## From the Editor

The trees are blooming and the warm weather is finally here to stay! In this issue of *GSA Steps* you will find articles with information on the new limitations to credit and debit card collection transactions, the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System, NSF International's new Protocol, NSF P391 General Sustainability Assessment Criteria for Services and Service Providers, the new web-based Green Products Compilation tool, as well as guidance on protecting GSA Purchase Card information when using Purchase Orders as shipping labels. This issue also highlights the online Pathway to Success and New Contractor Orientation training, discusses the new language in various appropriation bills that prevents agencies from contracting with corporations that have unpaid tax liabilities or felony convictions, and information on GSA Schedule contractors now able to sell to the United Services Organization (USO). Enjoy this 32nd issue of *GSA Steps* and have a safe and enjoyable Summer! ■

In This Issue
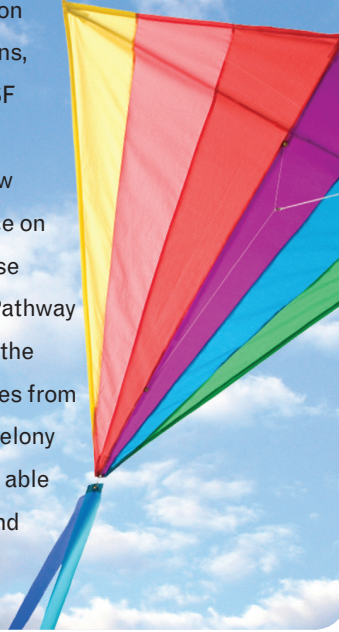
Pathway to Success & New Contractor Orientation Trainings are Available Online!

Pathway to Success & New Contractor Orientation trainings are available on the Vendor Education Center as Web-based on-demand trainings. Both trainings can be found here: https://gsafas.secure.force.com/MASTrainingHome OR under the 'TRAINING' tab on the Vendor Support Center https://vsc.gsa.gov/.

If there are any questions related to the trainings, contact pathwaytosuccess@gsa.gov. ■

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

As Contractors, you have probably already been introduced to the Contractor Performance Assessment Rating System (CPARS). Below you will find important information regarding CPARS including helpful websites that you are encouraged to visit.

What is CPARS?

CPARS is a Web-enabled system with an electronic process that reports contractor performance. CPARS also features automated emails which remind users of their roles and responsibilities within the process. Completed 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 contracting personnel who will initiate an evaluation report. Through the electronic process, proposed ratings on areas such as quality, schedule, cost, etc., are entered in to the report. Once the ratings are entered, contractors will be provided an opportunity to review, respond, and concur or not concur with the ratings.

What Contractors Need to Know

Contractor personnel who are designated as the Contractor Representative for a contract will be notified via e-mail of their role within the workflow. Access to the system is granted in the email notification and will include instructions for how to access and log on to CPARS. Contractors will be notified with an automated e-mail when their action is required, i.e, review and provide comments on proposed ratings.

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 VSC, under the "Contract Administration" tab which is located at https://vsc.gsa.gov. Additional information on CPARS, including Contractor Training, provided by Naval Sea Logistics Command, can be found on the CPARS homepage at https://www.cpars.gov.

U.S. Department of Treasury Changes Credit and Debit Card Transaction Limits this June

The U.S. Department of Treasury Financial Management Service (FMS) changed its limitations policy on credit and debit card collection transactions. The revised policy, effective June 30, 2012, lowers the maximum dollar amount allowed for a credit card transaction to $49,999.99 and eliminates the maximum dollar amount limit for debit card transactions. Contractors who choose to pay the Industrial Funding Fee (IFF) with a credit card at the Vendor Support Center (VSC) will need to adhere to FMS's new $49,999.99 limit starting June 30, 2012.

The Treasury Financial Manual (TFM) announcement publicizing FMS's new policy is posted to the TFM website and is available at the following link: http://fms.treas.gov/tfm/vol1/a-12-02.html.

Do You Get Orders from GSA*Advantage!*®?

If you can answer "YES" you know that when receiving an order from the GSA*Advantage!*® website you are issued a Purchase Order from the GSA Advantage team. This order contains all the information you will need to complete the order and ship your item(s). Once the order has been filled and is ready for shipment, it is common for contractors to choose to utilize the Purchase Order as the shipping label. If you do, **make sure that you delete the purchase card information**!

In recent years, GSA received complaints from Ordering Activities alarmed to see not only their card number, but also the expiration date and the card owner's name on the shipping label. It is everyone's job, especially as tax payers, to ensure the security of this information. So, if you decide to utilize the Purchase Order as your shipping label, ensure you cut off the bottom section "Mail Invoice to/Purchase Card Information." Below is an example of what should be removed prior to shipping.

MAIL INVOICE TO/PURCHASE CARD INFORMATION		
NAME Government Purchase Card = VISA	STREET ADDRESS Credit Card Number/Exp Date: XXXX-XXXX-XXXX-XXXX/ XX-XXXX	CITY/STATE/ZIP Obtain credit card authorization prior to shipment
CONTRACTING/ORDERING OFFICER	E-MAIL	PHONE

GREEN CORNER

Sustainable Services? There's a Protocol for That.

Until now, there has not been a standard for "green" or "sustainable" services or service providers. NSF International's new Protocol, NSF P391 *General Sustainability Assessment Criteria for Services and Service Providers*, contains general criteria that address the sustainability of services and service providers. The Protocol is divided into three categories: environmental criteria (the largest category), labor criteria, and social criteria.

In case you're wondering, Protocols are similar to Standards but are developed using different processes. NSF International developed a Protocol first because it's faster and less resource-intensive and can then serve as a basis for development of a Voluntary Consensus Standard in the near future. In the meantime, interested companies may utilize and be certified to the Protocol now.

The Protocol could provide GSA with a way to identify green services and service providers on the Multiple Award Schedules (MAS) program. For example, the Protocol could be used to identify green services that meet the objectives of Executive Order 13514, which requires that 95% of contract actions, including services, be energy-efficient, water-efficient, biobased, environmentally preferable, non-ozone depleting, contain recycled content, or contain non-toxic or less toxic alternatives.

MAS vendors interested in reading or conforming to the Protocol may purchase it from NSF International for $35 at http://www.techstreet.com/standards/nsf/p391?product_id=1825426. While there is no plan to identify compliant services and vendors in GSA*Advantage!*® or e-Library in the immediate future, GSA may choose to do so at a later date. If you have questions about the Protocol, the process to become certified, or are interested in participating in the Standard development process, please contact NSF International's Dennis Gillan at 734.476.2543 or dgillan@nsf.org.

GREEN CORNER

GSA Launches Web-Based Green Products Compilation

GSA recently launched its new, Web-based Green Products Compilation (GPC) as a new module within the GSA Sustainable Facilities Tool. The GPC is a publicly available, Web-based resource that allows users to identify applicable purchasing-related environmental programs by product type and category. The GPC targets anyone involved in federal acquisition, helping bring clarity to the complex world of federal "green" requirements.

The site identifies all green product types covered by the BioPreferred (biobased), Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (recycled content), Design for the Environment, Energy Star, EPEAT, Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP), GSA recently launched its new, Web-based Green Products Compilation (GPC) as a new module within the GSA Sustainable Facilities Tool. The GPC is a publicly available, Web-based resource that allows users to identify applicable purchasing-related environmental programs by product type and category. The GPC targets anyone involved in federal acquisition, helping bring clarity to the complex world of federal "green" requirements.

The site identifies all green product types covered by the BioPreferred (biobased), Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (recycled content), Design for the Environment, Energy Star, EPEAT, Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP), Significant New Alternatives Policy (SNAP), and WaterSense programs. In addition, the GPC:

- Allows users to search by keyword or browse by product category;

- Offers direct links to environmental program websites;

- Distinguishes between mandatory purchasing programs and others that support the achievement of agency sustainable acquisition goals;

- Identifies applicable FAR requirements;

- Identifies and links to potential purchasing options, including GSA Multiple Award Schedules, GSA Global Supply, AbilityOne, and UNICOR; and

- Remains up-to-date with the latest changes in green product designations.

Each product type in the GPC contains a "Where To Buy" column that identifies applicable Multiple Award Schedules and Special Item Numbers. Currently, this links users to the GSA*Advantage!*® Environmental Program page, where they can search for the products they wish to purchase. In the near future, however, the GPC will link users directly to a pre-populated search in GSA*Advantage!*® for each product type. Note that the search results only return compliant products, so be sure to keep the environmental attribute designations in your product catalog up-to-date! With the exception of EPA's Design for the Environment program, all environmental programs in the GPC are also included as environmental icons in GSA*Advantage!*®.

GSA envisions the Green Products Compilation as a centralized green purchasing resource for the federal acquisition workforce. GSA plans to expand its features and functionality in the future to continually advance toward this goal. Visit the GPC today at www.sftool.gov/greenprocurement to learn more!

Prohibitions Against Corporations with Unpaid Tax Liability or Felony Convictions

Language in various appropriation bills for Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) prevents agencies from contracting with corporations that have unpaid tax liabilities or felony convictions. In order to comply with these prohibitions, the agencies covered by these appropriation bills developed "representation" provisions for contractors to complete when competing for delivery/task orders. These representation provisions differ by agency because the legislation did not standardize the restrictions across the government. For example, some agencies are prohibited from contracting with a corporation that has felony convictions under federal law while other agencies are prohibited from contracting with a corporation that has felony convictions under federal or state law.

If a contractor represents themselves as having either unpaid tax liability or felony conviction under a certain Request for Quote (RFQ), the ordering Contracting

Officer is prohibited from awarding the delivery/task order to them unless the Contracting Officer goes to their Suspension and Debarment Official (SDO) and the SDO determines that suspension or debarment of the contractor is not necessary to protect the interest of the government.

For copies of the various agencies' representation provisions, visit here.

For more information on the restrictions as well as the guidance GSA is providing to ordering agencies, see the article posted on Interact.

There is no information yet on whether similar prohibitions will be placed in future fiscal years' appropriation bills.

United Services Organization Incorporated's (USO)

GSA Schedule contractors can now sell to the United Services Organization (USO) through their Federal Supply Schedules contract. Pursuant to 36 U.S.C. § 220107, the Secretary of Defense may make available access to GSA's supplies and services through the Federal Supply Schedules to the USO to the extent compatible with the primary mission of DOD and in accordance with guidelines issued by the Secretary of Defense. Based on the recent authorization from the Secretary of Defense, GSA has issued a letter of eligibility dated April 10, 2012 authorizing USO to use GSA sources of supply. This authorization allows for immediate access to all Schedules when the USO is purchasing within the authority of DOD in accordance with 36 U.S.C. § 220107.

This authority extends only to the Federal Supply Schedules and not to any other GSA program.

There is no modification required at this time to your Schedule contract in order to accept orders from the

USO. Orders placed under this authority are subject the Industrial Funding Fee and should be reported quarterly on your 72a form under your federal sales. USO must submit a copy of the eligibility letter to the contractor with each order.

Making Sure Option Process to Ensure iNtegrity, (OPEN) Runs Smoothly

The new process for exercising options to extend the term of your Multiple Award Schedule contract, OPEN, was rolled out on September 24, 2011. Overall, both industry partners and acquisition professionals agree that the OPEN process makes exercising options quicker and easier. However, as with all new processes, there are some growing pains and OPEN is no exception.

We have identified some typical stumbling blocks with the new process and specific steps that industry partners can take to make sure the option process runs as smoothly as possible.

Common Challenges Faced With OPEN:

Below is a list of common challenges that can cause the option process to get snarled up.

• No authorized negotiator listed on the contract

• Incorrect e-mail contact information on the contract

• Invalid digital certificate which will prevent access to eMod.

• Changes to the Basis of Award

• Out-of-date records in CCR and ORCA

• Outstanding mass mods

• Out of date sub k plans

The option process has a legacy of being the time for catch up in contract administration for both the contractor and GSA. However, in order for an OPEN modification to be unilateral, all routine contract administration must be completed PRIOR to exercising the option. This includes but is not limited to, Economic Price Adjustments, additions, deletions and other modification that would require a bilateral modification. The option letter, which is automatically sent to all Contractors 210 days prior to contract expiration, asks for a letter on corporate letterhead signed by a corporate officer affirming that there have been no changes to the most currently incorporated version of the following:

• Commercial Sales Practices

• Price Reduction Clause Discount Relationship

• Terms and Conditions

• The Basis of Award

If the Contractor cannot affirm that there have been no changes to the above disclosures under their contract, they must submit a separate modification request BEFORE responding to the OPEN mod. To obtain additional information about OPEN process please click here.