

Purchase Card On-Line System (PCOLS)

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide the reader with greater understanding and strategic perspective regarding the Purchase Card On-Line System (PCOLS) including the value it adds to more responsible management of the General Services Administration (GSA) Government Purchase Card (GPC) Program within the Department of Defense (DoD). Discussed herein are the situations and actions that led to the development of the PCOLS, highlights of the enabling computer applications that constitute the automated tools of PCOLS, and a discussion of the methodology to be used to train GPC participants.

PCOLS training will be delivered in three phases over time. The duration of each phase is designed to be short enough to minimize adverse impact on already busy schedules, present required information necessary to understand the concept and operation of PCOLS, and allow for timely reinforcement to maximize retention.

Reading this paper completes one of three parts comprising the first phase of PCOLS training. The other parts of the first phase of PCOLS training are the viewing of a video presenting an overview and background of PCOLS, and a set of PowerPoint slides describing roles, responsibilities and providing definitions. All the three parts of Phase I training are designed to be mutually reinforcing and are available for download and viewing at the following website:

http://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/pdi/eb/ebusiness_policy_support_center.html .

BACKGROUND

From 1996 to 2002 more than 600 DoD and Inspector General audit reports on the GSA Government Purchase Card program were issued. In 2002 the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued four audits, and Congress conducted the fourth in a series of hearings on the GPC Program. Findings included systemic issues regarding: 1) account reconciliation and certification, 2) administrative controls, 3) management oversight, 4) property accountability, 5) purchase card use, 6) separation of duties, and 7) training. In response the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller) [OUSD(C)] chartered the Charge Card Task Force to evaluate departmental management and use of the GPC Program, with recommendations due later that year.

In 2002 the OUSD(C) signed out Management Initiative Decision (MID) 904, which mandated specific remedies to previously identified internal management control deficiencies. Since that time DoD has aggressively worked to create and implement these required fixes. The final phase of this years-long effort is the implementation of PCOLS.

UNCLASSIFIED

Purchase Card On-Line System (PCOLS)

PURCHASE CARD ON-LINE SYSTEM

PCOLS is a DoD-wide, DoD-operated electronic system that GPC officials will use to improve the management and accountability of their GPC Program organizations. It is comprised of four computer applications, two of which are complete and will be fielded this calendar year. The completed automated tools are the Enterprise Monitoring and Management of Accounts (EMMA) and Authorization, Issuance and Maintenance (AIM) applications. The remaining automated tools—Data Mining (DM) and Risk Assessment (RA)—are in development and scheduled to be fielded later this calendar year or early next year.

EMMA is an automated tool used by various elements within DoD to capture and define organizational hierarchies, document authority chains, and identify relationships. It will increase the accuracy of personnel data and institute more robust inclusion of supervisors (e.g., cardholder and managing account supervisors) than has previously been the case. At the operational level EMMA acts to electronically define the GPC hierarchy and the roles within the hierarchy, and assign individuals to roles. In addition one can alter or remove any of these entities to reflect changes as part of ongoing program maintenance. Collectively these acts are known as “provisioning.” Provisioning is the primary functionality resident within EMMA used by PCOLS in support of the GPC Program.

AIM is an electronic application used uniquely by the GPC Program to initiate, approve, and transmit requests for GPC issuance and maintenance actions. AIM draws from hierarchies (e.g., responsibilities and permissions) established in EMMA. It directly engages GPC supervisors, helps ensure business rules comply with internal management controls, and is a workflow tool performing various GPC Program account authorization and maintenance functions. Additionally, formerly paper-based forms have been migrated to a Web-based format. AIM links to GPC Program banks’ electronic applications, allowing transaction management to continue to occur on the bank’s electronic access system (EAS). It is Common Access Card (CAC)-enabled to ensure secure authentication and non-repudiation as one key internal management control action.

As mentioned above, the two automated tools in development are Data Mining and Risk Assessment. The DM application will use sophisticated intelligent / learning software to identify correlations, patterns, and trends in GPC buying actions. This allows daily, near-real-time mining of transactions, conducting a 100 percent review that is not possible using current business tools. With this tool, scarce human resources can be targeted on identified high-risk transactions and maintain a record of actions taken on transaction reviews for improved internal audit ability of the program. The RA application will provide the organization manager and others at DoD and Federal levels with reliable information about GPC Program health. Reports will be created at various levels of the GPC

UNCLASSIFIED

Purchase Card On-Line System (PCOLS)

organization down to the Agency/Organization Program Coordinator (A/OPC) level and will automatically be made available to managers on a quarterly basis. The composition and format of reports is being developed currently. The strategic goal is to have the assessed health of an organization assist program officials and auditors in determining the appropriate level of oversight for any given GPC organization, allowing scarce human resources to be targeted where the greatest value can be obtained.

TRAINING METHODOLOGY

To minimize the overall level of effort incurred by GPC Program managers, supervisors and cardholders in executing requirements incident to the upcoming SmartPay® 2 contract and simultaneously implementing PCOLS, it is imperative that PCOLS training be conducted and completed in calendar year 2008. This goal presents a noteworthy challenge but one that is achievable. To reach out to and ensure all DoD GPC Program personnel are adequately trained on PCOLS within the allowed window of opportunity, the enabling training concept must be one of “train the trainer.” The GPC workflow role that is best positioned to effect this is the base/installation level A/OPC. It is critical, therefore, that A/OPCs assume a level of responsibility for understanding the PCOLS concept, understanding how to operate within EMMA and AIM, and ensuring those in their GPC Program organizations are trained to ensure business continuity is as seamless as possible when DoD transfers to both the new GSA SmartPay® 2 contract and institutes required GPC internal management control protocols using PCOLS.

To realize success in adequately preparing DoD A/OPCs and Resource Managers (RM) to act as PCOLS trainers within their parent GPC Program organizations, a certain minimum amount of knowledge and skills must be imparted. Based on lessons learned during prototype training conducted in Huntsville, Alabama, in April 2008, this equates to approximately four hours of training time. The concentration of nearly 2,000 DoD A/OPCs and RMs at the GSA SmartPay® Conference to be conducted in Denver on 22–24 July 2008 presents a prime opportunity to reach most of this community at one time, but the challenges inherent in presenting four hours of training to approximately 2,000 A/OPCs and RMs within three days are daunting.

Therefore, to ensure a valuable and efficient learning experience, a three-phased training approach has been developed. This approach will provide the right knowledge and skill sets using multiple modes delivered successively over time. Using this knowledge base and supported by help desk and Web-accessible training information, A/OPCs and RMs can transfer their knowledge to others within their GPC Program organizations.

Phase One provides background material addressing what PCOLS is and why PCOLS was developed. It will be distributed early on, prior to Phases Two and

UNCLASSIFIED

Purchase Card On-Line System (PCOLS)

Three, and should require approximately one hour to review. It will be composed of written material (including this white paper) and an informational video accessible via the Internet to be reviewed on demand prior to commencing Phase Two of the training.

Phase Two of PCOLS training will be presented in Webinar format and scheduled to last approximately two hours. It will be concerned primarily with the critical knowledge and skills required to access and maneuver within the EMMA and AIM applications. While the format and content will remain the same, these Webinars will be available in two modes. Some Webinars will be presented at predetermined times and made available to A/OPCs and RMs as the necessary preparation for the third and final stage of training that will occur in Denver. Pre-recorded Webinars will be available to anyone in the GPC Program, using an Internet link that will allow for on-demand viewing as follow-on support or refresher training at any time as desired by the viewer.

The third phase of the PCOLS training for A/OPCs and RMs will leverage the learning accomplished during Phases One and Two and will occur in Denver during the SmartPay® Conference. This phase will be comprised of live access to the applications, using guided exercises to provide hands-on reinforcement of knowledge gained in Phases One and Two. At the completion of Phase Three, A/OPCs, RMs, and those within their GPC Program organizations will have access to four sources of follow-on training support, in the form of help desk support (eBusiness Policy Support Center, or eBPSC), a user's guide to EMMA and AIM, access to prerecorded Webinars on EMMA and AIM, and answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs).

SUMMARY

The Purchase Card On-Line System is a response to a mandate by the OUSD(C)'s Management Initiative Decision 904, which was itself created in response to over 600 audits and reviews identifying a system of internal management control deficiencies in the GPC Program. PCOLS was not intended to respond to all MID 904 remediation requirements but does represent closure to the final issues remaining to be addressed. The concurrent requirement to award and execute the SmartPay® 2 contract while implementing PCOLS presents a notable challenge that mandates commitment and teamwork by GPC Program managers and supervisors and PCOLS program management officials. To help achieve this goal, a "train the trainer" approach was determined to be the most effective way to reach out and train all required GPC members in the abbreviated amount of time allowed. This training will be directed to A/OPCs and RMs using a three-phased approach and a focus on reaching the maximum number possible during the GSA SmartPay® conference in Denver in July 2008. By assuming a posture of serious intent to succeed in this endeavor, the DoD GPC Program can and will lead the Federal government in responsible management of taxpayer dollars in this area.

UNCLASSIFIED