

Schedules Modernization Customer Focus Group

Synopsis of all Discussions

10/25 – Customer Attendees – 3+ Customer Participants. Organizations represented included: Judiciary; DOL / OASAM; DHS; GSA; and others.

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; GSA; and others.

11/14 – Customer Attendees – 22+ Customer Participants. Organizations represented included : U.S. Probate & Pretrial Services Office; DoL; DHHS /NIH/NHGRI; DHS/TSA; DISA; DoD; NASA; US Air Force; US USMC; DoI; SSA; USDA; IRS; DSCA; GSA: and others.

1. Facilitators opened the meetings by welcoming participants and discussing the key objectives of the sessions 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 industry. 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 discussions are shown below:

GENERAL PRICING DISCUSSION

- Several agreed, in recent years, price has increased in importance in both product and service evaluations.
- Price, in addition to quality, are current the big priorities.
- One participant commented that routinely, their colleagues have found items cheaper on the open market.
 - GSA Response - Understandable concern and reminded participants that the schedule prices should be the starting point for negotiations.
- Sometimes schedule prices appear higher than what's in stores
- Sometimes there's lots of price variability...prices are all over the place.
- Others stated the prices they've seen offered on schedule are usually fair.
- Volume discounts to reduce prices for all federal agencies would be a benefit; however, volume discounts just at a single Agency may not be a huge benefit.
- ODC policies make it difficult to acquire complex solutions.

PRICING TOOL COMMENTS:

- Data elements that should be incorporated into a pricing tool include the following:
 - Quantity
 - Price adjustment history
 - Technical specifications
 - Rebate history
 - Aggregated prices paid across the government
 - Price paid per item by other agencies

- Price per item based on commercial price, GWAC price, FSSI price, and schedule price
 - Average past discounted rates
 - Date of prices shown
 - Warranty related information
 - Critical Tool perimeters:
 - Prices and data must be kept current, include “as of” date info
 - Critical tool capabilities:
 - Provide the ability to extract information by socio-economic designator.
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

- Does the number of schedules impact ease of use or likely hood to use MAS?
 - 30+ schedules is an issue when trying to figure out which schedule to use.
 - Having so many schedules makes it difficult to determine which company carries a particular product or provides a particular service.
 - The number of schedules can make finding a small business even harder.
 - IT crosses many requirements

- Several agreed, the fewer the number of schedules, the better.
 - Several agreed that typically, there's a good amount of competition when using schedules.
 - What critical aspects must GSA anticipate in order to ensure success?
 - Regardless of the number of schedules, a more robust search tool, and better more through product and services descriptions are needed, particularly if schedules are consolidated.
 - A reduced number of contracts must still ensure there's representative small business participation.
 - GSA Response – Concur.
 - A smaller number of schedules / solution sets is a great way to reduce duplication.
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 asked to respond to 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?
9. Highlights from the Enhanced Service Delivery Discussions are shown below:
- Accountability to ensure calls made to the contact center are addressed is critical.
 - Access to GSA people with industry knowledge and expertise would be helpful.
 - In some instances, it has taken too long to get an authoritative response from GSA.
 - Others state they are very pleased with the current level of support.
10. 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; however, some participants expressed the following opinions:

- Several agreed that it would be helpful to know what other agencies are buying.
- One participant noted that it would also be helpful to know what items were being purchased within their own Agency too.
- Participants were asked if they would be able to provide transaction level data to GSA. One participant responded that smaller agencies don't have the capability to supply such detailed information. Several agreed.

11. When asked if there are other modernization solutions that participants would like to see from GSA?

- Several participants stated that schedules were their vehicle of first choice and that they always prefer to purchase using schedules because it is more efficient and is fast.