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GWAC BACKGROUND

Just what is a GWAC?

GWAC stands for "Governmentwide Acquisition Contract". GWACs are task order contracts for information technology awarded under multiple award contracting procedures and are established by one federal government agency for use by all federal agencies. GWACs are rooted in the Clinger-Cohen Act and the Federal Acquisition and Streamlining Act.

>> These new contract vehicles made the ordering process faster and easier, both for the government and for contractors.

Clinger-Cohen Act

The Clinger Cohen Act vested governmentwide responsibility for Information Technology in the Office of Management and Budget. OMB issues "executive agent" designations to certain other federal agencies to award GWAC contracts. OMB has designated GSA as executive agent for most of the GWACs. With this designation comes responsibility for overseeing the contracts and for periodically reporting on their usage.

Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act

Prior to the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994 (FASA), GSA, like most other federal agencies, used single-award contracts to obtain IT services. Nearly all GSA regions had their own regional contracts. Most provided the same types of services, often with the same contractors. So, there was a lot of duplication of effort and expense in awarding and administering all those contracts.

Also, single-award contracts gave the federal agency nowhere to go with performance problems. It took so long to compete and award a new contract that terminating poorly performing contractors was not a viable option, because there were no other contract vehicles available for use.

FASA greatly simplified the acquisition process. One of the major features of the Act was the preference for multiple-award contracts instead of single-award contracts for buying supplies and services. Multiple-award contracts are awarded to more than one contractor for the same or similar supplies or services. Generally, users conduct a competition among the multiple-award contractors and then place the task or delivery order with the firm offering the best deal (considering price and other factors). Therefore, the government benefits from lower prices, better quality, faster delivery, and improved contractor performance. FASA also eliminated the requirement to post a public notice before placing orders; limited protests, and established the concept of "fair opportunity."

By establishing a preference for multiple-award contracts, FASA offered several benefits to the government. It:

- Created dual levels of competition — at the contract level and task order level;
- Allowed for streamlined task order competition within a pool of qualified contractors;
- Reduced procurement lead times; and
- Provided a pool of contractors, which helped mitigate problems associated with poor performance.

These new contract vehicles made the ordering process faster and easier, both for the government and for contractors. Individual orders under the GWACs can be competed and placed in a matter of weeks — significantly reducing bid and proposal costs for you, and enabling agencies to complete their buys more efficiently and effectively. Although under most GWACs, you have to compete twice, once at the contract level and again at the task level, the reward is greater. Unless a fair opportunity exception applies, as a GWAC contractor you have the opportunity to go after every task order under that contract.

The use of multiple-award contracts allows agencies to take continuous advantage of lower costs, better quality, reduced time from requirements identification to award, and improved contractor performance in satisfying customer requirements.

OPPORTUNITY

Fair Opportunity

Fair opportunity is the cornerstone of multiple-award contracts. The government must give all contractors a "fair opportunity" to be considered for each order that exceeds $2,500, except in the case of the 8(a) STARS GWAC. There are several ways to provide "fair opportunity." The contracting officer may furnish a summary description of the requirement to all of the contractors, and then request full proposals only from the interested firms. Or, the contracting officer may request written or oral proposals from all of the contractors. If more information is needed, the contracting officer may contact some, but not all, of the contract holders.

There are four exceptions to use of fair opportunity:

- The customer has an urgent need for the services;
- The service is specialized or unique, and only one contractor can provide it;
- The work is a "logical follow-on" to work already competed under the contract; and
- The government needs to satisfy the minimum guarantee provision of the contract

For more information about fair opportunity, see FAR 16.505(b).

In addition, the 8(a) STARS contracts are a unique blend of the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act (FASA) and Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(a)), which authorizes the use of sole source orders for 8(a) certified firms under the $3 million dollar 8(a) non-competitive threshold. These contracts allow the government to acquire an indefinite quantity, within stated limits, of supplies or services during a fixed period, with deliveries or performance to be scheduled by placing orders with the contractor. However, orders above the $3 million 8(a) non-competitive threshold are subject to the same fair opportunity provisions listed above.

How is a GWAC Different from a Schedule?

If you have both a GWAC and a Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contract, you may be wondering what the differences are. Here are some of the distinctions:

- **Scope**
  a. Schedule: (1) Covers a broad range of products and services, (2) allows agencies to meet their small business subcontracting goals using Schedule contracts, and (3), under IT Schedules only, gives state and local governments the ability to use Group 70 contracts to meet their IT procurement needs.
  b. GWAC: (1) Can be awarded only for IT services and products, and (2) allows only federal agencies to place orders.
- **Established Labor Categories**
  a. Schedule: Contractors use their own established commercial labor categories. (Task order proposals may be more difficult to evaluate because the labor categories are not pre-determined by the government but based on contractor's commercial practices.)
  b. GWAC: The government develops the labor category descriptions and all offerors are held to those categories. (Task order proposals are easier to evaluate because they are apples-to-apples comparisons.)
- **Total Solutions:**
  a. Schedule: "Total solutions" can be achieved by use of an individual Schedule contract or by utilizing multiple contractors under Contractor Teaming Arrangements (CTA).
  b. GWAC: Specifically designed to be solutions-based contracts integrating hardware, software and services.
- **Ordering Procedures**
  a. Schedule: Under the micropurchase threshold, the ordering activity should make a "best value" determination and place the order. Between the micropurchase threshold and $25,000, the ordering activity should review at least three contracts and make a "best value" determination. For orders above the maximum order threshold, additional contracts should be reviewed, ordering activities should seek a price reduction and they should make a "best value" determination.
  b. GWAC: Based on the concept of fair opportunity. Unless a fair opportunity exception applies, each contractor within a defined realm (e.g., contract suite or contract functional area) must be considered for each task order.

  Under 8(a) STARS, orders below the competitive threshold (currently $3 million) may be placed directly without further competition.
- Section 803: A recent legislative change for the Department of Defense (DoD) under the Section 803 of the National Defense Authorization Act requires contracting officers placing orders for DoD customers to either issue fair notice to all contractors offering the required service or issue fair notice to as many Schedule contractors as possible.
  a. Schedule: Ordering activities should issue fair notice to all contractors that may meet their needs or the ordering activity should issue the notice to a sufficient number of contractors so that a minimum of three responses can be anticipated. The number of contractors slated to receive an issued notice should be dependent on the ordering activity's market research. If the ordering activity does not receive at least three bids (and if, based on market research, it was anticipated that three bids would be received), the ordering

>>Unless a fair opportunity exception applies, each contractor within a defined realm must be considered for each task.

activity can document the file, make a "best value" determination, and place the order. By utilizing Federal Supply Services e-Buy, an online request for quote (RFQ) system, an ordering activity will fully meet the Section 803 requirements.

b. GWAC: The ordering official provides a fair notice of intent to make the purchase to all contractors offering the required services under that GWAC. Generally, this is accomplished by sending an RFQ to each of the contractors. Even if only one proposal is received, the requirements of Section 803 are considered met, and the order can be awarded.

- **Ordering Authority**
  a. Schedule: Any warranted federal contracting officer or purchase-card holder may issue an order against a Schedule contract without a specific delegation of authority. Section 211 of the e-Government Act of 2002 amended the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act to allow for "cooperative purchasing". Cooperative purchasing gives state and local governments the ability to utilize the Federal Supply Schedule 70 for information technology requirements.

  b. GWAC: An ordering official who wants to place an order against a GWAC must obtain a written delegation of authority from the GWAC Procuring Contracting Officer (PCO) and receive specific training (more about that later).

- **Protests**
  a. Schedule: Orders may be protested to the agency that issued the order, to the Government Accountability Office, or in the federal court system.

  b. GWAC: Orders may be protested only if the scope, period of performance or maximum dollar amount of the contract is exceeded. Other concerns with GWAC orders may be brought to the attention of the GSA Ombudsman for resolution, but they are not protestable.

- **Types of Orders**
  a. Schedule: Allows placement of fixed-price, labor-hour and time-and-materials orders.

  b. GWAC: Allows placement of fixed-price, labor-hour and time-and-materials types of task orders. Some GWACs also provide for cost-reimbursement tasks. It is important for you to become familiar with the types of tasks allowed by your particular contract. If your GWAC allows you to accept cost-reimbursement task orders, you will have additional record-keeping requirements … and you will also have additional business opportunities.

- **Receipt of Proposals**
  a. Schedule: There is a "standing" solicitation that allows submission of proposals at anytime.

  b. GWAC: There is a cutoff date, after which proposals will no longer be accepted by the government and evaluated for award. Many GWACs also include "on ramp" or "access ramp" provisions for adding new contractors when it is in the best interest of the government. Therefore, as a GWAC contractor, there will not be many more firms joining your vehicle.

- **Pre-Qualified Contractors**
  a. Schedule: Technically qualified offerors with a fair and reasonable price (based on most-favored customer) may receive an award. Schedules have a large pool of contractors that can meet ordering activities' requirements and increase competition. An ordering official will research the pool of contractors to find contractors capable of performing the specific requirements of a particular task.

  b. GWAC: The contractors have been screened and selected through a "best value" tradeoff evaluation approach. There are fewer contractors in the pool, and all contractors are capable of performing the work. The ordering official does not have to perform further market research to narrow the field.

- **Worldwide Coverage**
  a. Schedule: Coverage may be domestic (48 contiguous states, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Washington DC, and U.S. Territories) or overseas (outside the destination listed for domestic); or a contactor may offer both domestic and overseas coverage.

  b. GWAC: The contractors must be able to perform work at any location worldwide. The exception is the 8(a) STARS contractors, who have the option of performing outside the United States.

- **Program Managers**
  a. Schedule: If a task order or blanket purchase agreement requires a program manager, the position is a labor category on the contract, shown as line item on the order, and priced on an hourly basis.

  b. GWAC: All have dedicated program or contract managers who do not appear as a separate labor category on the contract. Rather, their salaries are built into the loaded labor rates. This provides high-level support within the companies.

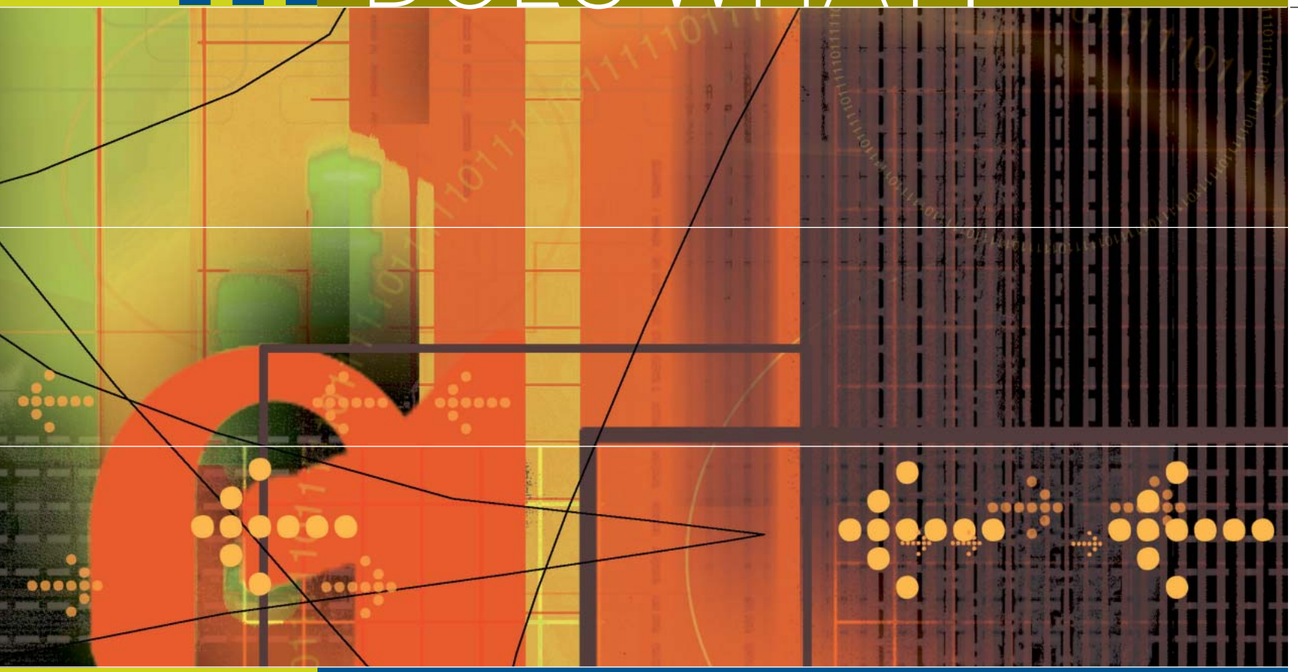
- **Reports**
  a. Schedule: A host of reporting requirements from subcontracting and sales reporting to compliance with various labor laws. Additional reports may be specified at task order level.

  b. GWAC: A host of reporting requirements from subcontracting and sales reporting to compliance with various labor laws. GWACs include additional required reports at the contract level — discussed in more detail in this guide. Additional reports may be specified at the task order level.

- **Technology Refreshment**
  a. Schedule: Refreshment is performed at the contract level. The contractor initiates technology refreshment through the modification process.

  b. GWAC: Refreshment can be done at the contract or task order level. At the contract level, GSA usually invites contractors and customers to annual "tech refresh" meetings to discuss ideas for updating the contracts. At the task level, the Ordering Agency Contracting Officer (OACO) can add skill categories necessary for performing that specific task.

WHO DOES WHAT?



The GSA Federal Supply Service Procuring Contracting Officer (PCO) is the individual who negotiated and awarded your contract and has overall responsibility for it. The PCO handles most day-to-day contracting matters, including issuing modifications and delegating task order authority to others.

>> The contractor's Program Manager (PM) is the contractor's representative who has overall responsibility for contractor performance, contract management, workflow and resource management.

The GSA Federal Supply Service **Administrative Contracting Officer (ACO)** will oversee certain contract-management functions such as contractor sales reporting, contractor performance evaluations, small business size status re-certifications, subcontracting reports, and other duties delegated by the PCO.

Ordering Agency Contracting Officers (OACOs) are assigned after contract award. The OACO is the official responsible for negotiating and awarding task orders under your contract. You probably will deal with several OACOs throughout the life of the contract. Most of the GSA Federal Technology Service regional offices have OACOs who will be issuing orders.

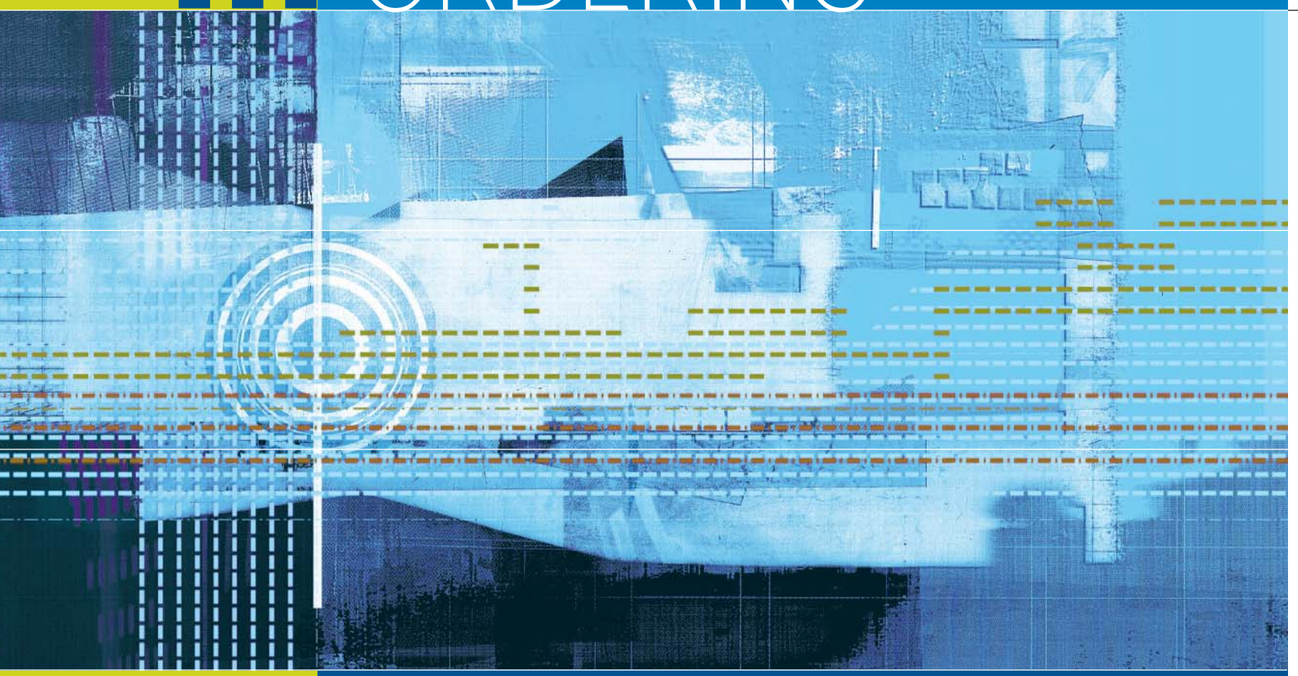
Other federal agencies with Direct Order Direct Bill (DODB) authority also have OACOs who will issue orders. DODB is discussed in greater detail later in this guide.

GSA Federal Technology Service **Contracting Officer's Technical Representatives (COTRs)** are also assigned after contract award. In FTS, these individuals are more commonly known as **Information Technology Managers or Information Technology Representatives (ITMs/ITRs)**. Most GSA regional offices have COTRs. The COTR (or ITM/ITR) is the focal point for GSA-issued task orders and works closely with you, the end user, and the OACO during the life of a task order. You probably will work with several ITMs/ITRs during the life of your contract.

The **End User/Customer/Client** is the federal agency for which GSA places task orders. The End User/Customer/Client is responsible for monitoring technical performance on their task orders. They are the ones with the requirement, and they provide funding for their task orders.

The contractor's **Program Manager (PM)** is the contractor's representative who has overall responsibility for contractor performance, contract management, workflow and resource management.

ORDERING



Who Can Place Orders?

Any federal agency may use the GWACs. However, the agency's ordering official must have received a delegation of authority from the GWAC PCO before issuing an order.

>> You will be more successful if you actively pursue a few tasks than if you take a scattered shot at many.

For GSA, the Federal Technology Service (FTS) is authorized to place and administer task orders on behalf of other federal agencies. Historically, the majority of the orders have been issued by FTS. A list of authorized FTS contracting officers will be provided to you shortly after contract award. In general, FTS is placing and administering these orders on behalf of end user agencies.

For non-GSA orders, the GSA PCO negotiates a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with agencies wanting to place orders directly with the GWAC contractor. The GSA PCO trains that agency's staff, then issues a delegation of authority to them to award orders under the contract. The GSA PCO will let you know when a non-GSA person has been given the authority to place orders. If you receive an order and are unsure about whether the person signing the order had the authority to do so, just give your PCO a call before you accept the order.

What is the Ordering Process?

The following is the typical process for a GWAC task order:

- The end user identifies a need for supplies or services and drafts a requirements document, including an estimated cost. This information is packaged as a purchase request. The purchase request is routed for approval within the organization (and may consist of many layers of approval and several drafts).
- The approved purchase request goes to the end user's finance office for a commitment of funds, based on the estimate, and is then sent to the office that will award the task. For non-GSA orders, this office usually is the customer's contracting office. If the customer wants GSA to place the order, the purchase request is sent to GSA FTS.
- GSA FTS or the other ordering agency finalizes the requirements document into a Statement of Work (SOW), determines which contract suite best fits the requirement, and issues a Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP (also called a Request for Quote, RFQ or Task Order Request, TOR) contains the SOW and the factors that will be used to evaluate proposals. Often, proposals are evaluated on a "best value" basis, which considers both the technical and price components of an offer.
- The GWAC industry partners prepare and submit their proposals to GSA or the other ordering agency.
- GSA or the ordering agency evaluates the proposals, obtains final approval from the end user, and awards the task.

Tips for What Makes a Good Proposal and Mistakes to Avoid

Here are several "good proposal" tips gleaned from the people who evaluate proposals on a daily basis:

- You will be more successful if you actively pursue a few tasks than if you take a scattered shot at many. Concentrate on the ones that involve your core expertise, are set at the dollar levels you prefer for the work you do, and are in an area in which you have confidence that you can be an outstanding performer. Then, learn as much as possible about the agency before you walk in the door; know as much as possible about the agency's business (their Web is a great place to start), and customize your presentation to the agency's needs. *Note: Be certain to send the other agencies polite letters that thank them for their interest and specify that you are not currently*

>> Because of the strict integrity associated with the procurement process, acquisition personnel must remain objective and unbiased.

in a position to pursue this task, but that you hope to respond to future requests.

- Submit all information specified in the Request for Proposals (RFP).
- Fully and specifically address all evaluation criteria in a meaningful, detailed way that directly relates to the task.
- Check for spelling and grammatical errors, and make your proposal easy to follow.
- Make sure to submit your proposal by the due date/time. If you must hand-deliver your proposal, allow plenty of time for passing through building security. There is never an excuse for submitting a late proposal. Always have it there by the proposal due date/time.
- If you are not clear about an aspect of the RFP, call the ordering official and request clarification. Do not be surprised if the ordering official asks you to confirm the question in writing and then shares the question and answer with all the contractors on the GWAC.
- If you decide not to submit a proposal, tell the ordering official why. The ordering system used by GSA allows you to submit electronically your reason for not proposing.
- For oral presentations, do not put overly detailed technical information on slides — it makes it difficult for the evaluators to read and follow.
- Clearly state any assumptions you have made in preparing your proposal and any exceptions you are taking.
- Canned presentations usually do look just that: canned. Agencies are not looking for generalities; they are looking to see if you really understand their objectives.
- Stick to any specified page limit.
- Concentrate on explaining what you understand the task to be, and how you will complete the job, on time and on budget.

And here are what those same people said were common mistakes:

- Incomplete proposals;
- Vague or broad terminology, rather than specific and detailed information;
- Misspelled words, incomplete sentences, poor grammar;
- Late proposals;
- Being determined to sell your existing solution without considering, or even knowing, the agency's problems or objectives;
- Name dropping;
- Poor use of oral proposal time. Too much time spent on marketing the company and its history and not enough time on the specific details of your solution; and
- Failure to address quality control plans, managerial oversight and other aspects of contract management.
- Bidding under Schedule contract terms and conditions, rather than your GWAC.

A Word About Proposal Evaluation

Evaluations usually are not based on price alone. Customers most often want the optimal blend of quality and price — and for complex acquisitions — the customers usually want a "total solution." In most cases, they do not have the resources or technical expertise in-house to buy and integrate the pieces. Before issuing the RFP, evaluation factors are developed which will maximize competition, minimize the complexity of the RFP and the evaluation, ensure impartial and complete evaluation of all responses, and facilitate selection of the source whose performance is expected to best meet the stated government requirements. Technical evaluation factors such as past performance, technical approach, and understanding of the requirement are often used when the quality of technical performance is important relative to price. If oral proposals are called for, one goal will be to verify that you understand these key technical requirements. The RFP will tell you which factors matter most. In some cases, the only factor is whether your technical proposal is acceptable or not.

Oral Proposals and Presentations

You may be asked for an oral proposal in lieu of a written proposal, or to make an oral presentation in addition to a written proposal. Oral proposals and presentations can be mutually beneficial to the government and the contractor. They often save time and money for both parties. Technical and management aspects of your proposal may be better understood when explained orally. Some agencies videotape or transcribe the oral proposals and use that content to document and enforce contract performance.

Because of the strict integrity associated with the procurement process, acquisition personnel must remain objective and unbiased. Government procurement officials must avoid improper personal relationships, gifts or any appearance of impropriety, but the face-to-face relationship is still significant to a long-term partnership.

How Will I Know when a Task RFP is Issued?

GSA Orders

GSA uses an electronic system to receive requirements, request proposals, award task orders and track financial information. ITSS, the current system, is being replaced by a new, more powerful system known as *GSA Preferred*. Most notifications of new Requests for Proposals are sent to the e-mail address you designate when you register in *GSA Preferred*/ITSS. Therefore, it is important to keep your address and contact information current in *GSA Preferred*/ITSS. If your information is not kept current, you will miss out on opportunities to respond to RFPs.

Non-GSA Orders (DODB)

Non-GSA orders are also known as DODB orders, for Direct Order Direct Bill. DODB refers to orders placed directly with the contractor by an agency other than GSA. Federal agencies use a variety of ways to request proposals and award orders. These range from electronic systems, to e-mail to postal mail. Requests for proposals and subsequent awards will be issued on the ordering agency's forms, and billing will be directly with the ordering agency.

Most GWAC contracts require the contractor to provide a copy of all non-GSA orders to the GSA PCO. If your contract contains this requirement, be sure you send copies to GSA as soon as you receive the orders.

How Do I Know If an Order is a GWAC Order?

One of the biggest questions about orders is how to recognize whether or not the order is a GWAC order. Any one or more of the following common indicators show that an order is a GWAC order:

- The GSA GWAC Contract Number is stated on the task order.
- The ordering information and terms are the same as on your GWAC.
- The order contains a statement identifying the particular GWAC under which it is being placed.

If you receive an order and are not sure whether it is an order under your GWAC, Schedule or another contract vehicle, call the person who signed the order and ask for clarification, or talk with your GSA PCO. Under any of these, you are required to retain accurate records and likely, to remit some type of fee. Failure to do so could cause you many problems, cost you money, and could even result in termination of your contract.

ORDERS

Statements of Work and Performance-based Contracting

Task orders under your GWAC will contain a Statement of Work (SOW) that describes the work the government wants you to do. Common practice has been to prepare SOWs in a way that dictates how the contractor must perform the work. However, that is changing as the government moves toward performance-based service acquisition.

Federal laws and regulations now establish a preference for performance-based contracting when buying services, and agencies are making an effort to write their requirements as performance-based. In a nutshell, a performance-based contract (or task order) will address three questions: "What do I need?," "When do I need it?" and "How do I know it's good when I get it?" Task orders under this contract may contain a Performance Work Statement, often called a Statement of Objective (SOO), describing what the government wants done and when. Performance standards will establish the performance level acceptable to the government. A Quality Assurance Plan will contain the measurement techniques the government will use to determine how well the work was performed. Positive or negative incentives may be included to encourage high-quality performance.

Performance-based service acquisition has many benefits:

- The focus is on intended results, rather than on the process of getting there.
- Contractors, who are the experts, have the flexibility to decide how to do the job and to propose the best way of doing it.
- The government has a variety of solutions from which to choose.
- There is less performance risk on the government — the contractor is taking more risk and can reap more rewards for success.

The downside: Progress toward performance-based contracting has been slow. Most of the people who write statements of work for the government are accustomed to dictating how the work will be performed. It can be difficult for them to shift gears to describe what needs to be done and how they will measure the work. Therefore, the transition to performance-based contracting continues to be a slowly evolving process. Over time, you probably will see more and more statements of work written as performance-based.

Any time you see a performance-based buy, anticipate having to propose your quality assurance measures. While sometimes the government will propose incentives for good performance and disincentives for poor performance, often the government will ask the contractor to propose the incentives and how the incentives will be measured. Think through how you will want to respond to requirements of this sort. In looking at your quality assurance plans, agencies are looking to limit risk. In looking at incentives, agencies often are thinking in terms of monetary incentives or disincentives — although other incentives can include exercise of options and percentages of future work.

To learn more about performance-based statements of work, visit www.acqnet.gov and click on "Seven Steps to Performance Based Services Acquisition Guide."

If I Have to Compete, Am I Competing with Other GWACs, Schedules, etc.?

When the ordering official determines which suite of contracts (e.g., Millennia Lite) is best suited for a particular procurement, the requirement is competed only among the firms who were awarded contracts under that suite. The requirement would not be competed against another GWAC vehicle or against the Schedules.

A special note applies to 8(a) STARS: We expect the vast majority of 8(a) STARS orders to be under $3,000,000. As 8(a) set-asides, they will be processed as direct buys, without competition. Orders above the 8(a) threshold are subject to the same competition requirements as the other GWACs.

Debriefings

The government is not required to provide a formal debriefing to unsuccessful offerors on task orders issued under multiple award contracts. However, you certainly may ask for one. Debriefings provide insight into the strengths and weaknesses of your proposal, which will help you to be more competitive in the future. Improving on weaknesses and capitalizing on strengths means you can be more competitive the next time you compete. Your chances of getting a meaningful debriefing depend, in part, on how you ask for it. Even though GWAC orders are not generally protestable, Contracting Officers may be hesitant to offer debriefings when they feel that they are being forced to defend their decisions. They are more forthcoming to an approach emphasizing that you are not challenging the decision but want to ensure that you have a better shot at winning the next time. Also, task order flow is somewhat cyclical, with many orders being issued during the couple of months before and after the end of the fiscal year. Because of this heavy workload, the Contracting Officer may need to postpone a debriefing for a short period of time.

Contractor Team Arrangements

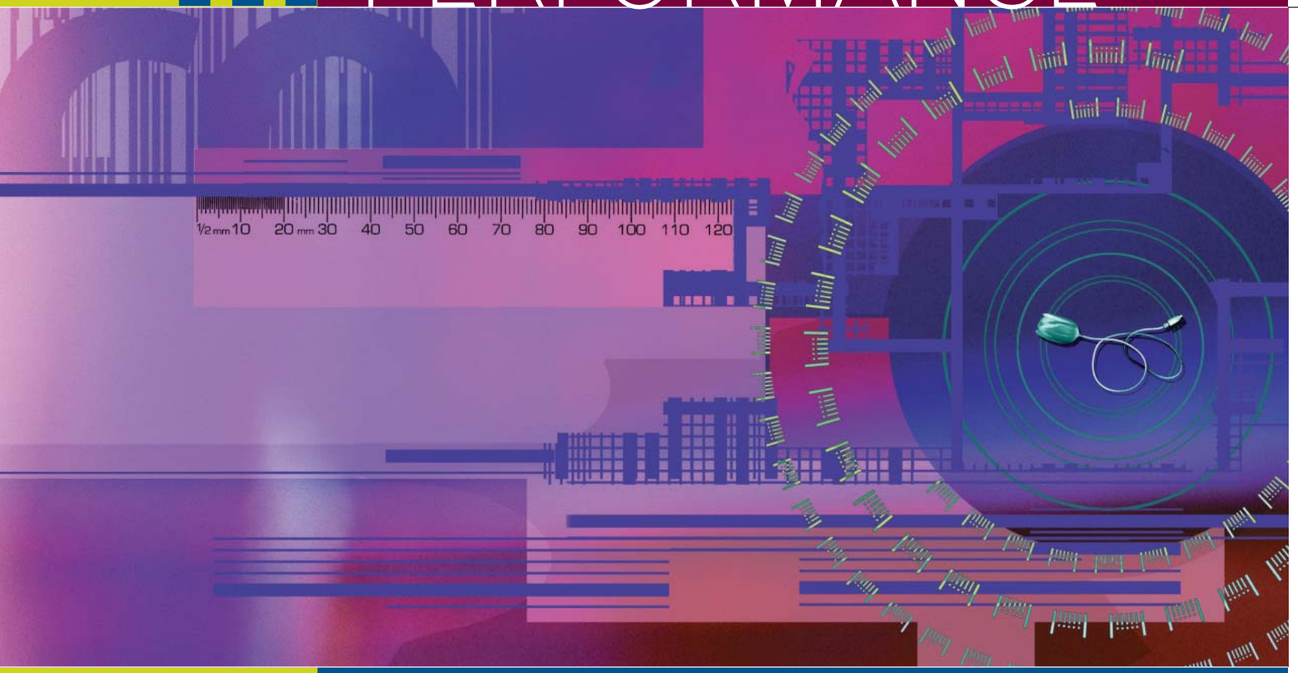
(The following paragraph applies primarily to the 8(a) STARS and HUBZone GWACs. Industry partners on other GWACs should check their contracts or contact their PCOs to determine what is appropriate for their contracts.)

If a job is bigger or broader than you can handle, you may consider teaming with another contractor. A Contractor Team Arrangement allows subcontractors to work with you to meet agency requirements. If you are a contractor on the HUBZone or 8(a) STARS GWAC, which are small business set-asides, remember you must perform at least 51 percent of the services during the life of the contract.

Contractor Team Arrangements benefit you and your customer. They:

- Satisfy the customer with a single solution;
- Increase the competitive edge;
- Provide complementary capabilities, with each teaming partner focusing on its core capabilities;
- Offer additional opportunities with customers;
- Integrate different skills;
- Build direct relationships with customers;
- Share risks and rewards;
- Maximize use of one or more solutions;
- Increase market share;
- Expand visibility; and
- Enhance contractor image.

PERFORMANCE



Performance matters — even more than you think. It is important to our mutual customers — the client agencies — as well as to you and to GSA.

>> A track record of high-quality performance will enhance your likelihood of winning another contract, while poor performance will probably hurt your chances.

For our customers, the quality of your performance determines to a great extent how well they can achieve their missions and provide value to the taxpayers. This translates into how well government agencies are able to serve the public and protect the United States.

For you, the quality of your performance is important in several ways:

(1) Performance on previous task orders may act as an initial screen to determine which awardees will receive further consideration for award of new tasks.

(2) Performance plays a major role in determining whether renewal options are exercised and whether future contracts are awarded to you.

Throughout the life of your contract, GSA will be gathering information on your performance from the client agencies. What we learn will determine if your contract will run its full course, or if it will expire at the conclusion of the base contract period.

(3) A third reason performance is important is that your performance information will be shared with other government agencies through the Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS). PPIRS is an electronic warehouse used to collect report cards that detail a contractor's record of performance on current and completed contracts. The information is made available to acquisition officials across the federal government to assist them in obtaining the best value for the goods and services they buy. The use of past performance as a major evaluation factor in the contract award process is instrumental in making "best value" selections. It enables agencies to more effectively predict the quality of — and customer satisfaction with — future work.

Your performance on one government contract directly affects your ability to compete for future contracts. Competition for government contracts is stiff, especially in the IT industry. Exceptional past performance indicates a heightened probability of success on future contracts. Confidence in a prospective contractor's ability to perform well is an important factor in source selection. One way of gaining this confidence is evaluating the contractor's performance history. A track record of high-quality performance will enhance your likelihood of winning another contract, while poor performance will probably hurt your chances.

SUCCESS

>> We want you to be an excellent contractor, and we will work with you to help make that happen. We will keep the lines of communication open so you will know what you are doing well and what may need improvement.

(4) Finally, in extreme cases, poor performance can result in having your contract terminated for default.

For GSA, our success depends in large part on how well you serve our clients. We strive to provide client agencies with quality products and services in a timely and cost-effective manner. To do this, we need high-performing contractors.

Often, the term "performance" is used in the context of how well the contractor delivered the services he was asked to provide. However, "performance" also includes how well the contractor managed and administered the contract itself. For example, were required reports accurate and submitted on time? Did invoices have to be returned because of errors or missing data? Did the contractor promptly resolve problems brought to his attention? These elements, too, are considered part of contractor performance. At least one GSA GWAC, Millennia Lite, contains award term provisions, in lieu of traditional renewal options, to motivate quality performance. Under Award Term, contractors are evaluated on how well they performed specific task order requirements, as well as how well they managed and administered their contracts. Contractors must earn a certain number of points to have their contracts extended for another period. Those contractors failing to earn sufficient points do not receive a contract extension, and their contracts expire. Do not be surprised if you start seeing award terms showing up in more GWACs, as well as in more task orders under them.

We want you to be an excellent contractor, and we will work with you to help make that happen. We will keep the lines of communication open so you will know what you are doing well and what may need improvement.

WHAT GSA WILL DO

to Help You Succeed

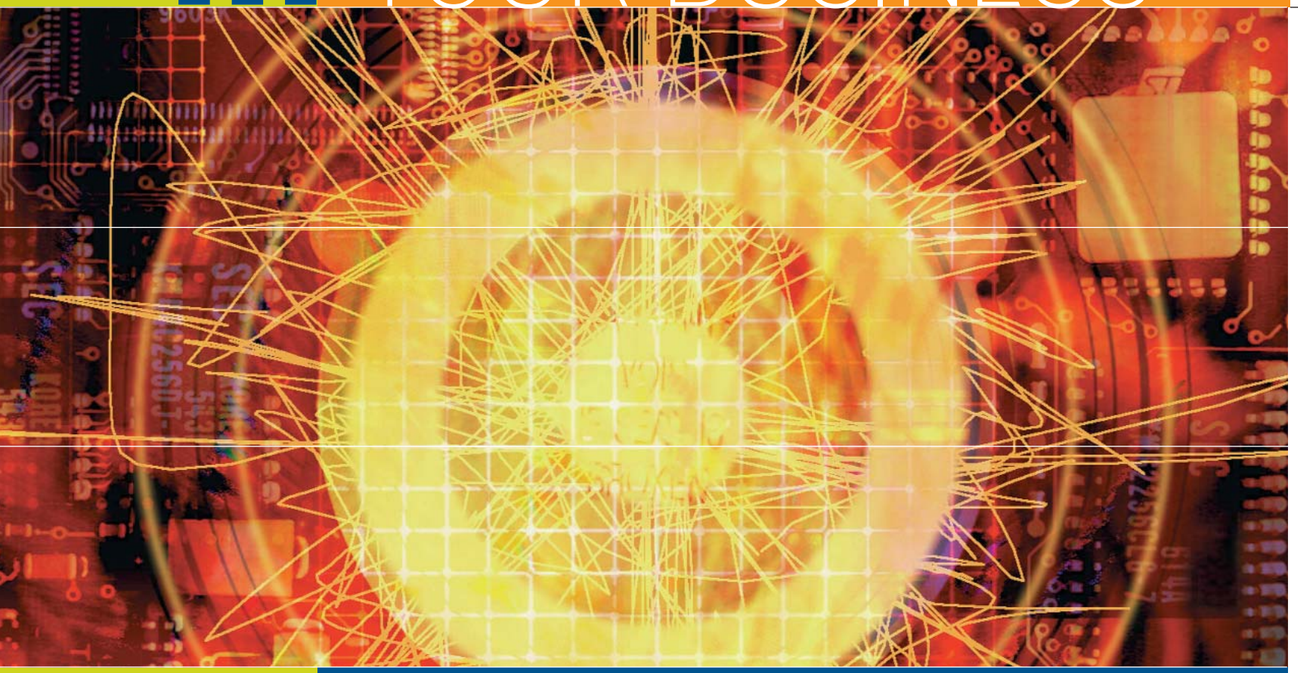
For most GWACs, GSA will hold a post award conference soon after the award of your contract. This conference helps ensure that everyone understands the government's expectations and has the same vision of successful performance.

Status meetings, often called "Contract Review" or "Program Review" meetings, are held throughout the life of most GWACs. These may be one-on-one meetings with GSA or group meetings with all the contractors in the respective GWAC suite. While the meetings cover a broad range of topics, performance is usually covered in some fashion, either specifically or more generally. In the one-on-one meetings, you can expect discussions on specific aspects of your performance. The group meetings will address administrative matters and common problems that are encountered with invoice submissions and reports, etc.

Following completion of the periodic performance evaluations, GSA will communicate the results of the evaluation to the contractors. Contracting Officers have the opportunity to give contractors a pat on the back, encouragement to keep up the good work, and suggestions if improvement is needed. Contractors may provide additional information about below-par performance.

We view our GWAC contractors as our partners. During the life of the contract, we will stay in close contact with you, and we will work together to anticipate and resolve problems before they escalate. We also require that you stay in contact with us as well about changes in your business (e.g., phone, fax, address, points of contact).

MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS



While the ink on your contract begins to dry, you should immediately turn your attention to marketing your new award. GSA's strength lies in identifying customer needs and supplying solutions for those needs through our industry partners. Our surveys have shown that customers most often seek the optimal balance of quality and "best value," so you should focus on these concepts to help ensure success.

>> Your plan should focus on the agencies you are most interested in, what size orders you can handle, what the agency budget looks like, strategies to make contacts, and ways to get started.

We want you to be successful. Just as you market your commercial business, you need to market your business to government customers as well. Below are some helpful hints:

Marketing Plan

You should have prepared a marketing plan long before you won your GWAC. If you did, great! Follow through with the marketing plan in your contract. Take advantage of conferences, trade shows and other opportunities to market your company and meet federal customers and potential customers. If you did not, prepare that plan now. You need to recognize that the government agencies are different than commercial customers — we have different needs and expectations. GSA estimates that it takes new federal contractors two years to get established.

Your plan should focus on the agencies you are most interested in, what size orders you can handle, what the agency budget looks like, strategies to make contacts, and ways to get started.

Often, subcontracting with other contractors is a great "foot in the door." It is an effective way to meet program managers and start building a good reputation. Work from there towards winning smaller orders. As you build a track record of great performance, your name will become known. The government places great emphasis on past performance — impress an agency and you will be a strong contender when they need future work performed.

Marketing Material

Your marketing material is your initial "face" to the customer. Make sure it is user-friendly and makes the customer want to do business with you. Do not flood the market; you would merely be wasting your money. Aim for quality publications, and focus your distribution.

Maximize Your Web Presence

In your marketing materials, be sure to provide the Web address that sends the customer directly to your GSA GWAC information. "Wow" your customers with the services or products you have available. It is your contract — make the most of it.

Reasons Customers Use GWACs

There are many reasons customers want to use GWACs. Knowing these reasons can help you in your marketing efforts.

- **Total Solutions:** GWACs are total solutions contracts, offering a full range of IT services. GWACs are a flexible means of meeting IT needs quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively.
- **Top Flight Contractors:** GWAC contractors are top-quality firms that have gone through a rigorous source selection evaluation process to become GWAC vehicle holders under "best value" procurements. All contractors in a particular GWAC suite are capable of performing the work. The customer does not have to research to determine which companies are capable of providing the service.
- **Procurement Preference Credit:** Federal agencies have annual procurement preference goals for business done with small, disadvantaged, women-owned, veteran or HUBZone firms. Under a GWAC, the agencies receive credits toward their goals when a task order is awarded to a firm in one of these categories. The agencies also receive set-aside credits for 8(a)STARS and HUBZone GWAC task orders, since the GWACs themselves were awarded as set-asides.
- **Competition:** GWACs offer dual levels of competition — once at the contract level, then again at the task level.
- **Section 803:** Section 803 of the National Defense Authorization Act established some rules for orders issued under multiple award contracts such as GWACs and Schedules. The rules call for contracting officers to contact as many contractors as practical when issuing service orders worth more than $100,000. For Schedules, if the ordering official does not issue fair notice, and if fewer than three valid proposals are received for a specific service, the contracting officer must determine that no additional qualified contractors could be identified despite reasonable efforts to do so. However, orders under GWACs automatically meet the requirements of Section 803 if the contracting officer provides a fair notice of intent to make the purchase (with description and selection basis) to all contractors under the GWAC. Even if only one proposal is received, the

>>Market research is a powerful tool to find out who is buying, what they are buying, and why they are buying.

requirements of Section 803 are considered met, and the order can be awarded.

- **Limited Protests:** GWAC orders are protestable only in very limited circumstances — if the scope, period of performance or maximum dollar amount of contract has been exceeded.
- **Special Skills:** Labor categories not on the basic GWAC can be added easily at the task order level.
- **Pricing Choices:** GWACs offer a variety of pricing mechanisms — all types of fixed price and cost-reimbursement, plus time-and-materials and labor-hour. *Note: Not all pricing mechanisms are available under every GWAC.*
- **Dedicated Program Managers:** GWACs have dedicated program managers whose salaries are built into the negotiated loaded labor rates. This provides high-level support within the companies and is not billed as an additional charge to the customer.
- **Technology Refreshment:** Under a GWAC, technology refreshment can be accomplished at both the contract level and at the task order level. At the contract level, we typically look at technology refreshment once a year at meetings attended by industry partners and customers. (This is discussed in more detail elsewhere in this guide.) At the task order level, under the "Special Skills" clause, we can add labor categories necessary to perform that specific task without a modification to the contract.
- **Quick and Easy:** GWACs are a quick, efficient and economic alternative to full and open competition, especially for large-dollar-value and/or high-profile tasks.
- **GWAC Program Support:** GSA supports the GWACs in a variety of ways. Toll-free numbers can be called for questions about the GWACs or assistance in using them. There are several training opportunities — some free, others at a nominal charge. We publish newsletters, brochures, contract user guides, and other informative materials. GSA associates attend conferences, tradeshows and workshops to spread the word about GWACs.
- **Coverage:** The GWACs offer worldwide coverage.

HOW TO

Find Customers

Being on the front line, your experience may be that that it is not easy finding the right people to talk to in the federal government. Which agency should you target? Once you have found the agency, then what? Do you work with the OACO, the ITM/ITR, or the end-users? Each of these individuals, regardless of specialty or area of interest, generally expects the same thing when procuring products and services, but how you approach each customer depends largely on what role that individual plays in the procurement process.

The OACOs are many times the "gate-keepers" to the ITMs/ITRs and end users. The ITMs/ITRs know what they want, but they turn to their OACO for advice on doing the procurement. OACOs are a key part of the GWAC process ensuring proper implementation and formulation of the task order.

The end user, or Project Manager, is the individual who will actually be the recipient of the service. They often have tight deadlines and frequently require the quickest solution. They may not be totally familiar with the procurement process and will turn to GSA for help. End users are accustomed to working with high-quality companies, and they demand good service: They want a voice in the selection of the contractor, and they want to remain the key contact in the working relationship with the contractor.

Market Research — Your Primary Tool

Market research is a powerful tool to find out who is buying, what they are buying, and why they are buying. Gathering information about your target federal market should be your first step towards increasing federal sales. An incredible amount of information is available on the Web and through government agency home pages. A good place to start is www.firstgov.gov. Another important Web site is www.fedbizopps.gov.

Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS-NG)

The Federal Procurement Data Center (FPDC), part of the U.S. General Services Administration, operates and maintains the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS-NG). The FPDS-NG is the central repository of statistical information on federal contracting. The system contains detailed information on contract actions more than $25,000 and summary data on procurements of less than $25,000. Executive branch departments and agencies award over $200 billion annually for goods and services.

The FPDS-NG system can identify who bought what, from whom, for how much, when and where.

Note: For more information, visit www.fpdc.gov and then click on "Federal Procurement Report."

Several private sector companies and government agencies are available to analyze market data for you. Some examples are*:

- Eagle Eye Publishers: www.eagleeyeinc.com;
- Federal Sources, Inc. (FSI): www.fedsources.com;
- GEIA: www.geia.org;
- GovCon: www.govcon.com;
- Fedmarket: www.fedmarket.com; and
- Input: www.input.com.

Federal Yellow Book Mailing List**

The Federal Yellow Book is a directory of the executive branch of the federal government within the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Quarterly editions, available on CD, keep you current with personnel and organizational changes and provide you with contact information for more than 39,500 federal officials.

All information in the Federal Yellow Book is verified directly with each organization listed, making it an accurate and reliable source of contact information for officials in federal departments and agencies.

Leadership Directories, Inc. publishes 14 personnel directories called Yellow Books, which are collectively called The Leadership Library®. They offer all 14 Yellow Books (including Congressional, Federal, State, Municipal, Federal Regional, Judicial, Corporate, Financial, News Media, Associations, Law Firms, Government Affairs, Foreign Representatives, and Nonprofit Sector books) in electronic form as "The Leadership Library®" on the Internet. The yellow Books are updated daily. You can search by job titles and compile a good profile list of customers.

Most agencies post an annual forecast of opportunities. Check it out on the respective agency's home page and determine if you are able to offer a GWAC solution. If so, go for it. If the agency identifies a procurement method other than GWAC, make contact to see if it can be converted to a GWAC buy.

Procurement Marketing and Access Network (PRO-Net) — See also CCR, below

PRO-Net was an electronic gateway of procurement information — for and about small businesses. It contained an online database of more than 195,000 small, disadvantaged, Historically Underutilized Business (HUB), Vet, D-Vet, 8(a) and women-owned businesses, a search engine for contracting officers, a marketing tool for small firms and a valuable link to procurement opportunities.

**Note: The preceding list is illustrative only and does not include all the resources that provide market data research. GSA does not endorse any of the private sector resources listed*

***Note: GSA provides this information on the Federal Yellow Book as informational only and does not endorse or prefer this product or service. For information on the Federal Yellow Book Leadership Directory, visit http:||www.leadershipdirectories.com.*

>>Participation in our shows and marketing opportunities will help you sell to the government and increase your customer base.

>> Businesses profiled in the system can be searched by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, ownership race and gender, keywords, geographic location, quality certifications, business type and Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) capability.

PRO-Net was used by federal and state government agencies, as well as prime and other contractors seeking small business contractors, subcontractors and/or partnership opportunities.

To simplify the contracting process, several federal agencies created an integrated database of small businesses that want to do business with the government. The database combined PRO-Net and Department of Defense's Central Contractor Registration (CCR) databases to create one portal for entering and searching small business sources. This integration assists small businesses with marketing their goods and services to the federal government. The integration began on Jan 1, 2004.

Businesses profiled in the system can be searched by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, ownership race and gender, keywords, geographic location, quality certifications, business type and Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) capability. For more information, visit www.ccr.gov.

To conduct market research and confirm eligibility for SBA's procurement preference programs, such as 8(a) andHUBZone, users may go to www.ccr.gov and click on the "Dynamic Small Business Search" button.

Military Installations

A huge opportunity for business exists on military installations. The trick is being able to locate the right program office or procurement official. Good places to start are with Armed Forces Network's list of military installations worldwide or the U.S. Department of Defense's "Defense Link," and then narrow your search by region, state and activity.

Note: For more information, visit www.armedforces.net or http://www.defenselink.mil/faq/pis/sites.html.

The GSA Marketing Partnership is a service offered by the Office of Marketing to help strengthen the success of FSS GWAC contractors in building identification and increasing sales. This partnership provides news and information about FSS program enhancements, shows, expos and various other marketing opportunities.

Participation in our shows and marketing opportunities will help you sell to the government, increase your customer base, and penetrate overseas federal and military markets. Check it out! Working with GSA's Marketing Office provides insight into what is happening in GSA, develops better partnering, and helps you be more successful.

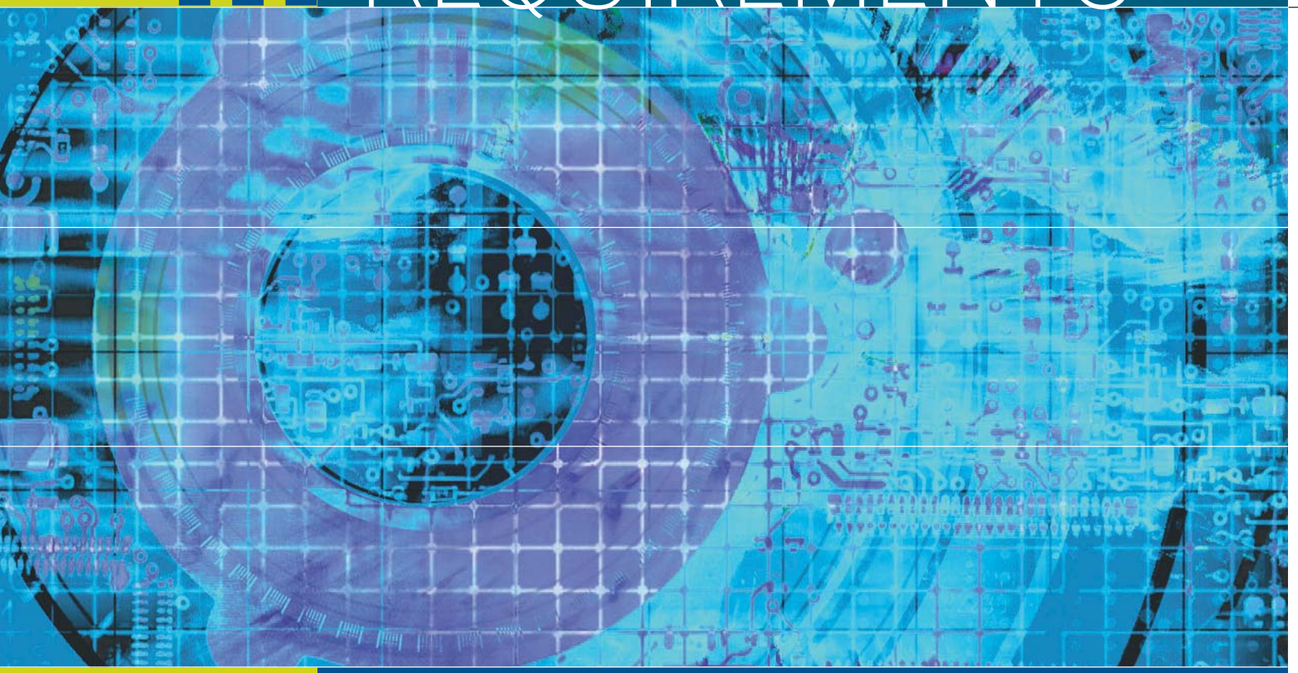
GOVERNMENT

Advertising Opportunities

There are numerous publications read by government employees every day. The following are publications that offer great opportunities to promote your products and services to a particular market. Some are IT-industry specific publications. Here is a small sampling of the huge universe of publications (although not endorsed by GSA):

- Federal Computer Week (www.fcw.com) is a weekly publication serving the information needs of all members of government IT buying team — executives, program managers, IT managers and integrators — across all segments of federal, state and local governments.
- Government Computer News (www.gcn.com) is a weekly publication reporting on federal, state and local government information technology projects and issues.
- Military Times (www.militarycity.com) is a publication dedicated to providing readers with the most up-to-date news and information about military careers, lifestyles and futures.
- Armed Forces Journal (www.afji.com) is a publication with international exposure to the U.S. military.
- Stars and Stripes (www.estripes.com) is the "hometown" newspaper for service members, government civilians and their families in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Pacific, offers the same type of national and international news, sports and opinion columns found in newspapers in the United States.
- Federal Times (www.federaltimes.com) is a source for timely news and information on managing staff, the latest technology, and financial and career decisions.
- Government Executive (www.govexec.com) is a monthly business magazine serving senior executives and managers in the federal government's departments and agencies.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS



Your contract contains several reporting requirements. Some reports are filed directly with GSA, while the rest are filed with other government agencies. Pay attention to who gets what report and when. Being timely and accurate with your reporting is an important part of your performance.

Sales Reporting and Contract Access Fee Payment

Section G of your contract contains a requirement for you to report GWAC sales information and pay the Contract Access Fee (CAF). You can file your GWAC sales reports through a secure website known as the Vendor Support Center (VSC) by visiting http://vsc.gsa.gov.

>> For large businesses, how well you do in meeting your subcontracting goals will have an impact on your ability to win future contracts.

To access the VSC, you will have a user ID and password. When you sign in, you will see many, but possibly not all, of your orders. Complete each data element for the orders loaded. For orders not loaded, click "Report On Another Order." Follow the directions that will first ask for identifying data: Contracting Officer's name, title, address, phone number, e-mail address and agency, and the Program Manager's name, title, address, phone number, e-mail address, and agency, etc. Then, fill out each data element about your sales. Even if an order does not appear in the system, it is your obligation to report it.

Sales reports must be submitted quarterly. If no sales occur on your contract for a given quarter, you are still responsible for filing the sales report for that quarter. And you must continue to submit reports as long as there are open orders under the contract, even if the term of the contract has expired. Reporting is a critical piece in the success of our relationship.

After you have reported your sales, it will be time to send GSA the CAF. The CAF covers GSA's costs to operate the GWAC program. Customers using the program pay a fee that is built into the contract's unit prices. Section G of your contract contains instructions for remitting the CAF, which is due quarterly. You may consolidate CAF payments for multiple orders against one contract, but you may not consolidate CAF payments for multiple contracts nor for multiple reporting quarters. Whether you pay electronically, by check or online, it is vitally important that you properly identify the CAF payment to assure that credit is given to the correct GSA contract. **Be sure to annotate your contract number on the check. And do not combine GWAC CAF and Schedules Industrial Funding Fee payments on the same check.**

Equal Employment Opportunity Reports

Your contract includes requirements for submitting equal employment opportunity reports. If you have 50 or more employees and are not exempt, you must file an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer Information Report EEO-1, by September 30 of each year. The report is filed with the Joint Reporting Committee of the Equal Opportunity Commission, Office of Federal Contracts Compliance. Information about exemptions and instructions forcompleting the report may be found at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Web site, http://www.eeoc.gov. You can now file your EEO-1 report electronically at https://apps.eeoc.gov/ee01/ee01.jsp.

Subcontracting Report

If you are a large business, your contract includes a subcontracting plan, and you are required to submit semi-annual and annual reports of your subcontracting activity. (Subcontracting plans and reports are not required for small businesses.) The report forms you will use are SF-294, Subcontracting Report for Individual Contracts, and SF-295, Summary Subcontract Report.

The SF-294 is submitted to your GSA PCO semi-annually and when the contract is completed. The SF-294 covers the periods October through March and April through September and is due within 30 days after the end of each reporting period. The final report is due within 30 days of the contract expiring. The SF-295 is an annual report covering the period October through September and is due to the GSA PCO by October 30 of each year. SBA plans to discontinue the SF-295, but you should submit the report until you receive notification from GSA that it is no longer required.

Your subcontracting plan contains the subcontracting goals you and GSA negotiated, and it is a material part of your contract. The government will monitor your progress toward meeting your subcontracting goals. If you do not make a good-faith effort toward meeting your goals, you may have to pay liquidated damages, and if you consistently fail to meet your goals, your contract may not be extended.

For large businesses, how well you do in meeting your subcontracting goals will have an impact on your ability to win future contracts.

Veterans Reports

Your contract contains a requirement for furnishing an annual report concerning employment of special disabled, Vietnam-era, and other eligible veterans. The report form is VETS 100, "Federal Contractor Veterans Employment Report" and is due to the Department of Labor by September 30 of each year. If you are a new federal contractor or otherwise have not received a report form and filing instructions by the end of July, e-mail the Department of Labor at helpdesk@vets100.com, or call (703) 461-2460. When requesting forms, please provide the parent company name, address, contact person, telephone number and e-mail address (if available). You may file your report electronically at http://vets100. cudenver.edu/.

INVOICES AND PAYMENT

Invoices

Sections G and I of your contract describe the information your invoices must contain and the procedures for submitting them. The process may be different than on your other contracts, therefore, it is important to be familiar with what is required for this contract.

>> Make sure your company name and remittance address exactly match the name and address on your contract.

Certain information is common to nearly every invoice you will submit: your company name and address, invoice number, invoice date, contract number, task order number, description, period of performance, price, other direct charges (if authorized by the task order), payment terms, remittance address, and taxpayer identification number (TIN). For invoices submitted to GSA, you also need to include the client name and address, as well as the Accounting Control Transaction (ACT) number (found on the task order GSA Form 300, Block 4).

If the task order was issued as a fixed-price task, your invoice should include the products delivered and accepted by deliverable or milestone number, travel, per diem and any other direct charges, and the total invoice amount.

If the task order was issued as a time and materials or labor-hour task, your invoice should include the number of labor hours expended for each skill level, the total labor charges, travel, per diem and any other direct charges (ODCs), and the total invoice amount.

If the task order was issued as a cost-reimbursement task, the invoice requirements and the schedule will be spelled out in the task order.

Note: The only time you should invoice GSA is when GSA placed the order. For task orders that were not issued by GSA, you must invoice the ordering agency directly at the address shown on the order.

The following three actions you can perform will make the payment process run smoothly:

1. Enter a complete and valid invoice into the Finance Web site at www.finance.gsa.gov;
2. Bill timely; and
3. Bill in accordance with contract terms.

To make sure you have a complete and valid invoice, you will need to:

- Ensure the task order is complete and correct when you receive it. (The contractor's name and remittance address on the task order must match the contractor's name and address on the contract. If the name or address on the task order is incorrect, notify the Ordering Agency Contracting Officer (OACO) so the task can be modified.);
- Enter invoice information into the Finance Web site;
- Include a complete description of the goods/services provided; and
- Be sure pricing and dollar amounts are correct.

What does "bill timely" mean?

- Submit the invoice at or after completion of service or delivery of goods.
- Send the original invoice to Finance and required copies to the correct office.
- Do not submit paper invoices.
- Do not submit statements or multiple copies to Finance.

What about "billing in accordance with contract terms?

- Submit the invoice to the correct office. The address will be on the task order.
- Include any required supporting documentation (e.g., client acceptances of deliverables or reported hours).
- Make sure your company name and remittance address exactly match the name and address on your contract. Even forgetting to include "Inc." as part of the company name may cause the invoice to be rejected. If your name or address has changed since the contract was awarded, notify your Procuring Contracting Officer (PCO) so a contract modification can be done.

PAYMENT

>> Generally, the government will pay you within 30 days of receiving a "proper" invoice or within 30 days after accepting the services you performed or supplies you delivered.

Payment

Generally, the government will pay you within 30 days of receiving a "proper" invoice or within 30 days after accepting the services you performed or supplies you delivered. A "proper" invoice must include the elements spelled out in the contract and must be sent to the office designated in the contract.

The government considers payment to be made on the day a check is dated or the date of an electronic funds transfer.

Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)

Most payments are made through electronic funds transfer (EFT) directly to your designated bank account. EFT has several advantages over paper checks. Chief among them is that you receive payment faster; this can help improve your cash flow. Because payment goes straight to your account, there are no lost, stolen or misrouted checks … and no more tracing to see what became of a check.

How to Check on Invoices and Payments

There may be times you want to check up on invoices or payments. You can do both by going to GSA's Web site, www.finance.gsa.gov. There, you will find information on past and pending payments, including check numbers and EFT dates. You can also view a list of outstanding and paid invoices. You may also request e-mail notification of payment status, or you may contact GSA Finance's Customer Service office. This information is for GSA-issued orders only. The GSA system does not maintain information on invoices or payments for orders issued by other agencies.

To be paid, you must be registered in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) system. If you are not already registered, visit www.ccr.gov and follow the directions. This site also provides links to getting a Dun and Bradstreet number, Cage Code, learning about NAICS codes and other helpful information. Your registration is good for one year. You must update your registration at least once every 365 days.

The primary source of information for making payments is the EFT data you entered into CCR, especially your DUNS number. The "D&B number plus four positions" ("DUNS +4") lets you establish additional CCR records for identifying alternative EFT accounts for the same parent concern. If you do not keep your registration current, you will not get paid.

CCR

The CCR system is a searchable database, accessible via the Internet by all federal agencies. It allows prospective contractors to register their business profiles in one place via a Web site (http://www.ccr.gov) and provides contracting officers with an efficient and less expensive means of access to contractor and industry data. CCR is part of, and may be accessed through, the Business Partner Network (BPN). The BPN, the source for vendor data for the federal government, offers a search mechanism into several key databases across federal agencies (http://www.bpn.gov).

Contractors enter their information in the CCR and will appear after completion and validation of the information. Information to be validated includes DUNS, 8(a) certification, HUBZone certification and Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN). The vendor CCR record is then considered "active" and is available for viewing.

Contracting officers access the CCR to verify that a vendor has registered before awarding or modifying a contract. Contracting officers also may use the CCR for conducting market research.

Additionally, data in the CCR will be used to generate certain information for the FPDS-NG (Federal Procurement Data System Next Generation) system, for SBA's PRO-Net system, now entitled Dynamic Small Business Search, and numerous other applications.

When contractors make changes to their CCR information, they must also provide the changes to the PCO for appropriate action and contract modification. Changes to CCR information do not eliminate the requirement for contract modifications.

Contractors are responsible for the accuracy of their data. Remember, if your data is not correct, you will not be paid.

CARING FOR YOUR CONTRACT

Your GSA GWAC will be more successful if you take good care of it. This includes keeping it up-to-date through improvements and/or administrative changes.

>> Tech refresh allows the government to make contractual changes needed to improve performance or to react to changes in technology.

Program Manager Meetings/Contract Review Meetings — The GWAC Centers hold periodic meetings with the individuals our industry partners have identified as Program Managers. The Program Manager is the person in your company with overall responsibility for managing your GWAC. Program Manager meetings (also known as Contract Review meetings) are typically held at least once a year. The meetings help foster a successful working relationship between GSA and the industry partners, as well as among industry partners. The meetings are an opportunity to work together to address consistency among the contracts, proper use of the contracts, the need for technology refreshment, development of joint marketing strategies, and any problems arising under the contracts.

Technology Refreshment — On GWACs, this process is known as "technology refreshment" or simply "tech refresh." Tech refresh allows the government to make contractual changes needed to improve performance or to react to changes in technology. Usually, technology refreshment is accomplished by adding or removing skill levels. Most PCOs will offer periodic opportunities (generally once a year) to provide comments and suggestions on skill levels that may need to be added or removed from the contract. New skills may represent the logical extension of existing skill levels (that is filling in gaps between or among current skill levels). Or they may represent more specifically defined skill levels to accommodate the ever-changing IT technology market. Or they may reflect changes in the way the private sector is characterizing skills and offering them for sale. In some cases, skill descriptions may need to be revised to better enunciate technical requirements. Similarly, tech refresh provides a chance to remove skill levels that may have become obsolete, or are no longer needed. Simply put: new, revised, or eliminated skill levels represent adjustments to improve performance or react to changes in technology. Tech refresh changes will be accomplished by contract modification.

Administrative Actions — When phone numbers, names, e-mail addresses, titles, etc. change, let your PCO know right away *in writing*. A contract modification may be needed.

Name Change/Novation — If your company is undergoing a name change/novation or is being bought or sold, notify your PCO immediately. They will guide you through the necessary steps and direct you to what paperwork is required.

Note: Look to the Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 42.12 for the required Change of Name and Novation Agreement documentation.

Address Change — Every GSA GWAC contractor has a Dun and Bradstreet number (DUNS) to participate under GSA GWACs. The DUNS Number is tied to your address, so if you move, you must notify your PCO, and Dun and Bradstreet. This is extremely important to the proper administration of your contract.

Note: Go to www.dnb.com for more information about changing your DUNS Number.

Business Size Status and 8(a) Eligibility Recertification — All small businesses and 8(a) certified firms are required to re-represent their business-size status and 8(a) program eligibility before exercise of the option period of the contract. If you no longer are a small or 8(a) eligible firm, or if you fail to re-certify, the option will not be exercised. See Section G of your contract for details.

e-Procurement Tools — GSA FSS has some exciting e-Procurement tools. An example is Schedules e-Library, which at present is an online source for complete information on FSS Schedule contracts. A section of the e-Library is under development for the GWACs. We anticipate you having a presence in the e-Library as well as other of the e-Procurement tools — and we will advise you in updates through our GSA Steps newsletter.

WHAT GSA DOES FOR GWACS

We do a lot of education for our customers on GWACs and how to use them.

>> We at GSA are your partners, available to you throughout your entire contract period — and we will strive to develop a close working relationship with you. We want to ensure that you have the tools necessary to be successful!

Solutions Edu — a joint initiative of the GWAC Centers. The program offers customized acquisition training courses focused on GSA's IT contracts. Subjects cover a broad range of material from writing performance-based statements of work to evaluating contractor performance. Classes include students from GSA, our clients, and our industry partners. Solutions Edu provides responsive, "just in time" training anywhere nationwide. The training is free for GSA associates, and there is a nominal charge for clients and industry partners.

Solutions Seminars — a fairly new FSS initiative. The seminars are one-day events for customers and potential customers to visit IT and Professional Services displays and attend IT and Professional Services training sessions. Several industry partners (acting as a cross-section) showcase the services they provide under the GWAC and Professional Services Schedules contracts. GSA and the industry partners conduct the training sessions. (At a recent seminar, there were 18 track sessions covering technical and acquisition subjects, as well as in-depth sessions on each of the GWACs and on the Professional Services contracts.) The seminars educate customers about FSS contract offerings and FTS value added services, and they offer a focused opportunity for industry partners and customers to meet and get to know each other.

Customer Site Training — The GWAC Centers take training to our customers, primarily the regional and national FTS offices. We educate the customers about new GWACs, as well as changes to existing contracts — and we provide refresher training, if necessary. By presenting the training in an interactive format to small groups, we are able to have lively discussions on the contracts and answer questions on specific issues or problems.

Conferences/Tradeshows/ Workshops/Publications — GSA associates attend many conferences, tradeshows and workshops. These events are an excellent opportunity for us to promote the GWACs to potential customers. Frequently, we present sessions or workshops on the GWACs, which is a great way to educate attendees on what the GWACs are all about. Often we sponsor booths in the display area, giving us access to virtually any attendee who passes by. Informational materials are prepared for each of the GWACs for distribution to as wide an audience as possible. Additionally, each of the GWAC Centers publishes an electronic newsletter highlighting the contracts managed by that center. The newsletters often feature particularly interesting or unusual projects done by one of the industry partners. We also include articles on acquisition issues, such as Section 803 or performance-based contracting.

Customer Assistance Centers — Each GWAC Center maintains a toll-free number for customers and industry partners to use to obtain guidance and information on contractual and technical matters. Please see Appendix A for contact information and toll-free numbers.

Web Sites — Each GWAC Center maintains a Web site with information about that center and its contracts. Please see Appendix A for web site addresses.

Open Season/On Ramp — Several of the GWACs have "open-season" or "on-ramp" provisions, which allow GSA to replenish its portfolio of contractors. This feature is particularly important on the 8(a) STARS contracts, where many of the contractors are so successful they lose their small business status before the end of the contract period.

GSA's job doesn't end with your contract award; in fact, that is just the beginning. We at GSA are your partners, available to you throughout your entire contract period — and we will strive to develop a close working relationship with you. We want to ensure that you have the tools necessary to be successful!

Enjoy Your Success!

A GWAC contract represents a whole lot of work on both our parts. You are on a GWAC because we believe in you and want you to be our partner — our "face" to the customer. The range of customers is vast, and your contract allows you the opportunity to sell to all of them. We are dedicated to working with you and helping you achieve great things. We have created this guide, "GWAC 101," in the hope that it will help you become a successful GWAC contractor!

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY

8(a) Contractors
Companies that meet the criteria for Small Disadvantaged Businesses and are certified by the Small Business Administration under Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act.

Administrative Contracting Officer (ACO)
A Contracting Officer who is administering contracts. For GSA's GWACs, the ACO oversees functions such as contractor sales reporting, contractor performance evaluations, small business size status re-certifications, subcontracting reports, and other duties delegated by the PCO.

Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) or Contracting Officer's Representative (COR)
Individuals designated in writing by the contracting officer to perform specific contract-related functions on his/her behalf. In GSA, these individuals are more commonly known as Information Technology Managers (ITMs) or Information Technology Representatives (ITRs).

Debriefing
Informing offerors of the basis for the selection and award decision. This information includes the government's evaluation of the significant strengths, weaknesses and deficiencies in the offeror's proposal.

Direct Order Direct Bill (DODB)
GSA GWAC orders placed directly by federal agencies other than GSA. DODB orders require the negotiation of a Memorandum of Understanding with GSA and a delegation of authority from GSA to use the contract.

End User/Customer/Client
The federal agency for which GSA places task orders. The End User/Customer/Client is responsible for monitoring technical performance on their task orders.

Fair Opportunity
A FAR requirement that all contract holders be given an opportunity to compete for task orders exceeding $2,500, unless one or more of the four statutory exceptions applies. See FAR 16.505.

Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR)
Uniform acquisition policies and procedures for executive agencies of the federal government.

Governmentwide Acquisition Contract (GWAC)
A task order or delivery order contract for information technology awarded under multiple-award contracting procedures and established by one federal agency for governmentwide use. GSA Preferred GSA Federal Technology Service's principal business system for delivering task and delivery order solutions. GSA Preferred replaces four existing procurement systems, including ITSS. Includes document management and collaboration, electronic bid process, online order confirmation and invoicing, deliverable acceptance and project and funds management.

HUBZone
A historically underutilized business zone that is an area located within one or more qualified census tracts, qualified non-metropolitan counties, or lands within the external boundaries of an Indian reservation.

Information Technology Managers or Information TechnologyRepresentatives (ITMs/ITRs)
See "Contracting Officers Technical Representative."

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
A document agreed to by GSA and another federal agency setting forth the terms, conditions, duties and responsibilities each agency will assume in the award of task orders under a GWAC.

NAICS
North American Industrial Classification System. An economic classification system for classifying business establishments in North America (US, Canada, Mexico). Replaces the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) system.

Option
A unilateral right in a contract, by which the government may elect to extend the term of the contract or purchase additional supplies or services called for by the contract.

Ordering Agency Contracting Officer (OACO)
The contracting officer responsible for negotiating and awarding task orders under your GWAC. The OACO may be a GSA employee or an individual from another federal agency who has been delegated Direct Order Direct Bill authority.

Performance-based Contracting
Structuring all aspects of an acquisition around the work to be performed with the requirements set forth in clear, specific and objective terms with measurable outcomes, as opposed to either the manner in which the work is to be done or around a broad, imprecise Statement of Work (SOW).

Procuring Contracting Officer (PCO)
The GSA Contracting Officer who awarded your contract and who has overall responsibility for it. The PCO handles most day-to-day contracting matters, including issuing modifications and delegating task order authority to others. The PCO may delegate contract administration functions to an Administrative Contracting Officer (ACO).

Program Manager (PM)

The contractor's representative with overall responsibility for contractor performance, contract management, workflow and resource management.

Statement of Objectives

Identifies the broad, basic, top-level objectives of an acquisition. Requires the competing contractors to develop the Statement of Work (SOW), performance metrics and measurement plan, and quality assurance plan.

Statement of Work (SOW)

The complete description of work to be performed under the task, including all specifications and standards established or referenced in the task.

Subcontract

A contract between a prime contractor and another source to obtain supplies or services the prime contractor needs to perform the contract requirements.

Subcontracting Plan

A written plan, submitted by a prime contractor and approved by a contracting officer, which describes goals and actions the contractor plans to take to use small, small disadvantaged, women-owned, HUBZone and service-disabled veteran businesses to the maximum practicable extent in performing the contract.

Task Order

An order for services placed against an established contract or with government sources.