

11/5/2012 Schedules Modernization Customer Focus Group

11/5 – Customer Attendees – 22+ Customer Participants. Organizations represented included: DoJ; US Army; US Navy; US Air Force; US Coast Guard; USDA Forest Service; VHA; FEMA; USDA NRCS; DoD WHS; Treasury; Office of Administrative Law Judges; HHS/PSC/SAS; DHHS; DCAA; USAID; GMU; and others. 15 GSA participants including facilitator.

1. Facilitator opened the meeting by welcoming participants and discussing the key objectives of the session such as:
 - GSA's business drivers and the high-level objectives for the Schedules Modernization Initiative.
 - The four Solution Sets that have been identified as key tenets for the Schedules Modernization Initiative as shown below:
 - Data Driven Pricing
 - Flexible Contracting
 - Enhanced Service Delivery
 - Increased Knowledge Management Capabilities
2. The primary solutions sets that were the focus for the discussion were: Data Driven Pricing and the Flexible Contracting.
3. The crux of the Data Driven Pricing Solution Set is the introduction of pricing tools, policies, and procedures that will give better insight into pricing variability. The basic assumption is that such information could be helpful to customers and vendors. Information regarding how the team developed the solutions was discussed.
4. Focus group participants were asked to respond to the following set of questions:
 - Is price, or price related factors currently your top priority in acquisitions? What is your perception of GSA's prices.
 - What pricing information would you want to access to better plan your procurement? For example, would you be interested in receiving any information on actual prices paid by other users?
 - Would you be interested in a tool that not only provided list price on GSA's contracts, but also of other major government wide contract vehicles?
 - What do think of mandating tier volume discounts at the order level and/or contract level?
5. Highlights from the Data Driven Pricing discussion are shown below:

PRICING COMMENTS:

- Sometimes there's lots of price variability...prices are all over the place.
 - Price and quality are currently the big priorities.
 - Sometimes schedule prices appear higher than store prices.
 - Others stated the prices they've seen offered on schedules are usually fair.
 - Rules of when to apply G&A seem inconsistent and vendors apply the rules differently. In order to better understand when G&A should be applied, one customer stated that she has reached out to COs but hasn't always received a solid answer. Any information regarding what are acceptable price build up practices would be appreciated.
 - GSA Response – Several provided examples of how G&A should be handled. Facilitator offered reach back to share best practices.
 - The concept of most preferred customer was discussed. One participant wanted to know why it appears that in some case they aren't offered the most favorable price. Insight into average past discounted rates would also be helpful.
6. The crux of the Flexible Contracting Solution set reflects recognition from GSA that the current structure of over 30 separate MAS schedules makes it difficult for customers to navigate, particularly when their requirements cross multiple schedules. A draft solution set that reduces the number of schedules down to the following eight solution sets was offered:
- Facility & Security
 - Office and Furniture
 - Engineering, Environmental, Logistical, & Scientific
 - Business Management
 - Information Technology
 - Travel/Transportation
 - Automotive
7. Highlights from the Flexible Contracting discussion are shown below:

REDUCED NUMBER OF CONTRACTS

- A reduced number of contracts must still ensure there's representative small business participation.
 - GSA Response – Concur.

- One participant wanted to know which solution set would include about test and development.
 - GSA Response – TBD Pending solution set refinement.
 - One participant thought consolidation to a smaller number of schedules / solution sets was a great way to reduce duplication because this also results in a time savings. The participant likes the groupings shown and believed the groupings may address 70-80% of their needs.
 - One participant acknowledged the solution sets seem reasonable but did note that IT crosses many requirements.
 - Another expressed a current challenge finding the right vendors to complete complex requirements. Wanted to know how will they know who can provide which area of expertise if the number of schedules is reduced.
8. Enhanced Service Delivery was discussed. The crux of this solution set area focuses on establishing a consolidated contact center, tiered support, and providing access to subject matter experts throughout GSA. Focus group participants were consider the following set of questions:
- Modernization includes centralization & making things easier. We will begin consolidating customer contact functions where it makes sense. Will this help?
 - What level of customer services or support from GSA do you find necessary or unnecessary?
- No further discussion.
9. The Transaction Level Data / Increased Knowledge Management (TLD /IKM) Solution Set was discussed very quickly, at a very high level. The crux of this solution set area focuses on compiling data at a transactional level in order to aid government buyers when making their purchasing decisions. TLD /IKM will also provide vital program management information and will provide other information that will help enable strategic sourcing. No specific questions were posed or discussed.
10. Participants requested copies of the presentation and notes. Meeting adjourned.