

## From the Editor

**Spring is in the air.** Here at GSA, Spring is a busy time because it is when we host our annual GSA Training Conference & Expo. This year GSA anticipates welcoming record numbers of vendors and government agency representatives to the San Diego Convention Center May 10-12, 2011. This issue of *GSA Steps* contains information about a new offering at GSA Expo, the **"Vendor Q&A with GSA" booth**. In addition, this issue highlights exciting information on GSA's Green Purchasing Plan, The American Red Cross' authorization to utilize GSA's schedules in addition to updates on the VSC and the MAS portal.

If you would like to provide feedback and/or have suggestions for subjects to cover in future newsletters, please feel free to contact Nichol West at [nichol.west@gsa.gov](mailto:nichol.west@gsa.gov). Enjoy this issue of *GSA Steps*! ■



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## New This Year at 2011 GSA Expo: "Vendor Q&A with GSA" Booth

**All vendors attending the 2011 GSA Expo in San Diego are invited to stop by the new "Vendor Q&A with GSA" booth. This Expo booth was created just for you with Industrial Operations Analysts and Administrative Contracting Officers available to:**

- Answer your questions about GSA MAS contract compliance requirements
- Discuss contractor assistance visits or contractor report cards
- Talk about general questions common to MAS contracting.

Please visit booth 3001 located just outside the main entrance to the exhibit hall.

No appointments necessary just stop by! The booth will be open Tuesday, May 10 through Thursday, May 12 during Expo hours. ■

Q&A WITH GSA

## Green Corner: GSA's Green Purchasing Plan

As we reported in the Winter 2010 edition of *GSA Steps*, federal agencies are preparing or updating green purchasing plans. In January 2011, GSA issued an updated Green Purchasing Plan (GPP), which promotes the purchase of environmentally sustainable products and services. The Plan aligns GSA's green purchasing policy with the sustainable acquisition requirements of Executive Order 13514, *Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance*.

E.O. 13514 requires the government to demonstrate leadership in sustainable acquisition and foster the market for sustainable technologies and environmentally preferable materials, products, and services. It also requires federal agencies to ensure that 95 percent of applicable new contract actions, including task and delivery orders, for products and services are energy-efficient, water-efficient, bio-based, environmentally preferable, non-ozone depleting, contain recycled content, or are non-toxic or less-toxic alternatives.

What is "applicable"? Any contract action to purchase designated green products or purchases of services under which designated products could be supplied or used. An example of the latter is a janitorial services contract, which generally includes

a supply of replacement tissue and towel products and could include cleaning with bio-based or other green cleaning products.

GSA's Green Purchasing Plan requires employees to purchase environmentally sustainable products and services. Many of the products contractors offer through GSA's Multiple Award Schedule and Global Supply™ programs are covered under this policy. Such items include, but are not limited to, EPA Comprehensive Procurement Guideline (CPG)-designated, Energy Star, Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT)-registered, BioPreferred, and WaterSense products. Services that utilize environmentally sustainable products during performance are also included under GSA's green purchasing policy.

The Green Purchasing Plan requires GSA to incorporate these requirements into daily operations and to work towards increasing and expanding markets for environmentally sustainable products and services. The Plan also addresses training, promotion, and education initiatives that GSA will undertake to ensure its employees and contractors understand the policy and advance green purchasing in the government. An increased awareness is essential to the success of sustainable acquisition.

Contractors can help federal buyers comply with this policy by frequently updating the environmental designations of products on *GSA Advantage!*®. Maintaining accurate designations and descriptions is critical to fulfilling our environmental goals.

If you are interested in reading the full plan, it will be available electronically through GSA's website at <http://www.gsa.gov/sustainability>. ■



## American Red Cross Authorized to Purchase via GSA Schedules

President Obama signed the Federal Supply Schedules Usage Act of 2010 on October 8. It expands the permissible use of GSA's Federal Supply Schedules to the American Red Cross. The act provides GSA the ability to allow Schedule contract usage by the American Red Cross when purchasing in support of their Federal Charter.

In response to this Act, the GSA Administrator has authorized Schedule contractors to now sell to the American Red Cross through their Federal Supply Schedules contract. With the new authorization, GSA Schedule contractors are able to provide immediate access to mission critical product and service solutions to equip the American Red Cross with access to more resources that allow them to respond faster and more effectively. This authority is limited to GSA Schedule contracts and does not include any other GSA programs. GSA Order 4800.2G, *Eligibility to Use GSA Sources of Supply*, has been updated to reflect this new eligible ordering activity.

For a summary of the new authorization and scope, please see the guidelines to the right:

### American Red Cross Ordering Guidelines

- Access is limited to purchases that fall under the purposes as set forth in their Federal Charter, 36 U.S.C. § 300102.
- The American Red Cross is encouraged to use GSA's Schedule Ordering Procedures ((FAR) 8.405-1 and (FAR) 8.405-2) to ensure the benefit of receiving the best value from GSA Schedule contractors, but may use whatever established competitive ordering procedures are needed to meet their acquisition regulations and the requirements of any grant funding they receive.

### Schedule Contractor Guidelines

- Acceptance of orders from the American Red Cross is voluntary.
- Schedule contractors may decline an order, for any reason, within a five-day period after receipt of the order; however, credit card orders must be declined with 24 hours (GSAM 552.232-79).
- Orders placed under this authority are subject to the Industrial Funding Fee (IFF) and should be reported quarterly on the contractor's 72a form under their federal sales.

For additional information, please visit the [Vendor Support Center \(VSC\)](#). ■

## Introducing the Redesigned Vendor Support Center

GSA released a redesigned Vendor Support Center (VSC) in October.

The VSC redesign incorporates:

- New modern look
- Easier site navigation
- Better designed hover menus
- Focus on GSA's social media resources
- Focus on most recent GSA News information fed directly from <http://www.gsa.gov>
- Rotating front section to showcase important feature items
- Links to current GSA initiatives such as the update to *GSA Advantage!*®

The redesigned Vendor Support Center continues to be a one-stop resource to help GSA's commercial partners succeed in the federal government market-place. If you have not visited the redesigned VSC, we encourage you to do so at <https://vsc.gsa.gov/>. ■



## Redesigned MAS Portal

In order to maximize the effective use of the Multiple Award Schedules (MAS) Program, the FAS Office of Acquisition Management has improved the design of the MAS portal used to provide information and education to its three chief users — federal customers, state and local customers, and vendors. Through an established social media presence on Facebook, Twitter and FAS' social media platform, Interact, GSA will provide enhanced education through both video and audio podcasts detailing the benefits and flexibility of GSA schedules.

The Office of Acquisition Management will develop and deliver training courses and webinars to provide improvements that will help our customers effectively use GSA schedules. Schedules provide fast, flexible and cost-effective procurement solutions that allow customers to meet acquisition challenges and achieve their missions. This open dialogue promotes the use of Schedules by integrating tools that focus on customer intimacy and operational excellence.

FAS fosters an informed and engaged vendor and customer community through its social media outlets. By focusing on these communication activities, FAS will create a greater understanding of the MAS program and its Value Proposition. Customers will discover cost and time savings, flexibility and choice, transparency and procurement control that make working with GSA an easy and enjoyable experience.

Visit <http://www.gsa.gov/schedules> to see the design improvements and new Web 2.0 sites. ■



MAS'  
New  
LOOK



## FAR 51 Ordering Guide

To better meet the needs of GSA's customer agencies; a deviation to FAR Part 51.1 has been approved to expand the authority of contractors to use GSA sources of supply. Federal government contracting officers have been authorized to give all GSA contractors access to the Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) and GSA Global Supply Programs when deemed appropriate for fulfillment of their agency requirements. Please note that the FSS Program is inclusive of those Schedules managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. This is one of many important acquisition flexibilities contained within the MAS program to arrive at a total solution.

The updated ordering guide explains the features and benefits of the FAR 51 deviation to both our customers and the contractor community. The revised ordering guide is completely Web-based to allow the user to quickly link to references and citations throughout the guide. In addition, the guide contains a process map that displays the interactions involved for each participant and provides an explanation of steps.

Visit <http://www.gsa.gov/far51deviation> to find out how the FAR 51 deviation can benefit you. ■