any orders. You can search, compare items, add items to your cart, configure a product, add accessories, view product detail, view vendor information, link to vendor websites, select a dealer, process your order, and more. Once your own catalog data is online, you should frequently check to make sure it appears as you had intended.

Instructions for Vendors Using SIP

Schedule Input Program (SIP): The Schedule Input Program (SIP) software can be downloaded directly from the Vendor Support Center website at <http://vsc.fss.gsa.gov>. SIP will allow you to input and transmit (upload) all your contract and product data directly to the Vendor Support Center (VSC) for inclusion in GSA Advantage!™. Please note that Internet access is required to transmit files using SIP.

SIP system requirements: The SIP is a Windows based program which operates in a Windows 95 environment or greater. The minimum hardware requirement is a 486 PC with 16 MB RAM and 12 MB of storage space. Use of the SIP communications module requires access to the Internet. SIP can be installed on a stand-alone PC or multi-user LAN environment.

SIP online and context sensitive help: SIP includes an online help function that can be used to assist you in the preparation of your electronic catalogs. Online help is available for each input field by simply pressing the F1 key. For novice users, a “SIP Assistant” is available which will guide you step-by-step through the input process.

Can I import my catalog data to SIP? Yes. When you install the SIP program, an Import Program is also installed which allows you to import standard ASCII text, DBF files (versions 3.0 or greater), or MS Excel files (MS office 97 version or greater) into the SIP. Call the VSC for further information and assistance. Online help is also available within the Import Program including instructions and templates.

SIP catalog submission: Once you have prepared your file using SIP, you must upload it to the GSA VSC. First, click on the Communications|Create Catalog Files option. Once the create catalog process is complete, click on the Communications|Send/Receive Files option to automatically upload the file to GSA (please note that this upload process differs from previous versions of SIP).

Once your file is sent, you must wait for a response from GSA (response file) before you can send the next catalog update (you can prepare the next submission in SIP but you cannot send it until the response file has been received and processed). The response could be a couple of days due to GSA/VA contracting officer (CO) review. The purpose of the response file is to update your SIP program ensuring that both the SIP and GSA Advantage!™ databases remain in sync.

Catalog data uploaded to the VSC is forwarded to the appropriate GSA/VA CO for review. Once the CO has reviewed the catalog, they will send you an e-mail (or FAX, phone) stating whether the file was approved or rejected and the reasons for rejection, if applicable. A response file will be generated and posted on the VSC system (may take a day or two to appear on the VSC). Please note that files submitted having invalid password, DUNS, or other validation errors, are rejected at the VSC and are not reviewed by the GSA/VA CO. If this occurs, a response file is created and posted on the VSC.

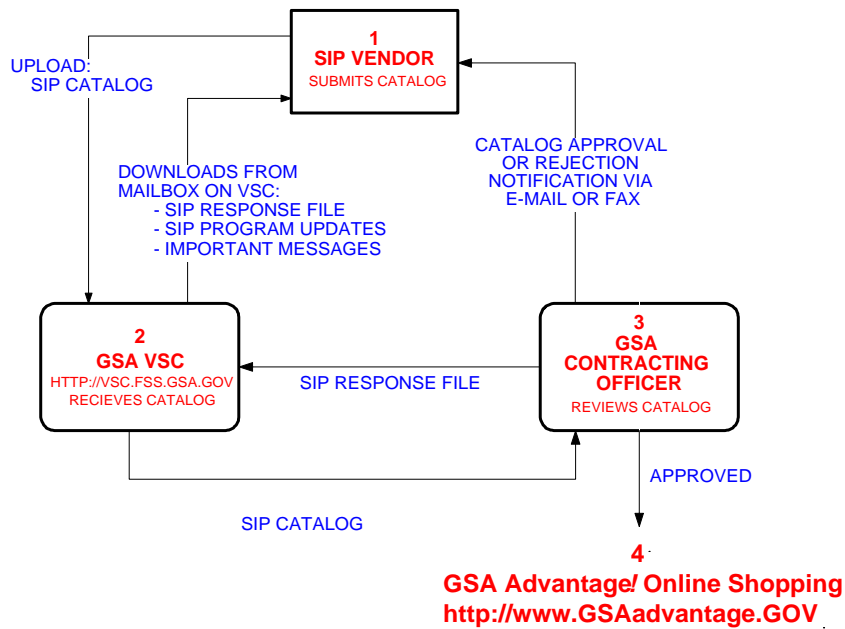
Processing your SIP response file: When you start the SIP program, you will be automatically prompted if a response file needs to be downloaded and processed. By clicking “I want to download”, SIP will connect to the VSC, download then process the file. You will be notified when processing is complete or if a response file was not present. You may also retrieve the response file at the Communications|Process Response File option. Once your response file is processed, you are free to submit further updates.

Rejected files: If your catalog file is rejected and your GSA/VA CO has not contacted you via e-mail, FAX, or phone by the time you have received your response file, please contact your GSA/VA CO for the details of why your submission was rejected. Rejected catalogs must be resubmitted within 30 calendar days.

Price reductions: Files containing price reductions only will be immediately loaded to GSA Advantage!™ without contracting officer approval.

The chart below shows the SIP submission process flow:

Schedule Catalog Submission Process - SIP



Can I submit my schedule products or services as text? Certain schedules and SINs have been designated as either “allowing” or “requiring” a text file instead of a detailed data file, particularly for services. The SIP program will prompt you when this option is allowed. Please note that products and services submitted as text cannot be ordered online but can only be viewed! Products should be submitted in a data format wherever possible.

See SIP online help for further instructions on file format and what should be included in your text file.

Vendor Support Center: The purpose of the VSC (<http://vsc.fss.gsa.gov>) is to provide assistance to vendors in the preparation and submission of their electronic catalog files. The VSC maintains a staff of personnel ready to assist you. The VSC also maintains a web site, which allows you to download SIP response files, the latest versions of the SIP software, etc. Full access to the VSC system is available using your user logon name/ID and password that is provided at registration.

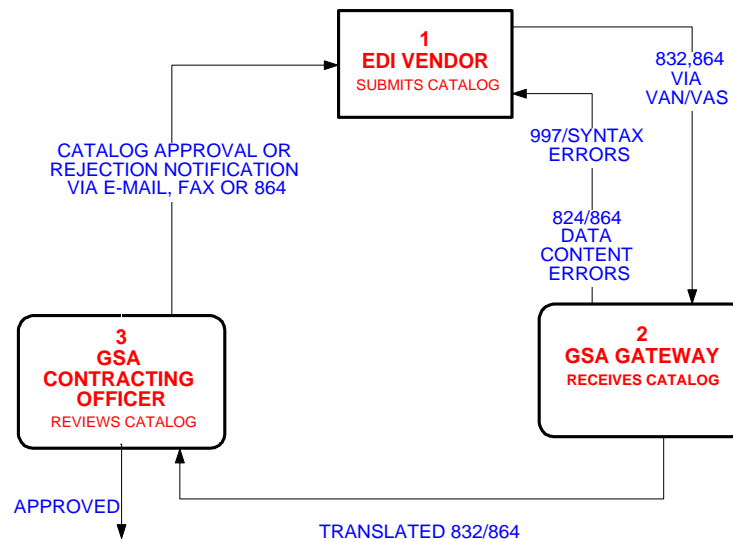
Personnel at the VSC may be reached at 703-305-6235 (M-F 8:00-5:00 PM EST), or FAX 703-305-7944, or e-mail vendor.support@vsc.gsa.gov.

Instructions for Vendors Using EDI

What is EDI and is it for me? Electronic Data Interchange or EDI is the computer-to-computer exchange of business information using a public standard. You have several different options when it comes to using EDI to submit your catalog file. In addition to commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) packages, there are also third parties and Value Added Networks (VANs) who can assist you. If you are interested in learning more about EDI, call our EDI Help Desk at 703-305-7559.

EDI catalog submission process: Catalog data submitted to GSA via EDI transaction sets 832 and 864 is first checked for EDI syntactical accuracy and then checked for data content. It is then provided to your GSA/VA contracting officer for review and approval. Once approved, vendors are notified via e-mail or FAX and catalog data is placed on-line for customer ordering via GSA Advantage!™. GSA will use the 824 and 864 transaction sets to specify data content errors in your catalog file should your file be rejected. These transaction sets are sent to vendors electronically (or are E-mailed or are Faxed to those vendors unable to accept an 824/864 electronically). Rejected catalogs must be resubmitted within 30 calendar days. The chart below shows the EDI submission process flow.

Schedule Catalog Submission Process - EDI



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GSA Advantage! Online Shopping
<http://www.GSAadvantage.GOV>

EDI 832 and 864 samples: Sample 832 Price/Sales Catalog and 864 Text Message Transaction Sets can be downloaded from the Vendor Support Center at <http://vsc.fss.gsa.gov>. The 864 should only be used when it is necessary to submit text data. These samples are compliant with the Federal Implementation Conventions (IC). These samples should be given to your software provider and/or Value Added Network (VAN) so that they will be able to furnish a transaction in accordance with the Federal IC's. Also included with the 832 and 864 samples is a table of expected data elements, which will be edited prior to GSA/VA contracting officer review of your catalog.

Other EDI samples: You may also download samples of the 810 Invoice, 850 Purchase Order and 824 Application Advice. Although not currently listed, please be aware that the 3050 version of the 860, Modifications to Award Instrument will soon be available. Additionally, the 997, Functional Acknowledgment, should be used in all appropriate cases.

Look-up tables: Look-Up Tables have been developed to assist you in the preparation of EDI transactions. These tables, which are maintained by GSA, provide valid schedule numbers, country codes, product codes, etc., and can also be downloaded from the VSC. These tables are updated as required.

How to submit your 832 (Price/Sales Catalog) and 864 (Text Message) Transaction Sets: There are three ways in which a vendor may send in their EDI data:

1. Vendors may use their Value Added Network/Value Added Service (VAN/VAS) provider and transmit their data through the Federal Infrastructure via the Electronic Commerce Processing Node (ECPN) at Columbus Ohio or Ogden Utah. The receiver IDs are as follows: The ISA07 is ZZ and the ISA08 is either DMCOGDEN or DMCCOLUMBUS, depending upon the VAN/VAS used. Your VAN/VAS provider will be able to tell you which one applies. The GS03 is 012966339 (the GSA/FSS Dun & Bradstreet (DUNS) Number).
2. Vendors can also FTP (File Transfer Protocol) their data directly to GSA/FSS. This method should only be used with large, initial loads of data. Contact the EDI Help Desk at the number provided below to get the appropriate IP Address, Log-on ID and Password.
3. A mailbox on the Sprint system is available for those vendors whose service providers have interconnects with Sprint. Please contact the EDI Help Desk below for more information.

Contract modifications: All contract modifications and/or changes must be approved by your GSA/VA contracting officer before submitting for inclusion in GSA Advantage!™. Please include your modification number with your submission.

Submitting changes: Changes can be sent by line item or as an entire catalog replacement. Files containing price reductions only will be immediately loaded without contracting officer approval.

EDI help desk: For more information or for any questions regarding EDI, please call 703-305-7559.

Can I submit my schedule products or services as text? Certain schedules and SINs have been designated as either “allowing” or “requiring” a text file instead of a detailed data file, particularly for services. EDI vendors must download the Schedule/SIN/MO Table from the Vendor Support Center at <http://vsc.fss.gsa.gov> to determine which schedules or SINs allow or require a text file. Please note that products and services submitted as text cannot be ordered online but can only be viewed! Products should be submitted in a data format wherever possible.

See the EDI 864 text file sample for further instructions on file format and what should be included in your text file.

Common EDI problems to avoid:

- Please ensure that if the following symbols are used as delimiters in your EDI submissions, that you not include them within your data: *, ~, @
- Make sure to include at a minimum the following line item (LIN) detail information:
 - MG: Manufacturers part number (except for certain services)
 - ZZ: Manufacturers name
 - PD: Part number description/Commodity name
 - CH: Country of origin
 - PI: Special Item Number (SIN)
- When stating the Federal Supply Schedule price (CTP segment with the D01 qualifier), please be sure to include a unit of issue (i.e. unit packaging).

- A name must be included with the PER that uses the AC qualifier (Administrator POC).

Vendor Support Center: The purpose of the VSC (<http://vsc.fss.gsa.gov>) is to provide assistance to vendors in the preparation and submission of their electronic catalog files. Although the primary focus of the VSC is the support of non-EDI vendors using the Schedule Input Program, it is also an important resource for EDI compliant vendors. The VSC also maintains a web site containing downloadable look-up tables, EDI transaction set samples, etc. Full access to the VSC system is available using your user logon name/ID and password that is provided at registration.

Personnel at the VSC may be reached at 703-305-6235 (M-F 8:00-5:00 PM EST), or FAX 703-305-7944, or e-mail vendor.support@vsc.gsa.gov.

For more information or for any questions regarding EDI, please call 703-305-7559.

What If I Do Not Know Which Way My Company Should Submit Catalogs?

If you haven't yet decided on a submission method, remember your options are EDI, SIP or you may use an outside source to prepare and submit your EDI or SIP file. Contact the GSA Vendor Support Center at 703-305-6235 (M-F 8:00-5:00 PM EST), or FAX 703-305-7944, or e-mail vendor.support@vsc.gsa.gov if further assistance is needed.

If you are a VA FSS contract holder, and have questions about the VA-GSA Advantage Partnership, call Ron Comtois at 708-786-5145 or ronald.comtois@med.va.gov.

Thank you!