

## GSA Advantage – Vendor Start-Up Kit

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Welcome Electronic Partner!

We are excited about our new partnership as we bring your Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) products and services to our Federal customers worldwide via the Internet! With millions of products now on-line, the GSA Advantage online shopping service is the most widely used shopping site in government. We invite you to join the thousands of schedule vendors already online!

This Start-up Kit explains how to get your products and services online as well as how to maintain your information. Your participation is extremely important to us as we have accepted the challenge to employ electronic commerce and to simplify the acquisition process for 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. Agencies may also submit request for quotes using the GSA Advantage "e-Buy" RFQ system which is a service of GSA Advantage.

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: Read** and become familiar with schedule clause I-FSS-597 that requires participation in GSA Advantage. Additionally, see clause I-FSS-600, "Contract Price List" of your Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contract which addresses the submission of electronic catalogs. Vendor's electronic catalog file must be received no later than 6 months after award. Catalogs must be submitted electronically via Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) or via the Schedule Input Program (SIP) software. 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) online at <http://vsc.gsa.gov> or by calling toll free at 877-495-4849 (M-F 7:30-5:30 PM EST). If you use SIP it will prompt you for registration information. The VSC will provide you with a password that 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. All contracts must be registered with the VSC.

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.

**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. If you choose to use SIP instead of EDI, please see "Instructions for Vendors Using SIP".

**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 and remain current.

### **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:

<b>GSA Contracting Program Offices</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>3rd - 4th Position of Contract No.</b>
IT Acquisition Center	703-605-2762	(35)

Automotive Division	703-605-5592	(30)
Office Supplies & Paper Prod. Acq. Center	212-264-9211	(02, 14, 15)
General Products Acquisition Center	817-978-2497	(07, 24, 26)
National Furniture Acquisition Center	703-605-9260	(25, 27, 28, 29)
Management Services Acquisition Center	253-931-7102	(10)
Services Acquisition Center	703-605-2840	(22, 23)
Hardware & Appliances Acquisition Center	816-823-1973	(06, 20, 21)
General Procurement Branch	215-446-5024	(03)
Travel & Transportation Services	703-605-2920	(33)
Contact office that negotiated your contract		(00)

**VA Contracting Program Office                      708-786-5145**

- If you have questions concerning the preparation and submission of your electronic catalog using SIP, contact the Vendor Support Center (VSC) at 877-495-4849 (M-F 7:30-5:30 PM EST) or e-mail [vendor.support@gsa.gov](mailto:vendor.support@gsa.gov).
- If you have questions concerning the preparation and submission of your electronic catalog using EDI, contact our EDI Help Desk at 703-872-3891.
- If you have general questions regarding the GSA Advantage shopping system call 877-472-3777 option 2 or e-mail: [gsa.advantage@gsa.gov](mailto:gsa.advantage@gsa.gov).

**Schedule/SIN mergers:** GSA/VA have merged a number of its schedules and Special Item Numbers (SINs) into new or existing schedules.

- 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 5.03), SIP will automatically convert your data to the new schedule and SINs. If you are using SIP 5.03 or later, use the Tools|Merge Schedules option.


**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 same part number. This may require a part number modification on your part.

**How do I get photos to appear with 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 70k, and the photo filename must not exceed 30 characters. Also, do not use special characters in the filename.

Vendors using EDI must upload photos to GSA using the Photo Upload Tool located on the VSC website. For EDI vendors, the photo filename must be included in the 832 catalog file submission using the REF segment (2/040) with the "51" qualifier in the REF01 and the filename in the REF02. In order to delete a photo from Advantage, simply exclude the REF segment from the 832 catalog submission

You may also indicate a web site address (URL) for each product if you wish. If your company maintains a web site that contains pictures and/or other information on your products, you may indicate those specific web site addresses with your catalog submission. Products on GSA Advantage having a web site address, as provided by the vendor, will have direct links to that

vendor's web site address. If a customer links to your website, they must have the ability to use their browser's "back" key to return to GSA Advantage.

**How are purchase orders issued by GSA Advantage?** GSA sends all purchase orders to MAS vendors via FAX, EDI, or XML depending upon the vendor's preference and capabilities. GSA also offers a free software program called the "GSA Advantage Order/Status Tool" which is included within SIP or can be downloaded as a stand alone version from the VSC. Once installed, this tool will allow you to download your orders from GSA Advantage. Once installed, a "GSA" icon  will appear at the bottom of your screen which can be set to automatically check for orders coming from GSA Advantage. In addition, you can use the tool to easily upload status on your orders. This status is made available to ordering customers.

All vendors are initially setup to receive FAX purchase orders. If you wish to receive EDI or XML purchase orders, please call 703-872-3891.

**How do I provide order status to my customers?** It is extremely important that status of orders be provided to your customers. We strongly urge you to do so. The GSA Advantage Order/ Status Tool mentioned above allows you to conveniently provide status back on every order that is sent to you via GSA Advantage. Our EDI and XML vendors may also provide status. The 856 transaction set can be used for those doing EDI and the documentation can be found on the VSC website. XML vendors may provide status back as well and are encouraged to call our helpdesk number at 703-872-3891.

**What will my data look like in GSA Advantage?** It is an excellent idea for you to take a look at GSA Advantage 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, you may browse, search, compare items, add items to your cart, configure a product, add accessories, view product detail, view vendor information, and more. Once your own catalog data is online, you should check frequently to make sure it appears as you had intended.

**Can I also submit information from my authorized government price list?** Vendors who submit product and pricing data are encouraged to also submit a text file containing the Customer Ordering information listed in their authorized government price list. This information will be viewable not only through GSA Advantage but also through our Schedules E-Library and e-Buy websites. GSA and DOD have been working on a collaborative effort to ensure proper use of MAS contracting vehicles. Submission of your GSA contract terms and conditions will help customers make an informed buying decision.

## **Instructions for Vendors Using SIP**

The Schedules Input Program (SIP) software can be downloaded from the GSA Vendor Support Center. SIP is a client-side application that allows you to import/input then upload all your contract and product data for inclusion on GSA Advantage.

**SIP system requirements:** The SIP is a Windows based program which operates in a Windows 98 environment or greater. The minimum hardware requirement is a Pentium class PC with at least 64 MB RAM. 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.

**Can I import my catalog data into SIP?** Yes. When you install the SIP program, an Import Program is also installed which allows you to import either 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 and Response File processing:** Once you have prepared your file using SIP, you must upload it to GSA. 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. Please note that if you later wish to replace all information you must create a replacement catalog using the Communications|Create Replacement File option.

Once your file is uploaded, it will be forwarded to the appropriate GSA/VA contracting officer (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 SIP “response file” will also be generated (usually within 24 hours). You must process your response file using SIP 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 purpose of the response file is to inform you as to whether your file was approved or rejected, and to update your SIP software ensuring that both the SIP and GSA Advantage databases remain in sync. SIP will prompt you when a response file needs to be processed and will automatically retrieve and process the file. Once your response file is processed, you are free to submit further updates. Please note that files submitted having validation or other errors, are rejected prior to CO review. If this occurs, an email is sent and a response file is created.

**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 CO for details as to why the file was rejected. Rejected catalogs must be resubmitted within 30 calendar days.

**Temporary price reductions:** Files containing temporary price reductions will be immediately loaded to GSA Advantage without contracting officer approval.

**Can I submit my MAS 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. The SIP program will prompt you when this option is allowed. Please note that products and services

submitted in a document cannot be ordered online but can only be viewed! Products should be submitted in a data format wherever possible.

The text file process has been enhanced and now allows you to create documents in .pdf, .doc, .xls, or .htm format. Please note that the filename must not contain spaces and must reside in SIP's "textfile" subdirectory. See SIP online help for further instructions including what should be included in your text file.

**Vendor Support Center:** The purpose of the VSC (<http://vsc.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 provides the latest versions of the SIP software, and more.

Personnel at the VSC may be reached at 877-495-4849 (M-F 7:30-5:30 PM EST), or e-mail [vendor.support@gsa.gov](mailto:vendor.support@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 703-872-3891.

**EDI catalog submission process:** Catalog data submitted to GSA via EDI transaction set 832 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 transaction set to specify data content errors in your catalog file should your file be rejected. The 824 is sent to vendors electronically or it may be E-mailed or Faxed to those vendors unable to accept an 824 electronically. Rejected catalogs must be resubmitted within 30 calendar days.

**EDI 832 samples:** Sample 832 Price/Sales Catalog transaction sets can be downloaded from the Vendor Support Center at <http://vsc.gsa.gov>. These samples are compliant with the Federal Implementation Convention (IC). The 832 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 samples is a table of expected data elements that 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. 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, etc., and can also be downloaded from the VSC. These tables are updated as required.

**How to submit your 832 Price/Sales Catalog:** 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. The appropriate IP Address, Log-on ID and Password will be provided by contacting the EDI Help Desk below.
3. A mailbox on the Inovis system is available for those vendors whose service providers have interconnects with Inovis. 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 temporary price reductions will be immediately loaded without contracting officer approval.

**EDI help desk:** For more information or for any questions regarding EDI, please call 703-872-3891.

**Can I submit my MAS 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. EDI vendors must download the Schedule/SIN/MO Table from the Vendor Support Center at <http://vsc.gsa.gov> to determine which schedules or SINs allow or require a text file. Please note that products and services submitted in a text file cannot be ordered online but can only be viewed! Products should be submitted in a data format wherever possible.

Text files can no longer be submitted in an 864 format. Instead, text documents must be created in .pdf, .doc, .xls, or .htm format and uploaded to GSA via the VSC website or FTP. Use the Text File Upload Tool if uploading via the VSC website. The text filename must include your contract number and the name of the file. The filename may not contain spaces. Format the filename as follows: "GS-07F-1234A\_filename.xxx", where xxx is one of the formats allowed above. The document filename should be placed in the REF segment C03 using the "TN" qualifier in the REF01 and the actual filename in the REF02.

**Submitting photos:** All photos must be in a .jpg format, must be no larger than 70k, and the photo filename must not exceed 30 characters. Also, do not use special characters in the filename. Vendors using EDI must upload photos to GSA using the Photo Upload Tool located on the VSC website. The photo filename must be included in the 832 catalog file submission using the REF segment (2/040) with the "51" qualifier in the REF01 and the filename in the REF02. In order to delete a photo from GSA Advantage, simply exclude the REF segment from the 832 catalog submission.

#### **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.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 support of non-EDI vendors using the Schedule Input Program, it is also an important resource for EDI vendors. The VSC also maintains a web site containing downloadable look-up tables, EDI transaction set samples, etc.

Personnel at the VSC may be reached at 877-495-4849 (M-F 7:30-5:30 PM EST), or e-mail [vendor.support@gsa.gov](mailto:vendor.support@gsa.gov).

For more information or for any questions regarding EDI, please call 703-872-3891.

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