GSA Acquisition Workforce Forum

--Informing the GSA acquisition workforce on the latest acquisition news and events!

EDITION THIRTEEN
FALL 2006

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

CAO Corner by Emily Murphy

GSA is in the midst of implementing a multi-year effort that is producing significant, across-the–board changes in all aspects of procurement. A driver of recent change is the government's increasing reliance on outside contractors to perform many functions critical to agency operations. With scarcer resources, both financial and human, all government agencies—including GSA, are turning increasingly to the private sector.

Big increases in the number of contracts being awarded by the government each year put considerable pressure on federal acquisition functions at all levels. Many agencies, including GSA, are scrambling to keep up. Here are a few steps we're taking to ensure that acquisition professionals are adequately prepared to execute their demanding and changing responsibilities.

Developing Interagency Standards. Why is this important, you may ask? With workloads shifting, people working on an acquisition may not always be in the same location or even in the agency. With a common set of standards this won't matter. The government becomes much more flexible to respond to needs as they arise and as they change. In the case of disasters, contracting

"All of our citizens should have the opportunity to live and work with dignity and freedom. Every October, we observe National Disability Employment Awareness Month, to recognize the talents, skills, and dedication of disabled Americans who are a vital part of our workforce."

– President George W. Bush

staff could immediately be reassigned to a different job to assist responding agencies without concern for capabilities. As it relates to the workforce itself, contracting personnel would have more flexibility to pursue new and unique opportunities within the federal workforce, giving them the opportunity to expand their horizons. Giving contracting personnel these opportunities will, hopefully, provide the upcoming workforce with added incentive to remain in the federal government.

Skill Gaps and the "Complete" Contracting Officer. Through various tools, GSA has gone through a skills gap analysis of its 1102 series employees at all levels. Using the information we've gathered thus far, we're developing common certification levels. We're also taking it a step further by using the results of these analyses to focus the training dollars we have on the areas our workforce scored lowest. We're developing courses that can cover a variety of skill gaps in a single course as well as courses that focus on just one competency.

We're also expanding the acquisition workforce to include project management. Preparing contracting officers of the future should include training across project management functions—finance, legal, management—as well as across contracting types. In the changing acquisition environment, a well rounded contracting officer will need to have a basic understanding of the skills of the rest of the acquisition team in order to do things better, faster, cheaper, and with fewer people.

These are only a few of the areas we're focusing on in developing the acquisition workforce. Through the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) and the Center of Acquisition Excellence, I believe we are on track to be able to meet both your development needs and the needs of the federal government as a whole. There is a lot more work to be done,

but I am confident that we at GSA, and as a government, will achieve great things for the acquisition workforce.

From the Desk of the Editor
by Judy Steele

This edition of the "Forum" is about change, updates and results. OCAO is well into a rewrite of the GSAM which will make our jobs as acquisition professionals easier to perform. The SARA Panel has wrapped up their work and made final recommendations. Two new Procurement Information Bulletins have been released by PBS. OCAO has also renewed a partnering agreement with the Interior Department to support Interior's Governmentwide Acquisition Intern Program. Results have been immediate—we have already welcomed our first Intern from that program, Kelly Lael. Articles on updates to e-Buy, GSA Advantage, a new release of the PBS Electronic Acquisition System, and an upcoming new release of the Buy Accessible Wizard demonstrate how GSA is working to update tools to facilitate the acquisition process.

Please take time to read Part 1 of the article Lisa Cliff and I wrote (with invaluable input from the whole IAE Program Office), "Then & Now: Integrating the Acquisition Environment." Part 1 of this article discusses how the IAE initiative evolved. Parts 2 and 3, which will be published in the Winter and Spring 2007 editions of the newsletter, will discuss what life was like for acquisition professionals before IAE, and what it is like now. Those of you who are new to the acquisition profession may be interested in seeing what those of us "oldtimers" had to go through! The complete article will be published in the November edition of "Contract Management," the National Contract Management Association (NCMA) magazine.

We hope you will find this issue of the "Forum" to be helpful in informing you on some of the changes underway at GSA. Please forward any comments, suggestions and articles for the newsletter to the Editor, Judy Steele, at judy.steele@gsa.gov. The "Forum" is here to meet the needs of the GSA acquisition community and we can't do that without your input!

OCAO UPDATE

GSAM Rewrite Underway

OCAO is beginning a comprehensive review of the General Services Administration Acquisition Manual (GSAM.) The goal is to have the GSAM completely revised by December 2008. Revisions to the GSAM are necessary to maintain consistency with the FAR; and to implement streamlined and innovative acquisition procedures that contractors, offerors and GSA contracting personnel can utilize when entering into and administering contractual relationships. The GSAM rewrite initiative will provide new and/or augmented coverage, revise sections which have become irrelevant because of changes in technology or business processes, and delete unnecessary burdens on small businesses.

The GSAM rewrite effort is organized into seven teams consisting of employees throughout the country, representing all of the Regions. OCAO chose to organize a team of experts consisting of subject matter experts from services and staff offices to draw from the knowledge base and best practices of GSA employees nationwide. The teams have been working diligently on several high priority GSAM parts. Their insight and input will help revise, maintain, and publicize the GSAM. For more information, contact Beverly Cromer at beverly.cromer@gsa.gov or 202-501-1448.

It's A Wrap: SARA Panel Final Recommendations
by Laura Auletta, Executive Director, Acquisition Advisory Panel

In the update on the Acquisition Advisory Panel (SARA Section 1423 Panel) in the Spring edition of the newsletter, I provided you with the recommendations from the Small Business Working Group and the Interagency Contracting Working Group. Since then, the SARA Panel has adopted recommendations covering performance-based acquisitions, commercial practices, the acquisition workforce, the appropriate role of contractors supporting the government, and data. This article will describe the general purpose of the recommendations for each of the working groups. You may review the actual findings and recommendations at the Panel's website at www.acquisition.gov by selecting the link for the Acquisition Advisory Panel, and, once at our website, selecting "Panel Recommendations To Date."

It is important to note that until implemented by statute, regulation or policy, the Panel's recommendations are just that, recommendations. This article should not be interpreted as policy implementing any of these recommendations.

The SARA Panel has been busy over the last 18 months. (Please see the Winter 2006 edition of the newsletter for more background information on the Panel.) During the last year and a half, the Panel:

- Held 31 public meetings
- Heard testimony from over 100 witnesses representing over 85 organizations including federal agencies, trade associations,

commercial companies, government contractors, both large and small, government audit agencies, government watchdog groups, academics, and private citizens

- Recorded nearly 7,500 pages of transcripts

Three of the specific areas the Panel was tasked to review were commercial buying practices, performance-based acquisitions, and interagency contracting. The Panel was to recommend changes that would advance the best interests of the government and improve the efficiency of the acquisition system while maintaining its ethical and financial integrity.

During the testimony of the more than 100 witnesses who addressed the Panel and the Panel's research, several themes began to emerge and intersect in the working groups:

- The importance of a competitive process to drive the best outcomes
- The importance of requirements analysis to derive the benefits of competition
- Lack of tools necessary for requirements analysis or market research
- Uneven or inadequate data collection rendering comprehensive analysis difficult, and
- Transparency lacking in key areas

Commercial Practices. The Panel invited speakers with expertise in given areas including commercial companies who purchase services from other firms. They included Procter & Gamble, Disney Corporation, and General Motors, among others. These firms were asked about how they buy services for their companies, and in particular, how they buy solutions. Here is what they told the Panel:

- They apply significant resources to these engagements, especially in the upfront requirements definition stages
- Because of this emphasis in analyzing their requirements, they are able to procure these services performance-based and at a fixed price
- They rarely buy solutions under time and materials (T&M) contracts because they are expensive to manage properly
- They nearly *always* compete these acquisitions
- Competition not only provides better pricing, it also fuels innovation
- They allow significant exchange with the companies during the competition and generally down-select to two or three companies during the competition
- They continually monitor performance after award

The Panel compared this to information collected about government procurements:

- Significant dollars are awarded non-competitively (32% of all contract awards in 2004 were non-competitive)
- Since 2000, competitive procurements resulting in only one offer have doubled
- The Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Inspectors General from GSA and the Defense Department, in both testimony and their reports, found that orders under interagency contracts
  - o frequently did not comply with competition requirements
  - o lacked sufficient government surveillance of T&M orders
  - o lacked clear roles and responsibilities between those holding the contracts, those ordering off of them, and the end user
- Government contractors and trade associations told the Panel that the

government frequently doesn't describe its requirements sufficiently to allow fixed pricing

- The GAO said there was little visibility into interagency contracts
- The government cannot identify how many interagency contracts exist outside of the GSA multiple award schedules (MAS) program and governmentwide acquisition contracts (GWACs).
- Approximately $140 billion was awarded under interagency contracts in FY 2004
- The GAO has added interagency contracts to their "High Risk" series

Based on what commercial firms told the Panel and the information it gathered, the Panel's emphasis on competition is understandable. Recommendations adopted reinforce the importance of competition and improved transparency when competitive procedures are waived. For instance, the Panel recommended that the Section 803 requirements for DoD be expanded governmentwide for multiple award contracts to ensure all vendors who may offer are notified of opportunities and that agencies solicit sufficient numbers to ensure three offers are received. The Panel also recognized the need for better requirements definition but clearly understood the challenge this poses to an already strained workforce. Therefore, the Panel recommended providing tools to assist acquisition personnel in developing requirements and maintaining market expertise.

Interagency Contracting. As to the recommendations for improving interagency contracting, the Panel suggested more emphasis on the business disciplines necessary for the creation of well-managed interagency contracts – focusing on a clear business case, sufficient resources, and delineation of roles and responsibilities when an agency decides to set up or continue such a contract. The recommendations also focus on transparency – in fact, some of you may have been involved in the data call from the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) which was an initial step recommended by the Panel to get an idea of how many of these contracts are in existence. The Panel agreed that competition among agencies using competing interagency contracts was good but inefficient duplication degrades the value of these vehicles to leverage buying power and reduce overall administrative costs to the government. Therefore, identification of these contracts is critical.

Small Business. The Panel also heard testimony from small businesses concerned with the impact of interagency contracts on their opportunities to participate in government procurements. The Panel recommended, therefore, statutory authority to reserve for small business some prime contract awards under full and open competitions for multiple award contracts that would not otherwise be suitable for a total small business set-aside. The Panel also recommended statutory authority to reserve certain orders under these contracts for just small business competition. If implemented, these recommendations would provide authority for such reservations but would not make them mandatory.

Performance-Based Service Acquis-itions. Based on a written public comment, the Panel initiated its own survey of performance-based service acquisitions (PBSA). The Panel randomly selected about 76 contracts and orders from those coded as performance-based in FPDS-NG from the top 10 contracting agencies. Approximately 64 were received and reviewed with the following findings:

- 36% contained the elements of a performance-based acquisition

- 42% were clearly not performance-based (quite a number of these were determined by the agencies themselves not to be performance-based and mistakenly coded as such in FPDS-NG)
- 22% required significant improvement in one or more elements of a PBSA

While not intended to be a statistically valid survey, the results support the GAO study done in 2002 and testimony heard from federal agencies about the challenges they face when trying to apply PBSA techniques. In the 22% where significant improvement was needed, the most common problem was that the measures weren't linked to a specific outcome or quality attribute. The most positively reviewed contracts or orders frequently used service level agreements (SLAs) to define performance levels and objective measures. The Panel heard testimony that commercial companies use performance-based techniques to drive innovative solutions. But it also heard from government contractors that many solicitations they receive could be written as performance-based but are not. The Panel's recommendations focus primarily on providing more guidance on how to assess a requirement for suitability for performance-based acquisition techniques as well as guidance on applying the technique, such as developing measurable performance standards and appropriate incentives.

Acquisition Workforce. The acquisition workforce recommendations focus on the need to consistently define and identify and provide human capital planning for the acquisition workforce in order to assess the needs of agencies. The Panel found that while acquisition reform simplified purchasing under the simplified acquisition threshold, purchasing above that threshold became more complex and the services bought by the government are more sophisticated than ever.

The Panel recommends incentives to retain experienced senior personnel and a governmentwide intern program to attract high quality personnel at the entry level. But the Panel also recognizes the need to focus on continuing training and recommended numerous improvements including agency head approval before training funds can be diverted for other uses and an OFPP review of whether the training of an individual agency is sufficient to support its Human Capital Management Plan for the acquisition workforce. The Panel recommended reauthorization of the SARA Training Fund.

Appropriate Role of Contractors Supporting the Government. The Panel recognized the growing use of contractors in the workplace to help agencies meet their missions. This emergence of what is frequently called the "blended workforce" has resulted in some confusion, especially with respect to the concepts of inherently governmental functions, personal services, and organizational and personal conflicts of interest. It also raises questions of how to protect contractors' confidential and proprietary data when in the hands of other contractors working side-by-side with government personnel. The Panel acknowledged the need for contractor support to meet agency mission; however, it found that the proliferation of contractors in the workplace raises some questions that must be addressed. The Panel, therefore, recommended updating the principles for agencies to apply in determining which functions must be done by civil servants and staffing these adequately. But it also found that the provisions that limit the government's ability to direct the work of contractors onsite create inefficiencies. Therefore, it recommended removing these artificial barriers to allow the government to direct a contractor's workforce on the substance of work or tasks to be performed while maintaining the prohibition on governmental

personnel performing in any supervisory capacity with respect to a contractor's workforce (e.g., hiring, leave approval, promotion, performance ratings). The Panel also recommended training and tools to assist government personnel in the identification of contractor organizational and personal conflicts of interest and how to address or mitigate these and how to protect contractor confidential and proprietary information in a blended workforce environment.

FPDS-NG Data. Finally, the Panel recommended improvements in the accountability of data submissions to FPDS-NG, finding that some key data in the system is either erroneously entered (as in the case of the performance-based data described above in the Panel's survey) or for other reasons provides little visibility into the government's procurement. For instance, the Panel frequently found anomalies within given transactions, where, for instance, the supply or service code completely contradicted the NAICS code or, where billions of dollars of GSA schedule orders were coded as "noncommercial." Therefore, the Panel's recommendations include that during Procurement Management Reviews (PMRs), and IG and GAO reviews, accuracy of FPDS-NG data for given transactions should also be reviewed to ensure consistency with the contract or order file.

You are encouraged to monitor the Panel's website. The Panel's draft final report will be posted for public comment. The Panel will submit its final report to OFPP and Congress later this year. For more information, contact Laura Smith-Auletta at laura.auletta@gsa.gov or 202-208-7279.

e-Buy Update

GSA's e-Buy, the federal government's premier Request For Quote (RFQ) tool, is designed to facilitate the request for and submission of quotes/proposals for supplies and services offered under GSA Schedules and Governmentwide Acquisition Contracts (GWACs). As customer agencies and vendor needs grow, we are continuously improving and enhancing e-Buy. For instance, for our customer agencies, we have improved and streamlined the purchase order process and updated the address features. Also, we have included more sorting functionality for RFQs and integrated links to vendor attachments on the RFQ detail page, making it easier to manage your RFQs.

We have also included more sorting functionality for RFQs for our vendors. Buyer modifications are now dated for identification purposes. Schedules and Special Item Numbers (SINs) selected by the buyer now appear on the RFQ for referencing capabilities. Also, the time remaining on an RFQ is now shown at the bottom of the screen to assist in a timely response to buyer RFQs. In addition, new training materials such as webcasts and updated tutorials have been added to the e-Buy homepage. For more information, check out the website at www.ebuy.gsa.gov or contact Sandra Ladds at sandra.ladds@gsa.gov or 703-605-2630.
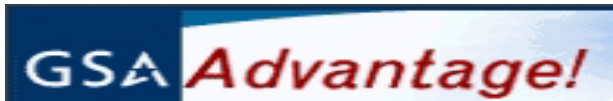
GSA Advantage Update

GSA Advantage provides the most convenient one-stop shopping source to meet all your procurement needs. With GSA Advantage,

you have the most reliable resource for federal purchasers, the most comprehensive selection of approved products and services, and the ability to complete purchases quickly, with confidence, and at best value. We have introduced several new special categories on GSA Advantage: Environmental, Disaster Relief, Fire, and Homeland Security. These special categories have been tailored to help customers locate related products and services as well as provide useful links and information relating to associated laws and regulations.

Purchasing or "checking out" your products is now faster and easier. We recently updated and streamlined the "Checkout" process. One page now tells it all! The new "Checkout – Review" screen displays a summary of your order including payment information, customer information, items being ordered, etc., and provides links to easily update this information if needed. The shopping cart now displays the vendor name with each product, and you now have the ability to add the same product to the cart as long as it is configured differently using the options/accessories link. New sorting capabilities have been added to the Search Results page allowing you to sort by price or by manufacturer. In addition, the Address Book has been reconstructed for better clarity and usability. Now you can view all your addresses at one time and designate an individual to receive shipment. Lastly, Order History has been improved to provide more information about your order. Shipping addresses and individuals receiving shipment are now listed at the bottom of the page. Environmental and other symbols associated with products ordered are now displayed, and you now have the ability to view and print Purchase Orders from the Order History page.

Look for more exciting changes coming to GSA Advantage in the near future! For more information, check out the website at www.gsaadvantage.gov or contact Sandra Ladds at sandra.ladds@gsa.gov or 703-605-2630.

Office of Organizational Resources Issues Procurement Bulletins

The PBS Office of Organizational Resources' Vendor Acquisition Division obtained the OCAO's concurrence and regional input toward the development of Procurement Information Bulletin (PIB) 06-05. PIB 06-05 implements OCAO's Acquisition Letter V-06-05, Assisted Acquisitions: Periodic Review Requirements and Fiscal Year Cut-Off-Dates, tailored for PBS operations. The PIB was signed by Commissioner Winstead for national distribution on August 8, 2006. The PIB provides for target compliance completion dates and a $50,000 review threshold for certain procurements.

The Acquisition Division also obtained regional, headquarters, and senior executive input in the development of a strategy for consistently managing the PBS Acquisition and Procurement program. The result was implementation of PIB 06-04, which focuses on Acquisition Excellence through the compilation of a uniform set of tools and approaches the regions can use to improve the PBS acquisition process. PIB 06-04 was signed by Commissioner Winstead for national distribution on July 21, 2006. For more information, contact Barbara Bartee at barbara.bartee@gsa.gov or 202-501-1824.

PBS Contract Writing System New Release

PBS Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) deployed a new version of the PBS Electronic Acquisition System (EAS) on June 12. This version of EAS uses the commercial product Comprizon Suite to provide PBS associates with a national web enabled system to manage the full lifecycle of procure-

ment activities and contract administration. In conjunction with several look and feel improvements, other behind the scenes improvements resulted in a significant increase in response time. Also, a National Interest flag was added, enabling easy identification of hurricane related actions.

In preparation for deployment of Comprizon Suite 8.0, PBS successfully provided a demonstration of the new capabilities to over 500 of the active users. This was accomplished by utilizing interactive Lotus Sametime sessions hosted by the PBS CIO and presented by CACI, system support contractor, that included a powerpoint presentation followed up with a live on-line demo of the system and Q&A session on the new version. There was one demo per region and, based on statistics gathered, PBS was able to reach a third of the active users in up to 23 different locations at once without incurring any significant travel costs. For more information, contact Greg Yantis at greg.yantis@gsa.gov or 540-338-7808.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

OCAO Partners with DOI on Government-wide Acquisition Intern Program

Over the last few months, the Office of National and Regional Acquisition Development has been making great strides in continuing to develop training, educating, and expanding the acquisition workforce. As part of our commitment to professional development, we are partnering once again with the Department of the Interior (DOI) Governmentwide Acquisition Management Intern Program. This is a three-year program which allows interns to rotate to four or five different federal agencies. This program is designed to develop federal government Contract Specialists into procurement professionals, allowing them to become the government business leaders of the future. Supervisors prepare an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for each intern that guides their training and assignments throughout the program, including four, six-month long rotational assignments at one of the sponsoring government agencies. Interns are permanently assigned to jobs in one of the sponsoring agencies.

Kelly Lael

Over the next three years, GSA will have four DOI interns rotating through different offices within GSA. We are pleased to announce that we have recently welcomed our first DOI intern for 2006, Kelly Lael. Kelly has been involved in several procurement–related projects while rotating through GSA, such as: reviewing RFPs and proposals, participating in A-76 studies, and observing Source Selection Boards. Kelly is very enthusiastic about this program and about GSA; she likes the procurement field and is anxious to complete all of the coursework necessary to be Clinger-Cohen compliant. We wish Kelly, and all of the interns who will be joining GSA through this DOI program, the best of luck in their federal government careers. For more information, contact Rachael Stevens at rachael.stevens@gsa.gov or 202-208-1261 or Ronald Quinn at ronald.quinn@gsa.gov or 202-219-1362.

SMALL BUSINESS CORNER

Tour of Duty: GSA's Small Business Initiative Benefits Service Disabled Veterans

The Veterans Entrepreneurship Act and Small Business Development Act of 1999 established an annual governmentwide goal of not less than 3 percent of the value of prime contract and subcontract awards for participation by small business concerns owned and controlled by service disabled veterans. Executive Order 13360 tasked GSA to establish a GWAC to strengthen opportunities in federal contracting for Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs). As a result of the order, the Veterans Technology Services Governmentwide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) or VETS GWAC was implemented.

The VETS GWAC provides federal agencies the ability to achieve small business goals through purchases of information technology (IT) solutions from small businesses owned by service-disabled veterans. It provides federal agencies with a new way to achieve small business goals through purchase of IT solutions from a pre-competed pool of SDVOSB firms. VETS is a multiple award, indefinite-delivery indefinite-quantity contract designed to provide worldwide IT solutions to federal agencies while strengthening opportunities in federal contracting for SDVOSBs.

VETS is the first GWAC set-aside for SDVOSBs and it is being procured by the GSA Small Business GWAC Center, which manages a diversified portfolio of small business GWACs. The Center's currently active GWACs are the 8(a) STARS (Streamlined Technology Acquisition Resources for Services) GWAC and the HUBZone (Historically Underutilized Business Zone) GWAC.

GSA GWACs are multiple award, solutions-based contracts for IT. GWACs are defined as task order or delivery order contracts for IT established by one agency for governmentwide use (FAR 2.1). VETS GWAC will provide not only socioeconomic credit toward agency procurement preference goals but also a variety of benefits that GSA GWACs offer. Customers can take advantage of GWACs' streamlined process – a competition within a qualified pool of contractors at the task order level. The GWAC Program office will assist customers in meeting their agency IT requirements by providing education and training, statement of work review, delegations of authority, and guidance throughout the process. There is also online training available, "Governmentwide Acquisition Contracts (GWACs) Overview," which contains valuable information on the proper use of GWACs. For more information about VETS, please visit our website at www.gsa.gov/vetsgwac or contact the Small Business GWAC Center at 877-327-8732.

Southeast Sunbelt Region at NC Defense Trade Show

The Southeast Sunbelt Region participated in the 5th annual defense trade show and government procurement workshop sponsored by U.S. Representative Robin Hayes at the Fayetteville Technical Community College, Fayetteville, North Carolina. Approximately 100 small business owners took advantage of meeting industry partners such as Boeing; Booz Allen Hamilton;

Danskin, Inc.; Ft. Bragg Army Contracting; Pope AFB Contracting Squadron; Seymour Johnson Contracting, and approximately 60 other exhibitors, including the Small Business Administration's North Carolina District Office. The trade show gave small businesses an opportunity to meet and network with federal buying activities and large prime contractors. Dinora Gonzalez, Regional Small Business Technical Advisor, presented information on how to do business with GSA; and John Porter, Customer Service Director, assisted vendors with questions on getting on GSA Schedule. For more information, contact Dinora Gonzalez at dinora.gonzalez@gsa.gov or 404-331-3031.

Attendees of Trade Fair at Boeing Museum of Flight

Northwest/Arctic Region Supports 1st Annual Native American Alliance

The Northwest/Arctic Region's Office of Small Business Utilization participated in the 1st Annual Native American Alliance Trade Fair, held in Auburn, Washington, August 22. This event kicked-off the previous night at the Boeing Museum of Flight and was attended by Washington State congressional staffs, government agency representatives, and local and national small business owners. The trade fair was sponsored by Northwest American Indian Development and the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development. These organizations are committed to helping American Indian communities progress towards self-sufficiency through integrated business and economic development activities. The event attracted over 300 participants. For more information, contact Kenyon Taylor at kenyon.taylor@gsa.gov or 253-931-7956.

GREEN PROCUREMENT

Potomac Yard Project Receives LEED Gold Award

Congratulations to NCR's EPA at One and Two Potomac Yard project team for receipt of the U.S. Green Building Council's Gold LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification rating. The prestigious rating recognizes the buildings' features such as 20% energy savings, 40% water use reduction, a "green roof" building connector, environmentally friendly fixtures and finishes, and the use of recycled content in most of the products. The buildings, located on the 300-acre Potomac Yard site in Arlington, Virginia, are the centerpiece of a portion of the former railroad yard and a premier urban redevelopment project.

Some of the key features of these state-of-the-art facilities include "daylight harvesting" allowing more light to come into the workspace and perimeter overhead lighting that will dim automatically based on ambient daylight. The result is an employee-friendly building that brings the natural settings into every office. It will be equally inviting to visitors and reflects EPA's mission – to protect human health and the environment.

With 412,590 rentable square feet of office space, this build-to-suit lease is the new home for EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response and Office of Prevention Pesticides and Toxic Substances. Approximately 1,600 people will work in this facility. Congratulations to Triangle Service Center associates Daryl Jackson,

Contracting Officer; Bob Roop, Section Chief; Sonia Mena, Realty Specialist; Monica King, Lead Budget Analyst, RWA Team; Scott T. Jackson, Project Manager; and George Jett, Project Inspector! For more information, contact Cherie McClung at cherie.mcclung@gsa.gov or 202-708-5110.

SE Sunbelt Region Wins 2006 Federal Energy and Water Management Award

The John J. Duncan Federal Building in Knoxville, Tennessee, was named a winner of the Federal Energy and Water Management Award from the Federal Interagency Energy Policy Committee and the Department of Energy's Federal Energy Management Program. The governmentwide awards recognize significant contributions toward increased energy efficiency and water conservation within the federal government. GSA was cited for making a real environmental impact through creative thinking, group collaboration and an over-arching passion to comply with federal energy reduction mandates at the Duncan building. The GSA Team exceeded Fiscal Year 2005 energy reduction goals by 33 percent - a reduction equivalent to 91,000 gallons of gasoline per year, and reduced water usage by 400,000 gallons per year, by utilizing green energy sources for electricity. Through office-waste and construction material recycling programs and through educational programs for the tenants and the maintenance and cleaning staffs, the Team reduced waste from the Duncan Building entering land-fills by 40%. The building has received the Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star Building Certification and the Federal Energy Saver Showcase Designation and is qualified for the

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Award for an Existing Building (LEED – EB) Certification. The Knoxville GSA team included C. Johnathan Sitzlar, Dennis Gentry, John McCrum, Timothy Wisner and Sandy Jones. For more information, contact Gary Mote at gary.mote@gsa.gov or 404-331-2774.

IAE CORNER

Then & Now: Integrating the Acquisition Environment—Part 1
by Judy Steele and Lisa Cliff

The Integrated Acquisition Environment (IAE), a Presidential e-Government initiative managed by GSA, has facilitated every phase of the acquisition lifecycle, from market research to contract administration. The purpose of this article is to familiarize the acquisition community with the IAE systems and provide examples of what life for the federal contracting community was like before IAE, and what it is like now. The goal of the article is to inform the readers about technology, services, and benefits IAE provides both buyers and sellers.

Background. Prior to 2001, there were few governmentwide shared acquisition systems and no collaboration incentives in agencies' budgets or management processes. Most federal agencies used commercial software packages for contract writing systems. Several agencies developed specialized systems to handle specific functions such as vendor data, past performance monitoring, etc.   The integration of all the federal acquisition processes was one of the 24 e-Government initiatives under President Bush's Management Agenda. In 2001, Teresa Sorrenti was named Program Manager of IAE, heading up the office which would provide overall management and execution of this governmentwide effort. In keeping with

the Services Acquisition Reform Act, IAE was later relocated to the office of the new GSA Chief Acquisition Officer, in the Office of Acquisition Systems, with Teresa as director and Earl Warrington as her deputy.

The goal of the IAE initiative was formidable—to integrate, unify and streamline all the federal acquisition processes. How was this accomplished? The team first established a business structure for IAE. They mapped the business processes inherent in the acquisition process. The IAE business structure provides a secure business environment that facilitates and supports cost-effective acquisition of goods and services in support of agency mission performance. This consists of four major parts:

1. Business Partner Network (BPN). BPN provides a single point of registration and validation of supplier data that can be accessed by all agencies. BPN includes CCR, ORCA, PPIRS, EPLS, and eSRS.

2. Acquisition Information Reporting (AIR). This provides a central point for consolidated collection and access of statistical and management information related to government acquisitions. It includes FPDS-NG.

3. Standard Transactions. It was important to develop a standard glossary and vocabulary to facilitate exchange of data between and within agencies.

4. eMarketplace. Provides services used during the contracting and ordering process. Includes FedBizOpps, FedTeDS, and WDOL. Future plans for eMarketplace include launching an updated version of an online Interagency Contract Directory (ICD) to simplify and facilitate leveraging government buying.

According to Teresa Sorrenti, the IAE team decided **not** to "reinvent the wheel." If agencies had systems that fit the IAE requirements, they would **Adopt** those systems. They would **Adapt** systems which were similar to what was required, and **Acquire** new ones where necessary. Once the business plan was decided and the structure was in place, the IAE team developed an organizational strategy to perform their mission. This consisted of:

- Organizing teams of acquisition professionals from across the government to perform requirements analysis of their acquisition needs. This involved more than 300 volunteers from 65 agencies.

- Leveraging existing systems, eliminating duplicative systems, building new systems where necessary.

- Communicating across agency cultures, creating buy-in across the board.

This was not an easy process. As Earl Warrington said, "The effort each agency went through to transform and operate within IAE was underestimated. Change management was difficult and getting agencies to give up their own automation systems was also challenging."

While IAE system Project Managers are often located in other agencies [National Technical Information Services, Department of Defense (DoD), etc.], this is a federation of services managed overall by GSA. The governance model for IAE is a tiered structure of

management whose components are:

- Acquisition Committee for E-Gov (ACE), an executive steering committee under the Chief Acquisition Officers Council that provides strategy, vision, scope and resources;
- Program Management Office, which executes and manages the operations;
- Business Area Managers who oversee a portfolio of related services to execute IAE strategy, manage development and implementation, and ensure inter-operability of the shared services;
- Multi-agency Business Area Teams that guide system requirements and development;
- Project Managers that execute the development, operations and maintenance of the IAE shared services; and
- IAE Change Control Board (CCB) that approves and prioritizes enhancements across shared services under the auspices of the IAE Configuration Management Plan. This provides the process to approve enhancements to the shared services, ensuring their ongoing inter-operability.

Through the work of a dedicated team of professionals from across the federal enterprise, IAE is achieving its goal of streamlining the intricate system of processes that is needed to buy and track $350 billion in goods and services annually.

IAE has been a success. Five systems have been honored with awards. Of the ten systems discussed in this article, all but three are required for use by the FAR. The Government Accountability Office pointed to IAE as "an example of effective collaboration" that had contributed to advancing the goals of the Presidential e-Government initiative.

Another benefit of this process, according to Earl Warrington, was that it opened up a huge communication channel between agencies; and between GSA, the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP), and agencies. It has allowed agencies to explore new opportunities to make their business environment more efficient. Teresa Sorrenti pointed out that the user groups and committees now established allow agencies to be more attuned to what other agencies are doing and what is out there to be shared.

IAE played a valuable role in support of the war on terrorism by providing tools and services needed to help the government fight the war at home and abroad. Recovery efforts for last year's hurricanes in the Gulf Coast were supported by the services IAE provides. For example, FPDS-NG was able to add a new field to identify Katrina support procurements less than thirty days after the storm, and continues to provide statistics on support to the affected areas. If it involves procurement, transportation of sensitive data to vendors, reporting procurement data to Congress, keeping track of government vendors, or providing payment information on contracts, it all falls under the umbrella of services provided by IAE.

(The next edition of the newsletter will begin a discussion of each IAE system. NCMA will publish this article in full in the November "Contract Management" magazine.)

SECTION 508 UPDATE

In July 2006, the Office of Governmentwide Policy conducted a review of all solicitation actions of fifteen federal agencies published in FedBizOpps during a one-week period in June 2006.

The results were a stark indication that federal agencies overall are not fully implementing the requirements of Section 508 as specified in the Access Board Standard and in the April 2001 FAR Final Rule (FAC 97-27). Less than 5% of the solicitations met the requirements. Section 508 requires the acquisition community to meet three basic responsibilities in preparing a solicitation or prior to purchasing electronic and information technology (E&IT):

1. Determine if the acquisition is subject to Section 508;
2. If the acquisition is subject to Section 508, identify which specific provisions of the Access Board's standard apply to the acquisition; and,
3. Conduct sufficient market research to report on the availability of E&IT that meets all or part of the applicable accessibility standards.

Effectively meeting these responsibilities will lead to better solicitations, and better solicitations will lead to more accurate responses and eventually the most appropriate acquisition of E&IT based on all procurement regulations and business needs.

We continue to enhance the Buy Accessible Wizard to assist all who are part of the acquisition process to understand and meet these responsibilities. As of today, the latest version of the Buy Accessible Wizard (version 2.2) is available free for anyone to use at www.buyaccessible.gov. The Buy Accessible Wizard is the quickest, easiest, and most efficient way to implement an agency compliance process that meets the three responsibilities **and documents each step in the process to ensure due diligence**. In addition, the Buy Accessible Wizard provides documentation of these responsibilities as part of the acquisition package.

At the end of September a new release of the Wizard (version 3.0) will be submitted at GSA for certification and accreditation approval (a process more commonly known as C&A). As we announced in the last newsletter, GSA is taking the necessary steps to store Wizard information for any registered agency user. In addition, the new Wizard will provide solicitation support (a 'solicitation checklist', an updated Wizard summary, and a new 'solicitation template'), making it easier to develop specific and appropriate language for solicitations.

Until Version 3.0 passes C&A, version 2.2 will remain in operation. Version 2.2 features a robust search capability to find accessibility information that vendors have provided and a complete worksheet to record the results of market research. This version also provides the ability for users to save Wizard sessions before they are completed, allowing users to resume where they stopped at their convenience.

To learn more about how Buy Accessible tools can be used to enhance your compliance process for Section 508, go to www.buyaccessible.org or contact Terry Weaver at terry.weaver@gsa.gov or 202-501-4906.

GSA AND JWOD STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

JWOD Thanks GSA for its Support!

In honor of October's observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, together with National Industries for the Blind (NIB), and

NISH (providing employment opportunities to people who have severe disabilities) would like to thank GSA for its continued support of the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program. The JWOD Program strives to reduce the very high unemployment rate – nearly 70 percent – faced by individuals who are blind or have other severe disabilities by providing employment opportunities on federal contracts nationwide.

Congress designated National Disability Employment Awareness Month as a time to increase the public's awareness of the contributions and skills of American workers who are blind or severely disabled and to highlight the specific employment barriers that exist today that need to be addressed and removed. The JWOD Program uses National Disability Employment Awareness Month as a time to recognize both the contributions of JWOD employees who are blind or have other severe disabilities whose efforts support the missions of various federal agencies, as well as the Program's federal customers who help the JWOD Program meet its employment mission by purchasing products and services provided by participating nonprofit agencies.

Always a strong and loyal partner of the JWOD Program, GSA has ensured the provision of quality products and services to federal customers. Not only are many SKILCRAFT® and other JWOD products available to federal customers from a variety of large and small businesses through the GSA Schedules program, but also GSA's Global Supply program remains the largest channel for the sale of JWOD products.

Federal customers, we would like to thank you for purchasing SKILCRAFT® and other JWOD products and services. With your purchasing decisions, you assist people who are blind or have other severe disabilities in making a valuable contribution to society and leading more independent lives, enabling many individuals to reduce dependence on government support and join the ranks of taxpayers.

We look forward to your participation in October's observance of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and by doing so, recognizing the many achievements and benefits of the JWOD Program while spreading the word throughout the federal government that JWOD Works for America. For more information on the JWOD Program, please visit www.jwod.gov or contact Stephanie Lesko at slesko@jwod.gov or 703-603-2146

Clint Cruse of the St. Louis Lighthouse addresses an audience of SmartPay conference attendees

JWOD Supports GSA During GSA's SmartPay Conference

Hundreds of federal employees charged with coordinating the government's SmartPay credit card program have a better understanding as to how their official actions help create jobs for Americans who are blind or have other severe disabilities thanks to the GSA SmartPay conference. During the event, which was held in St. Louis, Missouri, August 1-3, 2006, more than 3000 federal employees from around the world had an opportunity to interact with representatives of the JWOD Program. This year, as in years past, the JWOD Program had a large professional presence.

The GSA SmartPay conference targets government personnel involved with the SmartPay credit card program – namely, Agency/Organization Program Coordinators

(A/OPCs). The A/OPCs are the credit card managers who train the credit card holders; and therefore the SmartPay conference provides a great venue for the JWOD Program to "train the trainers."

National Industries for the Blind (NIB), one of the two central nonprofit agencies that helps administer the JWOD Program, upgraded its exhibit presence this year by making use of a new 20 foot display. The booth provided information on the quality SKILCRAFT® products available for any office requirement, and the exhibitors were honored by visits from GSA customers and business partners.

In keeping with GSA's St. Louis theme for the conference, NIB invited two Missouri-based JWOD-participating nonprofit agencies (NPAs), St. Louis Lighthouse and Alphapointe Association for the Blind (Alphapointe), to be a part of the JWOD exhibit. Adding these two local NPAs allowed for greater dissemination of the JWOD message. NIB arranged two tours of the St. Louis Lighthouse on the final day of the conference. One of the JWOD Program's premier NPAs employing people who are blind, the St. Louis Lighthouse has been a long-term quality supplier to GSA for many high quality SKILCRAFT® products, including enamel, aerosol paint, correction fluid, and tree marking paint. More than 60 SmartPay conference attendees saw first-hand how successful the JWOD Program is at creating jobs for this underserved population. The Lighthouse staff was extremely hospitable, and the tour was not only educational, but very entertaining. As with any visit to a JWOD-participating NPA, the tour strengthened the partnership the JWOD Program has with its valued government customers.

GSA Global Supply graciously invited NIB representatives to present at both of its scheduled training sessions during the conference while GSA Global Supply's

training course included several references to the JWOD Program and SKILCRAFT® products. Along with the registration materials, each attendee received a SKILCRAFT® pen, provided by Alphapointe, and a JWOD flyer.

As always, the JWOD Program remains grateful for the opportunity to participate in GSA's SmartPay conference in such a meaningful way. A big thank you goes out from the JWOD Program to the GSA staff that planned and executed this outstanding exhibit opportunity. If you have questions about NIB or the JWOD Program's partnership with GSA, please visit www.nib.org or contact Dan Carson at dcarson@nib.org or 703-310-0509. If you have other questions regarding the JWOD Program, please visit www.jwod.gov or contact Stephanie Lesko at slesko@jwod.gov or 703-603-2146.

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.

4th Annual Program Management Summit 2006
October 12-13, 2006
Ronald Reagan Building
Washington, DC
http://events.fcw.com/event/PM06
800-746-0099

25th Annual Government Contract Management Conference
December 4-5, 2006
Sheraton Premiere at Tyson's Corner
Vienna, VA
www.ncmahq.org

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.