



GSA Acquisition Workforce Forum

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



CAO CORNER--

Changes at the CAO

Former Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO) Emily Murphy left government service for the private sector on January 31. Murphy was with GSA for approximately two years, serving as the agency's first CAO. On March 5 Molly Wilkinson began her duties as the new CAO. With almost nine years of management experience and five years of acquisition experience, Molly Wilkinson has been in public service since 1991 at both state and federal levels.

Ms. Wilkinson earned her law degree from New York's Albany Law School in 1996 and is a member of the New York State Bar. She graduated from Holy Cross College in 1989. After spending seven years working in the New York State Legislature, in 1997 Wilkinson moved to serve as an Assistant Counsel in the General Counsel's Office of the New York State Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance (OTDA) (formerly the New York State Department of Social Services), where she focused on New York State contracts law. Here, she wrote and implemented Requests for Proposals; composed, reviewed and analyzed contracts between OTDA and service providers; drafted memoranda of understanding between OTDA and other state agencies; negotiated agreements between OTDA and contractors; developed and drafted legislation concerning Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) public assistance and immigration issues; reviewed public


EDITION FIFTEEN
SPRING 2007

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"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

--Winston Churchill



comments of regulations and wrote impact statements of federal and New York State Welfare Reform.

In 2000, Governor George E. Pataki appointed Wilkinson as the New York State Refugee Coordinator & Director of the Bureau of Refugee & Immigration Affairs (BRIA). While at BRIA, she was responsible for the overall operation of the Bureau, developing and implementing policy and management procedures to include: performance based contracting practices; program management reform; performance standards of contractors and government agencies; and revamped performance monitoring for evolving programs. She also directed and managed development of budgets, and established budgetary priorities for areas such as staffing, program expansion and initiation of new programs. This included providing management control and evaluation of program activities with particular emphasis upon the identification and correction of problem areas.

In 2003, Ms. Wilkinson continued to build on her experience and skills when she moved to the federal level working at the U.S. Department of Defense. Her most significant project was as Special Projects Coordinator for Iraqi National Conference and Special Advisor to the Iraqi Supreme Commission in 2004 where she managed American security, logistic, and administrative support for the 1500 Delegates who chose the Interim Iraqi National Council (the interim legislative governing body for Iraq).

In 2005, Ms. Wilkinson served as the Associate Deputy Secretary for Management at the U.S. Department of Labor providing counsel and support to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and senior staff of the Department. She also supported the Deputy Secretary who served as Chief Operating Officer and assisted in managing internal agencies on management, budget, and personnel issues,

and had oversight of Job Corps (a \$1.6 billion program at 122 sites serving over 60,000 students). She was the Deputy Secretary's liaison to the President's Management Council with special focus on E-Gov Initiatives. She also oversaw and managed the administrative functions of the Employee Compensation Appeals Board, Administrative Review Board, Benefits Review Board and the Office of Administrative Law Judges.

Ms. Wilkinson is honored to have been appointed to serve as GSA's new Chief Acquisition Officer and is eager to begin working in an area that she has spent her professional life preparing for. Please join us in welcoming Molly Wilkinson to the Office of the CAO!

From the Desk of the Editor

by Judy Steele



As the seasons change from winter to spring, change is also in the air for acquisition at GSA—changes at the top, including a new Chief Acquisition Officer, and many policy changes—detailed in our “Acquisition Update” section. We hope you find these articles and the other features in this month’s “Forum” to be interesting and helpful. Please forward any comments, suggestions and articles for the newsletter to the Editor, Judy Steele, at judy.steele@gsa.gov.

ACQUISITION UPDATE

Micro-Purchase Threshold Increased to \$3,000

Section 2.101 of the FAR increased the amount of the micro-purchase threshold for procurements of supplies or services from \$2,500 to \$3,000. Micro-purchase threshold means \$3,000, except:

- For acquisitions of construction subject to the Davis-Bacon Act, \$2,000;
- For acquisitions of services subject to the Service Contract Act, \$2,500, and
- For acquisitions of supplies or services that, as determined by the Administrator, are to be used to support a contingency operation or to facilitate defense against or recovery from nuclear, biological, chemical, or radiological attack, as described in 13.201 (g)(1), except for construction subject to the Davis-Bacon Act (41 U.S.C. 428a) -

- (i) \$15,000 in the case of any contract to be awarded and performed, or purchase to be made, inside the United States; and
- (ii) \$25,000 in the case of any contract to be awarded and performed, or purchase to be made, outside the United States.

Therefore, effective immediately, GSA micro-purchase cardholders are authorized to purchase at the higher threshold in accordance with the FAR. In addition, the Office of Finance has established specific procedures for offices to follow in using this authority as they relate to the Purchase Card Program. Contact: Yolanda Reynolds at yolanda.reynolds@gsa.gov or 202-501-0919.

“Pathway to Success” and the MAS Express Program

GSA has introduced a new education tool to assist vendors in preparing an offer for the Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) program. The education tool, called *Pathway to Success*, is available via live training or online at <http://vsc.gsa.gov>, Vendor Training.

Pathway to Success is designed to assist prospective GSA Schedule contractors in making informed business decisions as to whether obtaining a GSA Schedule contract is in their best interests. The presentation provides background information on the GSA MAS Program and encompasses a variety of other topics, including—

- What are GSA's expectations for a vendor to become a successful Schedule contractor;
- How to compete and succeed as a GSA Schedule contractor in the federal marketplace;
- How to develop a GSA Schedule-specific business plan; and
- How to submit a quality offer, the proposal submission process, and the GSA Schedule solicitation.



Speed forward with MAS Express!

The *Pathway to Success* education seminar is encouraged for all prospective MAS contract holders, and is mandatory for vendors interested in the new GSA MAS Express Program. The MAS Express Program, a specialized program established under the GSA Schedule Program, is designed to simplify, streamline, and ultimately accelerate the process for vendors to obtain MAS contracts.

Participation in the MAS Express Program is open to all business concerns, regardless of size, that meet specific criteria for certain products. At the present time, offers accepted under the MAS Express Program are limited to a total of 500 products/line items under

portions of the following GSA Schedules:

- Schedule 70 General Purpose Information Technology Equipment, Software, and Services;
- Schedule 67 Photographic Equipment—Cameras, Photographic Printers, and Related Supplies and Services (Digital and Film-Based);
- Schedule 78 Sports, Promotional, Outdoor, Recreational, Trophies, and Signs (SPORTS);
- Schedule 58 I Professional Audio/Video, Telecommunications, and Security Solutions; and
- Schedule 81 I B Shipping, Packaging, and Packing Supplies.

You can learn more about *Pathway to Success* and the MAS Express Program by visiting www.gsa.gov/masexpress. You may also receive MAS Express Program support via e-mail at mas.express@gsa.gov or by phone at 1-866-472-5738.



MAS Disaster Recovery Purchasing Program for State and Local Governments

Section 833 of the Defense Authorization Act for FY 2007 amended 40 U.S.C. 502 to authorize GSA to provide State and Local Governments the use of Federal Supply Schedules (“Schedules”) for purchase of products and services to be used to facilitate recovery from a major disaster, terrorism or nuclear, biological, chemical or radiological attack. This Disaster Recovery Purchasing authority is limited to GSA and Veterans

Administration Multiple Award Schedule contracts and does not include any other GSA programs. State and Local Governments may use the Schedule contracts to purchase products and services in advance of a major disaster declared by the President as well as in the aftermath of an emergency event. State and Local Governments are responsible for ensuring that products or services purchased are to be used to facilitate recovery.

The use of Schedules for Disaster Recovery is non-mandatory for both State and Local Governments and Schedule contractors. Businesses have the option of deciding whether to accept orders placed by State or Local Government buyers. GSA is now working with MAS contractors to solicit their interest in this program. State and Local Governments have full discretion to decide if they wish to make a Schedules purchase, subject, however, to any limitations that may be established under state and local law and procedures. Learn more about using GSA Schedules to support disaster recovery by visiting www.gsa.gov/disasterrecovery. A listing of the Federal Supply Schedules is available in GSA’s Schedules e-Library at <http://fss.gsa.gov/elibrary>.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FACE 2007 “Acquisition Frontiers: Blazing New Trails”

The Federal Acquisition Conference & Exposition (FACE) is back! FACE, the premier conference to train acquisition professionals, provides networking opportunities, dynamic speakers, and vendors with a variety of information on acquisition products and services. The

conference will be held June 19-20, 2007, at the Ronald Reagan Building, in Washington, DC. In addition to learning about important issues and emerging trends in acquisition, attendees also have the opportunity to earn 10.5 Continuous Learning Credits.

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



SMALL BUSINESS CORNER

New England Region Participates in Procurement and Business Expo

On January 19, Senator John F. Kerry's Massachusetts District Office hosted their Second Annual Massachusetts Procurement Conference and Business Expo at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, with close to 500 participants. Deborah Tarleton, Acting Director of the Small Business Utilization Center (SBUC); Linda Byrne, PBS Contracting Officer; Tony Guerra, FAS Contracting Officer; Peter Sullivan, FAS Customer Service Director; and Annie Khun, FAS Marketing Specialist; assisted potential vendors through one-on-one counseling and at the GSA exhibit booth. Tarleton and Khun participated in a focus group regarding the



Senator John Kerry, Governor Deval Patrick and Mayor Thomas Menino at the Boston Conference

Center for Veterans Enterprise Vetbiz.gov website. Matthew Sisk, Special Assistant to the Regional Administrator, also attended the event. Senator John F. Kerry, Massachusetts Governor Duval Patrick, and Boston Mayor Thomas Menino addressed the attendees at the conference closing. Contact: Deborah Tarleton at deborah.tarleton@gsa.gov or 617-565-8100.

Northwest/Arctic Region Participates in Business Opportunity Day

On January 24, the Northwest/Arctic Regional Office of Small Business Utilization participated in the annual Northwest Indian Business Opportunity Day in Shelton, Washington. The event was hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency and Northwest American Indian Development Center. Workshops provided education on opportunities with the 2010 Olympics, "Mastering the Market" best practice strategies, and showcased how to access contracts with federal and state agencies. Over 100 regional business owners were in attendance. Contact: Kenyon Taylor at kenyon.taylor@gsa.gov or 253-931-7956.

Web Conferences Held for VETS Awardees and Customers

Janna Babcock, Heartland Region Procuring Contracting Officer, hosted a post-award conference via the web on January 31 for the 43 awardees of the new Veterans Technology Services GWAC (VETS). Following the



New England Region Assists Business Owners in Vermont

award announcement on Dec. 18, 2006, this event marks a major milestone in the procurement process by presenting the awardees and the government an opportunity to achieve a clear and mutual understanding of all contract requirements and manage expectations prior to orders being placed against the contract. Also included in the web conference was an overview of GSA E-Tools such as E-Buy, an on-line procurement tool for government buyers. The web conference was deemed a success as evidenced by the numerous compliments submitted by participants. After the conference, two VETS awardees visited the Small Business GWAC Center to discuss specific questions on the contract and their marketing strategies.

On Feb. 15, the Small Business GWAC Center hosted an additional web conference for federal agencies. This web conference was designed for customer agency contracting professionals to obtain delegation of authority to use the VETS GWAC. A total of 94 attendees, including current customers of the 8(a) STARS and HUBZone GWACs, called in to learn about VETS and to discuss ordering procedures. The VETS GWAC offers a new option for federal agencies to achieve small business goals through purchase of Information Technology solutions from small businesses owned by service disabled veterans. A result of Executive Order 13360, the VETS GWAC supports the President's mandate to strengthen procurement opportunities for companies owned and managed by our nation's service-disabled veteran community. For information on the VETS GWAC, visit www.gsa.gov/vetsgwac. The VETS Procuring Contracting Officer is Janna Babcock, who can be reached at janna.babcock@gsa.gov or 816-823-5320. Contact: Mike Brincks at michael.brincks@gsa.gov or 816-926-7217.


New England Region employees participated in the 4th Annual Strategies for Winning Government Contracts Conference held in Burlington, Vermont, on February 1. Deborah Tarleton, Acting Director of the Region's Small Business Utilization Center; Kevin Morris, Senior Property Manager; and Brian Fuller, Building Management Specialist of PBS; Dick Gauthier, Customer Account Manager; and Peter Sullivan, Customer Service Director of FAS; assisted potential vendors through one-to-one counseling and at the GSA exhibit booth. This event provided an opportunity for small businesses to interface with federal, state, and local government agencies, as well as large businesses seeking potential suppliers. Attendees heard from Vermont Governor James Douglas; Kevin Dorn, Secretary of Commerce and Community Development; Neale Lunderville, Secretary of Transportation; Ted Brady, Field Representative for Senator Patrick Leahy; and Melissa Dever, Founder and Vice President of Competitive Computing. Approximately 200 companies attended the event. Contact: Deborah Tarleton at deborah.tarleton@gsa.gov or 617-565-8100.



City of Charlotte, North Carolina

Southeast Sunbelt's OSBU Hosts Charlotte Customer Service Center Event

The Southeast Sunbelt Region's Office of Small Business Utilization recently hosted the fourth in a series of Small Business events in support of its Regional Customer Service Centers.



Held on the campus of the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, the event was designed to assist the Charlotte Customer Service Center in expanding its base of small business contractors and vendors. A morning workshop attracted almost 40 small business owners and all 48 time slots for the afternoon matchmaking were filled. To expand the matchmaking opportunities for the attendees, the matchmaking portion of the event was expanded to include representatives from the Regional Office of the Small Business Administration and the North Carolina Small Business Development Center/Procurement Technical Assistance Center. Contacts: Dave Gibson, 404-331-2711; Dinora Gonzalez, 404-331-3031; or Michael King, 704-344-6196.



GREEN PROCUREMENT

The following interview with Lance Davis, one of the GSA sustainable design architects, is re-printed with permission from eco-structure's January/February 2007 issue. For a free subscription to eco-structure, visit www.eco-structure.com.

“Arm Yourself with Knowledge—Lance Davis Explains the Greening of the GSA”—Compiled by Christina Koch

James Madison, the fourth president of the United States, believed knowledge was the only thing that could move the fledgling U.S. government forward. In 1822, five years after the end of his presidency, Madison wrote, “A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern

ignorance; and the people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.”



Lance Davis

Similarly, the green-building industry requires information and understanding to continue gaining market share. And when it comes to sustainability within projects contracted by the U.S. General Services Administration, Washington, D.C., awareness of working with the government and thoroughly understanding sustainability are necessities. Lance Davis, one of GSA's sustainable design experts, hopes to arm architects and engineers with the knowledge to complete these sustainable public projects. With the help of contract documents and memorandums of understanding, the GSA intends to provide welcoming facilities that are comfortable for occupants and visitors despite the added security requirements of a post-9/11 world.

Eco-structure: What is your education and professional background? When and how did you get involved with the GSA?

LD: I graduated from Mississippi State University [Mississippi State] with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1995. I am a registered architect with more than 11 years' experience in the Washington, D.C., area. My previous work in private architecture firms focused on integrating environmental principles into a wide variety of project types. My more prominent work includes the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center [Washington], the Korean War Veterans Memorial [Washington] and the Walter Reed Community Center [Arlington, Virginia], which is designed for a LEED Silver rating.



I joined GSA a little more than a year and a half ago to fill the role as an advocate of sustainable-design strategies for the Public Buildings Service in the Office of Applied Science. I am with the Sustainable Design Program, and the entire team serves as internal consultants and an external source of world-class expertise.



The Duncan Building is a LEED building Lance Davis worked on

When contracting an architect for a green public building, what specifically is the GSA looking for?

LD: Strictly from a sustainable-design perspective, GSA looks for an architect that knows how to be part of a design team that understands and utilizes an integrated, charrette-based approach. Instead of the “master builder,” GSA is looking for “master integrators.” We want a team that understands that the infrequent grandness of a single idea from one person is being replaced by the beauty of the woven thread of many ideas of an engaged group. We also look for a team that understands how to site a building for the specific climate, design for efficient operations and celebrate the people in their indoor environment. When we find teams that know how to do these really well, we get buildings that are iconic, efficient and beautiful with a sense of belonging.

facility in Washington, D.C., that used a storm-water retention pond as a moat around the building, thus providing setback, limited building access and clear line of sight, as well as being good for the nearby Chesapeake Bay.

This sounds like a difficult task in a post-9/11 world. How can architects ensure public buildings are secure without being windowless fortresses?

LD: There is a continuing struggle between the idea of security and the well-being of the people inside a building. GSA strives to strike the balance between keeping federal employees safe from a potential attack and providing a place to work that promotes the well-being of each person. Not surprisingly, we find that when the issue of security is incorporated into integrated design charrettes, creative solutions that are beautiful start to emerge. One of the great examples I recently visited was a U.S. Department of Defense

Has the GSA set goals for numbers of green projects or will all projects have to include some sustainable aspects?

LD: For design starts in 2003 and beyond, GSA’s Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service, also known as P100, requires that all GSA new construction projects and substantial renovations be Certified through the LEED system. These projects are encouraged to achieve LEED Silver as a means to evaluate and measure our green-building achievements. Although Certified is the minimum level, GSA’s 11 regional offices are free to set their own level of achievement above the minimum. For example, the National Capitol Region requires buildings meet Silver and strive to achieve Gold. And some clients, like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [Washington], bring their own requirements, so we usually see a higher rating on their facilities.

Are there requirements for greening leased buildings?

LD: GSA is working to change lease language so these buildings meet the same environmental requirements as our owned facilities, and there is movement to look at how we operate and maintain all GSA buildings to reduce environmental impacts.





By setting a green standard for all new construction projects, is the GSA sending a message to the private sector about sustainable design and construction?

LD: The intent of GSA's Facilities Standards and any future standard is not to motivate the private sector but to be good stewards and meet the GSA mission to provide a superior workplace for the federal worker at superior value for the American taxpayer. We do expect though that architects and engineers interested in doing work with GSA will get the required training, knowledge and expertise to provide the government with integrated designs that are environmentally measurable. We have, however, seen that the decisions GSA makes have an influence on the private sector. As of December, 2006, GSA has 18 LEED-rated projects, and we are finding private developers who will offer a building designed to a higher LEED rating at no additional cost to the government. By asking for a high standard, GSA is helping to change what is considered a Class A office space for the industry.

Why is LEED the GSA's chosen green-building certification program?

LD: Based on a study done by the Richland, Washington based Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in 2006, GSA found that the LEED Rating System continues to be the most appropriate and credible sustainable building rating system available for evaluation of GSA projects. It is applicable to all GSA project types, tracks the quantifiable aspects of sustainable design and building performance, and is verified by trained professionals. Finally, LEED has a well defined system for incorporating updates and is the most widely used rating system in the U.S. market.

Will other tools on the market provide a better way to determine which buildings perform the best and which certification system the public sector should use?

LD: GSA has various methods for measuring building performance internally. For sus-


tainable design, GSA will continue to evaluate other systems and determine how they may be applied to projects in the future. The way I like to think of it is that the LEED Rating System is a good measuring stick with which we like to gauge the design of our building projects, and we will continue to look at other measuring sticks and their gauges to see if they may work better for our use.

Is LEED accreditation essential within a firm GSA hires or will architects that have worked with regional green standards or other national standards be considered?

LD: LEED accreditation is a wonderful tool for an individual to test his or her understanding of the LEED Rating System, but it does not measure whether the person can actually design a good building and document how well it performs from an environmental standpoint. Ultimately, we are looking for a person's ability to handle the sustainable design process. That said, it would be useful for at least one person on the design team to be a LEED AP [Accredited Professional] to assist with LEED documentation and the development of integrated design.

What is GSA doing to help architects and engineers understand what GSA expects from them regarding sustainability?

LD: GSA and 18 other agencies signed the Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings Memorandum of Understanding. This MOU articulates a common set of guiding principles that the signatories expect in their facilities. The guiding principles include attention to a building's waste stream, water usage, energy usage, materials and indoor environmental quality. The MOU is available on the Whole Building Design Guide at www.wbdg.org/sustainablemou. I think the signing of the MOU and the changes in contract language send a clear message of what GSA expects as a minimum from an architecture/engineering team.



With recent movement in sustainable design, GSA is working to incorporate sustainable-design language in contracts for architect and engineer selection, feasibility studies, contractor selection, commissioning agent selection, construction manager selection and lease agreements. Much of this work centers on the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the MOU and the use of LEED.

We also have recently extended an invitation to the design industry in a GSA booklet titled *“Expanding Our Approach to Sustainable Design—An Invitation.”* As described in the forward of the booklet, “We hope to stimulate the dialog on ‘next steps’ for moving the built environment toward a more sustainable future.” The booklets can be found at www.gsa.gov.

Do you believe government regulation of green building would be beneficial? To whom and to what extent?

LD: My personal belief is that government regulation for well designed buildings is beneficial to the occupants of the building, the public who financed the construction, and the lifelong operations and maintenance of the building. Government regulation should be much more than code, which is the minimum required to not noticeably ill-affect the health, safety and welfare of the people. I would like us to take a closer look at environmental regulations from the perspective of William McDonough [principal of William McDonough & Partners, Charlottesville, Virginia.], which is to “Love all the children of all species for all time.” That sort of thinking is beneficial to the world for as long as we humans choose to participate.

Do you think Washington, D.C.’s recently passed mandate that private buildings be constructed to LEED standards will encourage other cities to follow?

LD: I like the fact that Washington is looking to be a leader by passing a green standard. I

think it sends a clear message that the building you build today should respect the people of the city, the land on which it sits and the environment that it influences. I certainly think other cities will follow Washington’s initiative and will even try to do one better. We already have seen this with state-funded projects across the country.

Mandates like this can be good because they force a new segment of the market to become educated about better design that is respectful and continues to move the industry forward to sustainability. The problem with a mandate like this, in any form, is the danger that many of these new projects will not use an integrated approach to provide a well designed building but will make decisions to merely achieve points. With such an approach, there will most certainly be cost overruns, complaints, and a potential backlash claiming that building green costs more than typical construction, which in reality is nothing more than poor decisions made by the owner or design team.

If you have questions on this article, please contact Lance Davis at lance.davis@gsa.gov or 202-208-2038.



IAE CORNER

Then & Now: Integrating the Acquisition Environment—Part 3
by Judy Steele and Lisa Cliff

This concludes our serialization of the article which was published in the November 2006 National Contract Management Association (NCMA) “Contract Management” magazine.

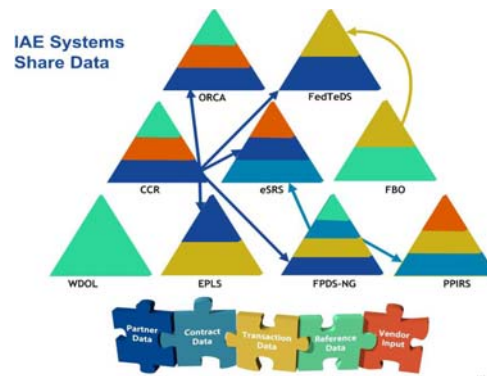
PPIRS (www.ppirs.gov)

Then: *Contracting Officers had to request that each contractor provide a list of*

references in their proposal—contracts of similar scope, size, and dollar amount. Then the members of the evaluation team and the Contracting Officer would split up who to call and begin checking references. Typically this was very time consuming—locating the point of contact, if they had left, going back to the contractor for more references, etc. Frequently, the contractor would not provide the right kind or quantity of references and would have to be asked for more.

Now: A prospective contractor’s ability to satisfactorily perform contract requirements is an important factor in making best value decisions in the acquisition of goods and services. Federal regulations (FAR Part 9 and 42.15) require that performance reports are completed annually during the life of qualified contracts. The Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS, pronounced “peepers”) is a web-based system that consolidates contractor report cards collected from across the federal government into a single searchable database. These report cards offer federal source selection officials the in-depth performance information they need to make sound best value procurement decisions. Contractors also have the ability to review their data to ensure the government has accurate, up-to-date performance information for them. OMB has advocated the use of PPIRS since a July 2002 memo announced the roll-out of the system. Government users are encouraged to use PPIRS to access timely and pertinent contractor performance information.

PPIRS has grown to contain 75,000 detailed report cards which provide contractor performance ratings and supporting narratives for many business sectors including major systems, information technology, services, hardware, architect-engineer, and construction. Records can be searched by contract, contractor, agency, dates of performance, dollar value, and other criteria.



How the IAE Systems Share Data


A statistical reporting module of PPIRS (PPIRS-SR), aimed at simplifying past performance evaluation in low-dollar value procurements, is currently deployed on a pilot basis at several DoD sites.

A proposed FAR rule explaining how to better use, perform, and collect performance evaluations is expected to go out for comment the end of September, 2006, along with a new Performance Data User Guide. [Ed. Note—this notice was published in the Federal Register November 17, 2006 and comments were due January 16, 2007. Comments on the rule and the Guide are currently being evaluated.]

EPLS (www.epls.gov)

Then: *Before awarding any contract actions, the Contracting Officer was required to manually check the extensive monthly “List of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement and Non-Procurement Programs.” Sometimes information was outdated by the time the list was released from the printers and made available. If a multiple award contract was awarded, Contracting Officers had to search for each of the awardees.*

Now: The web-based Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) replaced the printed “List of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement and Non-Procurement Programs.”



GSA manages EPLS, which is used by federal acquisition professionals, federal debarment and suspension communities, and government contractors who need to identify parties excluded from receiving federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and certain types of federal financial and non-financial assistance and benefits. Users are able to search, view, and download current and archived exclusions to make them aware of administrative and statutory exclusions across the entire government, suspected terrorists, and individuals barred from entering the United States. All of the nine different search options query the entire database and results can be viewed immediately or downloaded.

FAR 9.4 requires contracting officials to check EPLS after receipt of bids and proposals, and further requires contracting officials to check EPLS before making contract award. The debarment and suspension process protects the government from doing business with individuals and companies that have demonstrated poor performance, waste, fraud, violations, abuse, or have been identified as terrorists, drug traffickers, or those engaged in the sale of illegal weapons. Executive Order 12549, "Debarment and Suspension," and Executive Order 12689, same title, provide guidance for agency debarment and suspension activities. EPLS makes the job of agency debarment officials much easier as it simplifies the entering of debarment and suspension information.


EPLS is a highly visible tool under IAE which receives over 8 million hits a month. A new release of EPLS, Version 3, which will provide enhanced searching, reporting, and downloading capabilities with additional features and functionalities requested by the user community, is underway. One of the major changes will be that use of the D-U-N-S number will be mandatory to facilitate searches and enable interface with CCR.

FPDS-NG (<https://www.fpds.gov>)

Then: *Before the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS) was developed, all reporting was done by paper. In 1978 FPDS came online but it had limited individual user report capability—contracting offices or contractors had to send off to the Federal Procurement Data Center (FPDC) and request specific reports. Additionally, data input was not timely—Contracting Officers had 45 days after a contract action to do the reports, and receiving reports took a while since it was a quarterly batch process.*

Now: FPDS-NG (Federal Procurement Data System-Next Generation) is the central repository of detailed information on federal contract actions over \$2,500. "Next Generation" designates that it is an updated version of the original 25 year-old Federal Procurement Data System that has been transformed into an integrated business process receiving contract accomplishment data real-time from agency contract writing systems. FPDS-NG reports on contract accomplishment data in a self-service model across the entire federal enterprise (see FAR 4.6, Contract Reporting).

Now in its third year, FPDS-NG continues to evolve and transform to respond to the growing needs of the government user community and the general public. Today everything is self-service with contract writing systems reporting directly into FPDS-NG. Reporting is real time, on demand. Users have a greater ability to submit information quickly, and receive reports quickly. In 2005, over 1.1 million federal civilian contract actions were posted. With about 65 departments and agencies now reporting the data directly to FPDS-NG, the civilian agency integration process has been a success. DoD will be fully integrated in real-time with FPDS-NG by the end of 2006. FPDS-NG is focusing on improving access and visibility into the data.



With new software transitioning in, FPDS-NG has undergone a major facelift to enhance access to its contents. Refreshment of the hardware is also underway.

A new Ad Hoc Reports Tool helps frequent users of FPDS-NG get answers to questions not already addressed in the Standard Reports. The following comment was offered by a Contracting Officer who had not had any training on FPDS-NG and was inputting ad hoc data (late on a Sunday night!), “I just went into NG to run an ad hoc that I’ve been creating each month...and was introduced to the new reporting tool. So far, I am impressed. I was able to save the ad hocs...which is a huge improvement over the old system. I was able to recreate the ad hocs without any trouble. I like the format and the data is easy to manage. And another big improvement—the reports download easily to Excel. This is really good stuff!”

ESRS (www.esrs.gov)

Then: *Previously, contractors used multiple systems, and in some cases filed paper reports to report subcontracting information. Individual agencies had good subcontract reporting systems, but vendors wanted to only have to use one. It was also hard for agencies to track whether large companies were fulfilling their sub-contracting requirements—small firms often complained they weren’t.*


Now: The Electronic Subcontracting Reporting System (eSRS) is the newest member of the IAE family and meets the request of vendors for a single point of data entry. eSRS streamlines reporting of small business subcontracting activity by large federal prime contracts. It also makes it much easier for agencies to monitor whether prime contractors are fulfilling their mandatory subcontracting plans. eSRS transforms subcontracting reporting from a disorganized

and confusing process into a cohesive, easy-to-use, web-based system. Prime contractors no longer have to send reports to multiple persons within the same agency. It provides one stop reporting for primes as well as easy access for government personnel.

This web-based tool eliminates the need for paper submissions and processing of SF 294’s, Individual Subcontracting Reports, and SF 295’s, Summary Subcontracting Reports. Previously, a major contractor might have to fill out hundreds of these forms and send them to multiple offices in an agency and to multiple agencies. Now the data is entered one time and the government sees it online as soon as the data is entered. In most of the Executive agencies this information is reviewed by the Small Business Office, with the Contracting Officer also reviewing the Individual Reports. Summary Reports are due October 30 each year, and Individual Reports are due April 30 and October 30 each year.

eSRS has reduced the government cost in terms of manpower and time. It has eliminated duplicate systems and reduced the manpower required. More time is now spent on data analysis instead of data collection or input. It has improved the quality of subcontracting data by providing trending, reducing manual errors, and providing a single method and point of entry for all subcontracting reports. Future plans call for the integration of DoD into eSRS. Additionally, the FAR Council is discussing further changes to FAR Clause 52.219-9 Small Business Subcontracting Plan. Go to www.esrs.gov for access and web training opportunities.

Acquisition.gov. Acquisition.gov is the IAE website dedicated to providing the acquisition community with the tools and information it needs to do its job efficiently. Just as IAE integrates acquisition systems governmentwide, the IAE website will be a central location for all the information the



contracting workforce needs to do its job. Significant files from AcqNet have now been migrated to acquisition.gov. Drop down menus under “Acquisition Workforce” and “AcqNet” give you instant access to the FAR, OMB’s website, Defense Acquisition University, links to assist small businesses, and much more. It contains resources for government buyers as well as government vendors. IAE is working with representatives from across the government to add to the content and make it a one-stop-shop for a complete menu of acquisition related information. Updating and redesigning the website is also underway.

The future of IAE. The IAE Program Office is in constant communication with the end user customers to look at where they think new opportunities exist to change or expand IAE. The IAE staff and Project Management Officers are constantly re-evaluating internally what they are doing and how they can improve the current processes. They also continually review how new technology can impact and revamp the systems. According to Teresa Sorrenti, future plans include more consolidation of systems, more real-time sharing of data, and eventually single sign-on using e-authentication, a common infrastructure for electronically authenticating the identify of customers of e-Government services governmentwide.

Proposed expansion of IAE also includes development of a portal which will simplify data interactions and serve as a single point of access and integration for the shared systems and the agencies; development of standard electronic catalog ordering processes; and updating the Interagency Contract Directory (ICD). The ICD will be an online market research and planning device which will allow government buyers to examine existing multi-agency contracts to see if their requirements can be met there before developing new contracts.

Another IAE project underway focuses on the Commercial-Off-the-Shelf Contract Writing Systems (CWS) that agencies rely on. Since March, 2005, the Acquisition Requirements Team (ART) has been working on developing a set of common acquisition requirements, including interfaces with finance systems, that all CWS packages would have to meet to qualify for federal agency use. A similar qualification is used for Core Financial Systems. An internal draft of this document is being finalized for public comment.

As the business of acquisition changes, evolves, and becomes more technical, IAE will continue to change. For more information on this article, please send questions or comments: integrated.acquisition@gsa.gov.

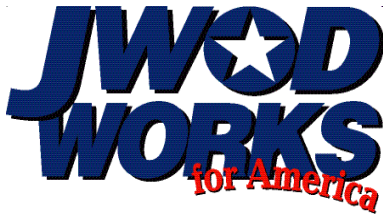


The IAE Program Management Office

GSA AND ABILITYONE/JWOD STRATEGIC ALLIANCE

JWOD Program Renamed AbilityOne

AbilityOne will become the new name of a longstanding procurement program employing people who are blind or who have other severe disabilities under the auspices of the Javits-Wagner-O’Day (JWOD) Act. According to Andrew D. Houghton, Chairperson of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled (“the Committee”), AbilityOne will replace the JWOD acronym, but does not change the underlying law, which was established to create job opportunities for people who are blind or severely disabled in the manufacture and delivery of products and services for the federal government. Today,



this program is the single largest employer of people with severe disabilities in the United States, with more than 46,000 jobs nationwide.

The Committee, the independent federal agency that administers JWOD, determined that the program's future success required an enhanced ability to communicate its purpose and value to others. After a long-term, comprehensive study, the Committee decided that "AbilityOne" best fit its criteria for an effective name, and published its decision in the November 28, 2006 Federal Register. "AbilityOne has a much closer linkage to the program's workforce and capabilities, and alludes to the convergence of all participants into one umbrella program," said Mr. Houghton. "A stronger, more unified name will help us increase overall awareness, understanding and support for our program, and ultimately, better fulfill our employment mission."

While the enabling Act remains important and its sponsors retain their place of honor in the program's history, the Committee believes that in the 21st century, it is necessary to build a program identity beyond the legislation in order to fulfill its mission. Mr. Houghton stated, "We honor our founders by maximizing employment for people who are blind or severely disabled; and we believe that as AbilityOne, we are better positioned to succeed in our goals."

To ensure that all stakeholders familiar with the JWOD acronym are able to recognize and transfer their support to the new program name, the Committee will continue to use JWOD along with AbilityOne for a transition period of about 18 months. An unveiling of


the new name and graphic design is expected Spring 2007. The well-recognized SKILCRAFT® brand will continue to be licensed and managed by National Industries for the Blind for a wide range of products furnished to the government under JWOD authority, and is not affected by the program name change. For more information, visit www.jwod.gov.

Check Out the AbilityOne Program at GSA Expo 2007!

AbilityOne (formerly JWOD) is offering several courses at the upcoming GSA Expo 2007, to be held in Orlando, Florida, May 15-17. For more information on these courses, contact Stephanie Lesko at info@jwod.gov or visit www.jwod.gov:

How to Leverage the AbilityOne Program to Fulfill Your Needs. Are you responsible for purchasing products or services for your agency? This course provides an overview of the AbilityOne/JWOD Program, describing how it fulfills customers' needs for products and services while also helping to employ people who are blind or have other severe disabilities. Topics to be addressed include the JWOD Program's legislative and regulatory background, its unique organization and capabilities, and its role in meeting the federal government's socioeconomic goals. The course will provide samples of solutions available through the AbilityOne Program, as well as practical, "how-to" information to get you started.

Buyer's Guide for SKILCRAFT® and other AbilityOne/JWOD Products – how to get the Quality, Value and Convenience You Need. Navigating the federal marketplace for off-the-shelf or custom products can be challenging. This course provides a comprehensive guide to purchasing SKILCRAFT® and other AbilityOne Program products, making it easy



to obtain the quality and value you require, when you need it. Learn about the many types of products offered through the AbilityOne Program, a priority source of supply. You will also learn about the wide range of authorized AbilityOne distribution channels offering AbilityOne Program products that will help satisfy your agency's product purchasing needs.

AbilityOne/JWOD Products for Government-Unique Requirements. The AbilityOne Program offers a wide array of products that support our government's mission-critical needs. This course is designed to inform program managers and contracting personnel about AbilityOne products that are designed to meet military and civilian agencies' unique requirements – items like uniform clothing and equipment, subsistence items in special packaging, medical products, and specialty boxes. We will demonstrate how the AbilityOne contracting process works, start to finish, and will address initiatives to deliver quality and best value. The course includes several real-life examples of AbilityOne products that were mutually developed with our federal customers. In addition, this course will provide helpful reference material to support the exploration and development of manufacturing and related storage/distribution projects under the AbilityOne Program.

DID YOU KNOW?

GSA's Center for Acquisition Excellence has posted a video, "*Conducting Assisted Acquisitions Via Interagency Agreements*" to its website. This is the beginning of a series of video announcements and training opportunities. This video is part of GSA's commitment to fulfill its obligations under the Memorandum of Agreement between GSA and the Department of Defense signed in December 2006. GSA's Acquisition



Workforce is encouraged to view the video and watch for upcoming training dates. To view the video, log on to the Center's Web site, click on the Learning Center, Audio and Video presentations, then Search to locate the video. Contact: rachael.lerum@gsa.gov.



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.

Excellence in Government Conference

April 4-5, 2007
Washington Convention Center
Washington, DC
www.excelgov.com
1-800-332-5185

NCMA's World Congress

"Achieving Outstanding Results Through Effective Life-cycle Contract Management"
April 22-25, 2007
Hyatt Regency
Dallas, TX
www.ncmahq.org/meetings/WC07

IRMCO

April 29-May 1, 2007
Kingsmill Resort and Conference Center
Williamsburg, VA
<http://irmco.gov>



GSA EXPO

May 15-17, 2007
Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, FL
www.expo.gsa.gov

Federal Acquisition Conference (FACE)

“Acquisition Frontiers: Blazing New Trails”
June 19-20, 2007
Ronald Reagan Building
Washington, DC
www.fai.gov/face

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.

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