

From the Editor

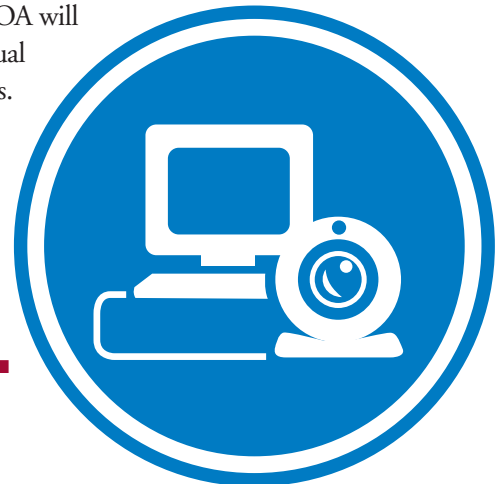
Happy Spring! This issue of *GSA Steps* highlights the AbilityOne program and how it relates to the Multiple Award Schedules and some of the products you may offer. This issue also contains the latest and greatest contractor focused training offered via webinar. Additionally, this issue provides information on the new “Virtual CAV” concept, a refresher on CPARS and contractor roles, a reminder for Subcontracting Plan Administrators to report past due Summary Subcontracting Reports, as well as use of DOD ECA Digital Certificates.

Virtual Contractor Assistance Visits

One of the hallmarks of GSA’s supply chain management process is the onsite visit. Every contractor receives personal attention via an onsite visit from one of our Industrial Operations Analysts (IOAs). These Contractor Assistance Visits (CAVs) are opportunities for GSA to measure each contractor’s progress and provide the education necessary for continued success in the government marketplace. CAVs have always been performed onsite at each contractor’s location – until recently.

With the continuing proliferation of information-sharing technologies, GSA has developed guidelines for the use of “Virtual CAVs.” A Virtual CAV is where the GSA IOAs and contractor personnel are at different locations, and is an option when it is in the best interest of both parties. Your IOA will determine whether or not your contract is a candidate for a Virtual CAV and discuss options with you prior to making any decisions. Utilization of virtual methods is completely optional, and will only be used when all parties are comfortable and in agreement that it represents a beneficial alternative to the traditional onsite visit.

Although this is a new initiative, GSA’s endorsement of virtual methods marks an important milestone in our organization’s reliance on technology and dedication to savings and efficiency. ■



In This Issue

Attention Subcontracting Plan Administrators: Are Your SSRs Past Due?

Page 2

Identification and Removal of Essentially the Same (ETS) Items on MAS Contracts

Page 3

The Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) and Your Role in the Process

Page 4

DOD ECA Digital Certificates
Upcoming Webinar Training
eOffer/eMod Help Videos Update
Update Your Profile in the Vendor Education Center

Page 5

Attention Subcontracting Plan Administrators: Do You Have Past Due Summary Subcontract Reports (SSRs)?

Companies having one or more contracts with the GSA containing a Company-Wide Subcontracting Plan for commercial products or an Individual Subcontracting Plan must submit reports on goal achievement. In accordance with FAR 52.219-9, each plan requires submission of an annual “Summary Subcontract Report” (SSR) into the Electronic Subcontracting Reporting System (eSRS) by October 30. To access the eSRS, visit www.esrs.gov. Please make sure that the correct Subcontracting Plan Administrator information is up to date, should we need to contact you by telephone or e-mail. You can find answers on how a contractor can make changes to their registration data under “Frequently Asked Questions” on the eSRS homepage.

The eSRS homepage has Quick Reference Guides, Webinars, and Sample Reports with step-by-step instructions to assist you in filling out your SSR. If you need further help, you can contact the Small Business Administration (SBA) located in your area.

In addition, Federal Government contractors are required to file their Year-End Supplementary Report for Small Disadvantaged Businesses (SDBs). Pursuant to 48 CFR 52.219-9(l)(2)(iii), all Summary Subcontract Reports (SSRs) submitted at the close of each fiscal year (both individual and commercial plans) shall include a breakout, in the contractor’s format, of subcontract awards, in whole dollars, to small disadvantaged business concerns by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Industry Subsector – this can be accomplished by submitting a Year-End Supplementary Report for each related SSR.

Please make an effort to submit any overdue reports as soon as possible, so that your accomplishments can be included on SBA’s Annual Scorecard that is reported to Congress. We appreciate the contractors who have submitted their reports and their support of the Small Business Programs. Please call your Contracting Officer or Administrative Contracting Office with any additional questions. ■



The eSRS homepage has Quick Reference Guides, Webinars, and Sample Reports with step-by-step instructions to assist you in filling out your SSR.

Identification and Removal of Essentially the Same (ETS) Items on MAS Contracts

AbilityOne and MAS

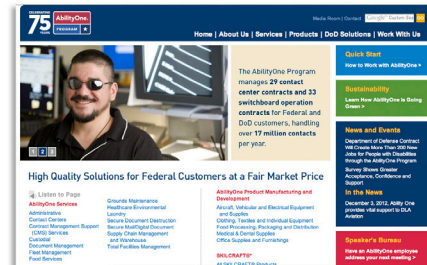
It is important that our industry partners be aware of all contractual requirements, including an understanding of the AbilityOne program and how it relates to the Multiple Award Schedules (MAS). The AbilityOne Program is a federal procurement program that provides jobs to individuals who are blind or have another significant disability through the manufacturing of products or the provision of services required by federal personnel. AbilityOne is a mandatory source of supply for use by Federal customers per FAR part 8.7 and must be adhered to by all MAS contract holders.

Essentially the Same (ETS) Products

Certain commercial products are considered to be “essentially the same” (ETS) as some AbilityOne Procurement List items. Because AbilityOne products are a mandatory source for Federal customers, MAS contractors are required to remove these commercial ETS items from offers as well as from current contracts. An item that is determined to be ‘essentially the same’ as an item on the AbilityOne Procurement List is understood to have the same form, fit and function, fair market price, and unit of issue as the AbilityOne labeled item.

ETS Product List

Recently, GSA conducted a review of the electronic catalogs on *GSA Advantage*™ and identified numerous ETS commercial item(s) on MAS contracts. The most recent ETS list was developed jointly by the AbilityOne Program and GSA, and the file is posted both on the [VSC](#) and on the [AbilityOne](#) website. The file development will continue to be a joint venture between GSA and AbilityOne, and the GSA will continually house the most updated Procurement List on the VSC for your convenience.



How Does this Affect You?

If one or more ETS item(s) has been identified on your contract, your Contracting Officer will be contacting the Authorized Negotiator(s) of your contract via e-mail regarding these items.

Within the e-mail communication, the process for challenging any ETS designation(s) is defined. After the ETS challenge period has concluded, GSA will begin to issue unilateral modifications to remove ETS items. If you offer products that are ETS and appear on the Procurement List, you are encouraged to become an authorized distributor of AbilityOne products. For more information on the AbilityOne Program and how to become an authorized distributor, please visit www.abilityone.gov.

If you have any questions about the AbilityOne Program, the Procurement List, or the removal of ETS items, please contact Elizabeth Hampton at Elizabeth.Hampton@gsa.gov or Laura Ray at Laura.Ray@gsa.gov. ■

The Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) and Your Role in the Process

As Contractors, you have an important role in the Contractor Performance Assessment Rating System (CPARS) process. Below you will find key points regarding CPARS including helpful websites you are encouraged to visit.

What is CPARS?

CPARS is a web-enabled system used by contract Assessing Officials (AOs) for reporting on contractor performance. CPARS features automated e-mails which remind users, including Contractor Representatives, of their roles and responsibilities within the reporting process. Finalized CPARS reports are transmitted to the Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS) for use in source selection.

How does CPARS Work?

Contracts are registered in CPARS by designated government contracting personnel. CPARS AO roles are then assigned for the purpose of evaluating contract performance. A performance evaluation report includes ratings on areas such as quality, schedule, cost, etc. Completed reports are forwarded to Contractor Representatives for review and comment before a report is finalized. Once a report is finalized it is forwarded to PPIRS.

What Contractors Need to Know

The Contractor Representative for a contract will be notified via email of their role within the reporting process. Their access to CPARS is granted via an e-mail notification which includes CPARS log on instructions. The Contractor Representative is also notified via an automated e-mail when there is a completed performance report ready for review and comment.

Where to Find Additional CPARS Information and Enroll in a CPARS Contractor Course

FAS Office of Acquisition Management has published the Contractor Information Sheet which provides helpful information and tips regarding CPARS and your role in the CPARS process. This information can be accessed via the Vendor Support Center (VSC), under the "Contract Administration" tab which is located at <https://vsc.gsa.gov>. Additional information on CPARS, including Contractor Training is provided by Naval Sea Logistics Command and can be found on the CPARS homepage at www.cpars.gov. ■



DOD ECA Digital Certificates

Do you use eOffer/eMod? Are you aware, effective January 1, 2013, if you have a DOD ECA digital certificate you may also use it to access the eOffer/eMod applications?

GSA realizes that it has a lot of vendors who also do business with DOD and are required to have a DOD ECA certificate. To minimize the cost of doing business for our vendors, GSA is now allowing its vendors that have both the ACES Business Representative certificate and the DOD ECA Certificate to maintain one certificate and use the DOD ECA certificate with both organizations. ■

Upcoming Webinar Training

FREE GSA Schedules Webinars open to all vendors!

Register at www.gsa.gov/masnews (bottom of page)

March 7, 2013 (1:00pm ET)

GSA Schedule Contractor Team Arrangements (CTAs) – This course explores Contractor Team Arrangements (CTAs) and how they benefit the customer and the contractor by saving time and effort. CTAs allow increased flexibility for meeting agency needs through the simplified procedures of the GSA Schedules program.

April 4, 2013 (1:00pm ET)

FAR Subpart 8.4 versus Open Market – This course will explore the differences and similarities between Subpart 8.4 and Parts 13 & 15 procedures, advantages and disadvantages for various situations, and help customers analyze alternatives in acquisition strategies.

eOffer/eMod Help Videos Update

Last issue we introduced a series of help videos for eOffer/eMod available at <http://eoffer.gsa.gov>. To those who reported browser compatibility troubles, we have good news! The videos are now compatible with Firefox and Google Chrome.

GSA welcomes your feedback on these videos, as well as ideas for future videos. Feel free to e-mail amsystemssupport@gsa.gov with your comments and suggestions.



Update Your Profile in the Vendor Education Center!

Recently changes have been made to the Vendor Education Center (VEC). All VEC accounts are now required to have a DUNS number associated with them. To update your profile in the VEC with your company's DUNS number follow these steps:

- ① Log into the VEC: <https://gsafas.secure.force.com/MASTrainingHome>
- ② Under "Profile", click on "My Profile" on the left of the page.
- ③ Click "Edit" then enter your DUNS number.
- ④ Upon completion, press "Save".
- ⑤ You can then log out of your VEC account and your DUNS will be registered. ■