

**In This Issue****Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) Express Program**

GSA is proud to introduce the new Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) Express Program, an initiative designed to simplify and streamline the process for companies to obtain MAS contracts. By accelerating the processing period between application and award for federal MAS contracts, GSA hopes to achieve 30-day contract awards for eligible companies within the Program's first year.

There are obvious benefits to potential industry partners, but there are also benefits to our existing contractors and to our customers. Federal Acquisition Service Commissioner Jim Williams explains: "Our customer agencies will also enjoy more rapid access to state-of-the-art goods and services and quality industry partners, allow greater focus on high value and risk contracts, and increase savings to the American people."

Below are a few Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the program. Read on if you're interested in more details.

**Are all Schedules participating in the MAS Express Program?**

At the present time, the Program is open to five Schedules and specific Special Item Numbers (SINs) under those Schedules, as follows:



**Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) Express Program**

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- **Schedule 70:** General Purpose Information Technology Equipment, Software, and Services  
SIN 132-8  
SIN 132-12
- **Schedule 67:** Photographic Equipment—Cameras, Photographic Printers, and Related Supplies and Services (Digital and Film-Based)  
SIN 19-1      SIN 20-320  
SIN 20-130    SIN 262-53  
SIN 20-316
- **Schedule 78:** Sports, Promotional, Outdoor, Recreational, Trophies, and Signs (SPORTS)  
All SINS
- **Schedule 58 I:** Professional Audio/Video, Telecommunications, and Security Solutions  
SIN 58-1
- **Schedule 81 I B:** Shipping, Packaging, and Packing Supplies  
SIN 617-1      SIN 617-4      SIN 617-11  
SIN 617-2      SIN 617-7      SIN 617-12  
SIN 617-3      SIN 617-8

**I plan on submitting a MAS Express offer under one of the Schedules/SINs cited above. Are there other criteria that I need to meet in order to qualify for the Program?**

Yes. First, be sure to read the “MAS Express Program Instructions to Offerors,” located under each applicable solicitation file on FedBizOpps.gov. In addition, it is critical that you read the solicitation for the Schedule in which you are interested. Unless explicitly stated in the “MAS Express Program Instructions to Offerors,” you must still adhere to all other requirements as outlined in each solicitation.

At a minimum, companies must meet the following criteria in order to submit an Express offer:

- Has been in business for at least two years;

- Has a minimum of \$100,000 in cumulative sales over the last two years;
- Has minimum current ratio of 1.5, based upon the Offeror's most current year's financial statement;
- Has positive and/or neutral ratings on *all* elements on the *Open Ratings Past Performance Evaluation Report*.

In addition, there are a number of other qualifying criteria that must be met. For example, offers accepted under the MAS Express Program are limited to a total of 500 products/line items. Most Favored Customer (MFC) pricing must also be offered at the outset in order to expedite the contract award process. Companies wishing to submit an offer under the Express Program must also complete the Pathway to Success education program/seminar.

**What is the Pathway to Success, and how do I access it?**

One prerequisite for participation in the MAS Express Program is the successful completion of the *Pathway to Success* education seminar. *Pathway to Success* is designed to assist prospective GSA Schedule contractors in making an informed business decision as to whether obtaining a GSA Schedule contract is a good fit for their organization. The presentation provides background information on the GSA Schedules Program and encompasses a variety of other topics, including:

- What are GSA's expectations for a company to become a successful Schedule contractor
- How to compete and succeed as a GSA Schedule contractor in the Federal marketplace
- How to develop a GSA Schedule-specific business plan
- How to submit a qualify offer

You can access the web-based presentation

on the Vendor Support Center ([vsc.gsa.gov](http://vsc.gsa.gov)) under the Training tab or directly at: [http://webcast.gsa.gov/login.asp?lib=pn100381\\_gsa\\_pathways](http://webcast.gsa.gov/login.asp?lib=pn100381_gsa_pathways)

### **Once I submit an offer, what's the process?**

Your offer will be submitted to the Schedule Program Express Evaluation Desk (SPEED Desk) located at the address cited in the "MAS Express Program Instructions to Offerors." Through the use of a centralized SPEED Desk, GSA intends to standardize and expedite the initial review and qualification of offers.

### **What happens if the SPEED Desk discovers that I didn't meet one of the criteria?**

Missing *one or more* of any of the Express Program criteria will result in your offer being returned to you. Depending on the deficiency, you will be given the option of resubmitting your offer to the SPEED Desk or submitting an offer to the applicable Acquisition Center/Office for standard processing.

### **What happens if my offer meets all of the Express Program criteria?**

Your offer is forwarded to the appropriate Acquisition Center/Office. Your offer will undergo an additional evaluation to validate that all other applicable solicitation requirements are addressed and allow GSA to request any other information that may be needed. This may include more detailed information relating to Express Program criteria.

### **I have additional questions. Who do I contact?**

For more information, visit [www.gsa.gov/masexpress](http://www.gsa.gov/masexpress), call 1-866-472-5738, or email [mas.express@gsa.gov](mailto:mas.express@gsa.gov).

## **Understanding the Basis of Award**

Can you identify the basis of award customer/class of customer for your GSA contract? Do you monitor the pricing and discounts offered to your basis of award customer? Have you maintained the established discount relationship with GSA? Knowing the answer to these questions is critical to the effective management of your MAS contract.

When you submitted your offer to GSA, you completed the CSP-1 to disclose the best pricing and/or discounts given to any customer. Your Procurement Contracting Officer (PCO) used that information to develop the pricing objectives for negotiations. Once you completed negotiations, you

should have included a statement regarding your negotiated basis of award customer and/or most favored customer in your Final Proposal Revision (FPR). Your FPR should have been incorporated in to the final award of your contract.

Clause 552.238-75, Price Reductions, in your contract states that "before award of a contract, the Contracting Officer and the Offeror will agree upon (1) the customer (or category of customers) which will be the basis of award, and (2) the Government's price or discount relationship to the identified customer (or category of customers). This relationship shall be maintained throughout the contract period." Any change in the pricing or discounts given to the identified customer that disturbs this relationship constitutes a price reduction.

*GSA intends to standardize and expedite the initial review and qualification of offers.*

So what should you do if you haven't been monitoring the basis of award customer? It's possible that you may have breached the Price Reductions clause in your contract, and this is a very serious issue. The first thing you need to do is review your award documentation to identify the basis of award customer and the discount relationship that you established with GSA. Then, do a self-audit to determine if you have maintained the relationship. If you find that you have breached the Price Reduction clause, or if you are unsure, notify your PCO immediately.

to supplement the efforts and available resources of state and local governments. Implementation of the law allows for procurement of all goods and services on GSA Schedules. For more information on the Act, go to: [www.fema.gov/about/stafact.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/about/stafact.shtm)

State and local governments may use the Federal Supply Schedule contracts to purchase products and services in advance of a major disaster declared by the President as well as in the aftermath of an emergency event. The use of Schedules for disaster recovery is

non-mandatory for both state and local governments and Schedule contractors. Businesses have the option of deciding whether to accept or decline orders on an order-by-order basis.

GSA is now working with MAS contractors to solicit their interest in this program. For contracts awarded on or before January 31, 2007, electronic Mass Modification, FX-47, was issued on February 12, 2007, giving contractors the option to participate in

Recovery Purchasing. Acceptance of the modification is voluntary, but if you choose to accept it, please be aware that all of your awarded products and services are included.

Here are some other key points to be aware of:

- GSAR subpart 538.71—Recovery Purchasing is the main clause governing the initiative
- State and local governments are responsible for ensuring that only authorized representatives place orders
- Be familiar with the definition of state and local governments

## Recovery Purchasing

Did you know that legislation has been passed that allows state and local governments to use GSA Schedules for disaster relief and recovery? Section 833 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 (P.L. 109-364) authorizes the use of Federal Supply Schedules by state and local governments to facilitate recovery from major disasters, terrorism, nuclear, biological, chemical, or radiological attacks.

Under this law, state and local government purchases must be for recovery from a major disaster as declared by the President under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. A "major disaster" is defined by the Act to mean a natural catastrophe in any part of the United States, including its territories, which in the determination of the President causes sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant major disaster assistance

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- Orders placed under Schedules become separate contracts—Schedule contract Terms and Conditions are incorporated (with certain exceptions)
- If the ordering activity's State has a prompt payment law, then it applies. Otherwise, the Federal Prompt Payment Act applies
- The GSA Schedules disputes and patent indemnity clauses do not apply to Recovery Purchasing
- The federal government is not liable for contractor performance. Disputes can be litigated in any state or federal court with jurisdiction
- Prices include the Industrial Funding Fee (IFF)
- Contractors will have to report Recovery Purchasing sales to state and local governments under a separate SIN
- Contractors will be required to collect and report transactional data, such as items and quantities sold, prices, and the state or local government placing the order

## Multiple Award Schedule Tracking Measure

### **"Percent of Surveyed Vendors Satisfied With Offer/Mod Process"**

In previous *Steps* newsletters, GSA reported that we had instituted a new tracking measure to gauge vendor satisfaction with the Offer/Mod process. The measure came about as part of GSA's annual Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) Vendor Satisfaction Survey, which indicated room for improvement in the responsiveness and quality of interaction provided to industry partners. Results also indicated that improvements are necessary in operational procedures and processes associated with the solicitation process and the processing of offers and modifications.

To help improve in these areas, GSA and the CFI Group issued the first wave of monthly surveys in late 2006

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Permitting state and local governments to use federal contracts to support recovery from major disasters and acts of terrorism will vastly improve GSA's ability to assist communities during times of national emergencies. GSA Administrator Lurita Doan summed it up by saying, "Opening our Federal Supply Schedules means unprecedented delivery speed and best value for state and local agencies directly helping Americans who need it most."

Learn more about using GSA Schedules to support disaster recovery by visiting [www.gsa.gov/disasterrecovery](http://www.gsa.gov/disasterrecovery).

to measure satisfaction with the Offer/Mod process. The surveys allow vendors to rate their satisfaction with the contracting process and the Contracting Officer's knowledge and responsiveness for the following contract actions:

- Offers/Options Awarded, Rejected or Withdrawn
- Modifications Awarded, Rejected or Withdrawn. This includes the following Mod types as listed in FSS-19: Administrative Changes, Add SIN(s), Terminate SIN(s), Cancel SIN(s), Add

Products, Delete Products, Price Reduction, Economic Price Adjustment, Exercise Option and Other Changes

The first wave of survey results indicated high satisfaction in some areas of the process, but indicated that improvements can be made in others. Some of the key findings from the first six months of survey results are:

- GSA Contract Officials follow-through and response to phone calls and/or e-mails rated at a satisfaction index of 70.5
- The aggregate Contract Experience (ease of reaching the right person, number of contacts required to resolve any issues, timeliness of contract award decision) satisfaction index score is 62.2
- The clarity, amount, and consistency of information required to complete a contract action scored a 60.7 satisfaction rating
- Overall satisfaction with the Schedule contract award or modification process rated a 62.2 index score

GSA is currently working to use these results to make improvements in several areas. Your survey responses will help guide us to identify potential areas for improved interaction and support, as well as help substantiate areas for improvement in the contract offer/mod process. We are also using this data to identify and share best practices across all Acquisition Centers and to identify training opportunities for our contracting personnel. Your input to these surveys provides valuable assistance in helping us improve in these areas.

GSA is committed to better meeting your needs and those of the vendor community as a whole. Thank you if you have completed an Offer/Mod transaction survey. We encourage you to continue to provide feedback through future surveys and ask that you be candid in

your reply. Together we can continue to make the MAS program even stronger.

## Go Green! Energy Policy Act Requirements and You

On August 8, 2005, President George W. Bush signed the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPACT) into law. Section 104 of EPACT establishes new requirements for Federal agencies regarding Energy Star® qualified and the Department of Energy's Federal Energy Management Program (FEMP) purchasing specifications for energy-efficient products. The FEMP will soon release regulations implementing Section 104, which means that Federal buyers will be required to purchase only Energy Star® or FEMP items for all products categories covered by the two programs.

### What GSA Schedule items are covered?

To view the items covered by Section 104 EPACT requirements and the pertinent GSA Schedule and Special Item Number (SIN), visit [www.gsa.gov/enviro](http://www.gsa.gov/enviro). In the left sidebar, click on "Energy Efficient Products," and then click on "Energy Efficient Product Library." This will lead you to the Energy Efficient Products Offered spreadsheet. The spreadsheet lists the energy efficiency requirements for each item.

### What should I do?

The EPACT requirement places a priority on the purchase of energy-efficient products, meaning that Federal buyers will have a purchasing preference for Energy Star® products and products that meet FEMP specifications. If you have a MAS contract, it is important to properly identify Energy Star® and FEMP products in accordance with GSAR 552.238-72, Identification of Products That Have Environmental Attributes. This requirement

applies to both printed and electronic publications. The bullet points below will assist you in complying with your contract and keeping your products in high demand. We want potential customers to find you!

- Review the GSA Schedules and Special Item Numbers (SINs) containing Energy Star® and FEMP specifications
- Update your GSA Advantage! item descriptions and product designations to accurately represent the environmental attribute(s) associated with each product offered. Remember that the properly identifying items that are energy-efficient, and keeping this information up to date is required by GSAR 552.238-72!
- Remove any inappropriate designations. Remember, Energy Star® and FEMP designations apply to a whole item, not parts of an item. For example, a refrigerator can be Energy Star® qualified, but a replacement part for a refrigerator may not be Energy Star® qualified
- Make all environmental marketing claims clear to the buyer. You need to be able to substantiate any environmental attributes associated with the products that you offer. To help, take a look at the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims, which outlines principles and guidance for making environmental claims. The FTC takes corrective actions against any vendor making deceptive claims, so be sure to follow the rules! If you have any questions regarding environmental marketing claims, please reference the FTC guide at: <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/grnrule/guides980427.htm>.

Additional information on Energy Star® and FEMP can be found at:

<http://www.energystar.gov/products> and <http://eere.energy.gov/femp/procurement>.

## VETS GWAC Awarded

On December 18, 2006, GSA awarded the Veterans Technology for Services (VETS) Governmentwide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) to more than 40 service-disabled, veteran-owned contractors. Eligible contractors will be able to

compete for Federal Government procurements under this set-aside contract that has a five-year base with a five-year option period and a potential overall value of \$5 billion. VETS will provide cutting-edge technology solutions to federal agencies without the expense and time involved in open-market set-aside procurements. VETS' broad contract scope provides information security, information systems engineering and systems operations and maintenance.

VETS is the result of Executive Order 13360 issued on October 20, 2004 by President Bush to strengthen opportunities in federal contracting for service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses. "At GSA, we're doing our part to ensure that federal contracting opportunities are available to our nation's service-disabled veterans" said GSA's Administrator Lurita Doan. "These veterans placed the nation's security before their own lives, and that sacrifice creates a debt we can never fully repay, but we can and should try."

*The FTC takes  
corrective actions  
against any vendor  
making deceptive  
claims, so be sure to  
follow the rules!*

A complete list of industry partners is available on the VETS GWAC website at [www.gsa.gov/vetsgwac](http://www.gsa.gov/vetsgwac). With the addition of VETS, GSA adds to its contract portfolio offerings from small disadvantaged 8(a) firms and historically underutilized business zone (HUBZone) small businesses, as well as large-business integrators. Awards were made by GSA's Small Business GWAC Center located in Kansas City, Missouri.

online check payments for amounts of over \$1 million.

After you report your sales at the Vendor Support Center (VSC) website, simply click "Pay Online," and you will be directed to the Treasury Department's secure website, [www.pay.gov](http://www.pay.gov), to enter your payment information. Neither GSA nor the Treasury stores any account information that you enter. If you are not the person authorized to make an electronic payment for your company, don't worry! You can still take advantage of this feature. After you report your sales, click "Pay Online Later," and you will be given a code that your company can use to come back to the VSC website at any time to make the payment. You can simply forward that code to your financial personnel, and they can make a payment that will automatically link to the sales you just reported.

## ePay Makes Great Strides

GSA is now entering its fifth year of allowing MAS contractors to electronically pay the Industrial Funding Fee (IFF), and the program is stronger than ever. Similarly, online payment of the GWAC Contract Access Fee (CAF) is approaching the one-year mark, and the number of payments is soaring. Currently we receive over half of our payments (*almost 20,000 e-payments for Fiscal Year 2006 alone!*) online via credit card and online checks. If you haven't had a chance to take advantage of this tool, we encourage you to give it a try in the next reporting month. *It's fast, it's free and it's easy to do.* You can use any major credit card for payments less than \$100,000, and there is no limit on the amount you can pay using your bank account via an online check. To date, GSA has processed credit card payments for amounts right up to the \$100,000 limit and have received



*You can use any major credit card for payments less than \$100,000, and there is no limit on the amount you can pay using your bank account via an online check.*

## Coming Soon

To make your payment process even easier, GSA will be allowing contractors to make electronic payments at any time, for any amount. Look for this—and other new enhancements—in an upcoming sales reporting quarter.

For more info, check out the Sales Reporting tab on the Vendor Support Center website: [vsc.gsa.gov](http://vsc.gsa.gov).