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The New and Improved MAS Report Card Is Here

The first of the redesigned Contractor Report Cards was successfully issued on August 21st!

Since 2002, GSA has been using a Contractor Report Card, as part of the Multiple Award Schedule's (MAS) Contractor Assessment Initiative, to reflect how well MAS contractors manage and comply with contractual requirements. After five years, we thought that it was time to update and improve on the original concept to better reflect the current acquisition environment.

We've added some new areas of evaluation, including:

- System or process to monitor the "basis of award" pricing
- Meeting the minimum sales criteria (\$25,000 over first 2 years, then \$25,000 annually)
- Including prompt payment terms on invoices
- Use of electronic contracting tools

In addition, we're changing the way we calculate the contractor's overall rating. The current calculation is simple but not very useful. A score of 27 out of 27 items results in an "outstanding" rating, a score of 22 to 26 results in a "successful" rating and fewer than 22 results in an "unsuccessful" rating. In the new Report Card, items are classified as critical, mandatory but not critical, and above-and-beyond. Nine areas were determined to be critical, so failure in any of those areas

causes an overall rating of “serious concerns exist.” If all critical items are met, ratings will range from “very good” to “satisfactory” to “marginal” depending on performance on the other eleven mandatory but not critical items. Finally, six items are classified as going above and beyond the contractual requirements. Contractors who receive a “very good” based on the above, and achieve five of six of these extra credit areas, get an “exceptional” overall rating.

As with the original Report Card, the new version is designed to provide contractors with helpful feedback on how they are managing the many requirements that come with being a contractor. Some of the changes were made in response to industry feedback and other changes were generated internally. Remember that the Report Card deals strictly with performance against MAS Terms and Conditions and is visible only within GSA and to the individual contractor. It is not used by customer agencies since it does not evaluate performance on individual task and delivery orders.

Check out the new Report Card on the last page of this issue of GSA Steps.

The MAS Express Program—Act II

The Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) Express Program is a two-year pilot designed to simplify and streamline the process for companies to obtain MAS contracts. By accelerating the offer evaluation process, GSA’s goal is to drastically reduce the cycle time for contract awards to eligible companies. In order to participate, companies must meet specific criteria and must successfully complete the *Pathway to Success*, a web-based education seminar designed to assist prospective Schedule contractors in making an informed business decision as to whether obtaining a GSA Schedule contract is in their best interest.

Phase I of the Program was rolled out on January 16, 2007. Initially, the Program was open to five Schedules and specific Special Item Numbers (SINs). GSA is proud to announce that, to date, all awards under the Program have been made in less than 30 days! Building on that accomplishment, GSA began planning for Phase II of the Program—including an expansion of the available Schedules and SINs, leading to an increase the number of offers that are eligible for submission, and submission of electronic offers, injecting even more speed into the offer evaluation process.

On August 15, 2007, Phase II of the Program was released. Under Phase II, the number of Schedules participating in the Program was expanded from five to 15, and the number of SINs also increased substantially. In addition, our industry partners now have the ability to submit electronic Express offers through an enhanced version of the existing electronic tool, eOffer. Initially, the ability to submit an Express eOffer will be available for specific Schedules. This feature will be expanded over the coming months.

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 specific Schedules and SINs under 15 Schedules. The participating Schedules are:

- Schedule 36: The Office, Imaging and Document Solutions
- Schedule 48: Transportation, Delivery and Relocation Solutions
- Schedule 51: V Hardware SuperStore
- Schedule 58: I Professional Audio/Video,

- Telecommunications, and Security Solutions
- Schedule 67: Photographic Equipment—Cameras, Photographic Printers, and Related Supplies and Services (Digital and Film-Based)
- Schedule 69: Training Aids and Devices, Instructor-Led Training, Course Development, Test Administration
- Schedule 70: General Purpose Information Technology Equipment, Software, and Services
- Schedule 71 I: Office Furniture
- Schedule 71 III: Special Use Furniture
- Schedule 73: Food Service, Hospitality, Cleaning Equipment and Supplies, Chemicals, and Services
- Schedule 75: Office Products/Supplies and Services
- Schedule 78: Sports, Promotional, Outdoor, Recreational, Trophies, and Signs (SPORTS)
- Schedule 81 I B: Shipping, Packaging, and Packing Supplies
- Schedule 599: Travel Services Solutions
- Schedule 899: Environmental Services

Pathway to Success is designed to assist prospective GSA Schedule contractors in making an informed business decision.

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

Yes. Read the “MAS Express Program Instructions to Offerors,” posted in FedBizOpps under each participating Schedule, in its entirety. 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, vendors 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 commercial sales over the last two years
- Has an acceptable current ratio based on the company’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/labor categories. Most Favored Customer (MFC) pricing must also be offered at the outset in order to expedite the contract award process.

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 vendor 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, the proposal submission process, and the GSA Schedule solicitation

Vendors may view the web-based presentation posted on the Vendor Support Center (VSC) under the “Vendor Training” tab at <http://vsc.gsa.gov>.

Can I submit my offer electronically?

You may be able to submit your offer electronically using Express eOffer. Please visit the eOffer homepage at <http://eoffer.gsa.gov> for additional details.

Once I submit an offer, what’s the process?

Your offer will be submitted to the Schedule Program Express Evaluation Desk (SPEED Desk). Through the use of a centralized SPEED Desk, GSA intends to standardize and expedite the initial review and qualification of offers.

You will receive an initial email to notify you that your offer has been received by the Desk. Then, within five days, you will be notified again once the Desk completes its initial review. The SPEED Desk will notify you via email as to whether the offer meets the criteria for consideration under the MAS Express Program and, if not, the options available to you. By expediting this turnaround time for the initial review and qualification of an offer, as well as providing you with rapid feedback, the overall time to review, evaluate, negotiate, and award a GSA Schedule contract should be greatly reduced.

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?

You will receive an email that your offer is being forwarded to the appropriate Acquisition Center/Office. You will also receive notice once your offer is assigned to a Procuring Contracting Officer (PCO).

Your offer will undergo an additional evaluation to validate that all other applicable solicitation requirements are addressed and to allow GSA to request any other information that may be needed. This may include more detailed information relating to Express Program criteria. **It is important to note that your assigned PCO makes the final decision concerning your offer. Your offer is still subject to contract negotiation and may be rejected and returned to you at any point during the offer evaluation process.**

For more information, visit www.gsa.gov/masexpress.

New Flexible e-Pay Option

Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contractors now have the option of remitting the Industrial Funding Fee (IFF) online at any time and for any amount. Previously, electronic payments

were limited to the amount owed for currently reported sales and could not be changed. If contractors needed to pay more or less than this amount, or needed to make additional payments, the only available option was to submit a paper check. This process was slow and prone to errors. The new flexible e-Pay option adds speed, flexibility and increased accuracy into the payment process.

Take advantage of this enhancement! Select “Make a Payment” from the 72a online reporting website. Be sure to indicate the appropriate reporting quarter to which the payment should be applied. As with previous GSA electronic payment options, the new “Make a Payment” option is free to use, and payments may be made using any major credit card or by electronic check.

GSA is available to provide DoD with a comprehensive suite of products, services and solutions to meet their acquisition needs.

A Resource for Increasing the Use of GSA Contracts

You’ve undoubtedly heard a lot about whether the Department of Defense (DoD) can use GSA’s Multiple Award Schedules or other contracts either directly or through an assisted acquisition service arrangement. You may have even encountered this question while talking to your DoD customers. The answer is that GSA is available to provide DoD with a comprehensive suite of products, services and solutions to meet their acquisition needs.

An informal poll taken at the last GSA EXPO showed that even many seasoned DoD contract specialists believed incorrectly that they were forbidden from using GSA. To counter this

misperception, GSA created an easy to remember website designed to set the record straight: www.gsa.gov/dod.

The website contains signed copies of official policy and guidance documents issued by high-level acquisition officials in DoD and GSA that may not have filtered down to local customers. It includes copies of news articles quoting DoD officials who support and endorse GSA acquisition services and some specific contracts. It provides updates on active partnership efforts between DoD and GSA.

Now that this resource is available, you will be in an excellent position to correct misinformation whenever and wherever you may encounter it. You can print these documents and articles and provide them at customer meetings. You can also include these with your marketing packages. You can refer your customers to the website, and encourage

them to use GSA Schedules or other GSA contracts to fulfill their requirements.

Be sure to bookmark www.gsa.gov/dod. It is an excellent marketing tool for increasing the DoD’s use of the Schedules, while at the same time strengthening the DoD/GSA partnership.

Be a Good Steward of MAS

Increasingly, GSA Schedule contractors are getting confused regarding when they can offer non-contract products and services in response to Request for Quotes (RFQ) issued under the GSA Schedules Program.

When an agency makes the determination to issue a RFQ under the GSA Schedules program, either through GSA eBuy or through any other method, the agency may only accept quotes for products or services covered by a GSA Schedule contract. Contractors may meet these requirements by offering products on their own contract(s) or by entering in to a Schedule Contractor Teaming Arrangement with one or more Schedule contractors if the scope of the procurement goes beyond the products or services on one contract.

While FAR 8.4 does allow agencies to mix contract and non-contract items on a delivery order or task order for convenience, it is incumbent on the Schedule contractor to make sure that their quotes clearly identify which line items are covered by the contract and which items are not covered by the contract. As a GSA Schedule contractor, you are a steward of the Schedules program. Please ensure that you are always following all applicable procurement rules and regulations and being honest with customers.

petroleum-based counterparts, and many biobased products are biodegradable or recyclable.

Federal agencies are required by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (FSRIA) of 2002 to purchase USDA designated biobased products over their petroleum-based counterparts, as long as the biobased materials are reasonably available, reasonably priced, and comparable in performance.

By using biobased products, we can help reduce our Nation's dependence on oil and natural gas.

As the federal manager of the BioPreferred Program, USDA continues to identify and designate items (product categories) that will require preferred procurement. Currently, over 10,000 commercially available products have been identified for future inclusion in the Program.

In support of USDA's effort, GSA is working to provide two new icons to its environmental symbol library—one to identify designated BioPreferredSM products that require a procurement preference and one to identify non-designated biobased products that are also available for purchase. In this regard, it continues to be important for our MAS contract holders to properly identify BioPreferredSM and biobased products by applying the appropriate symbol to each biobased product awarded on your MAS contract and listed on GSA *Advantage!*[®]

Environmental symbols are provided for your convenience and use in GSA *Advantage!*[®] Our federal procurement customers rely on the information you provide about your products. Therefore, please be diligent, and only apply environmental attribute symbols that meet the requirements of each applicable environmental program. Help GSA maintain the integrity of this important service for our shared customers—

BioPreferredSM Gains Speed

BioPreferredSM is the new name identifying the federal Biobased Products Preferred Procurement Program. The request to "Pick Preferred" will soon echo throughout the Federal Government.

Biobased products are made from renewable agricultural resources, including plant, animal, or marine materials. By using biobased products, we can help reduce our Nation's dependence on oil and natural gas. Biobased products are generally safer for the environment than their

the federal procurement community.

To learn more about current “preferred” BioPreferredSM products or to learn how to participate in the BioPreferredSM program visit <http://www.usda.gov/biopreferred>.

Government agencies are able to purchase designated biobased items from GSA Advantage![®] at <http://www.gsaadvantage.gov>. Products can also be purchased on the GSA Advantage![®] Environmental Aisle by clicking on “Environmental” on the GSA Advantage![®] home page.

Also, designated biobased items will be available on the GSA Global Supply online purchasing system at <https://www.globalsupply.gsa.gov>.

Stay tuned for more information!

Small Businesses Win 85 Percent of FSSI Awards for Office Supplies

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) has awarded Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPA) to 11 small and two large businesses to provide office supplies to the Federal Government, as part of the Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative (FSSI).

Eight-five percent of the companies awarded BPAs Friday, Aug. 3, are 8(a) certified, women- and veteran-owned small businesses.

“These awards not only enable the federal government to realize significant savings but

also provide opportunities for small business to be full participants in the federal procurement world,” said Administrator Lurita Doan. “Under the BPAs, companies will use their best commercial practices to provide further cost reductions and are required to submit management and detailed transaction reports.”

The following contractors will compete for federal office supplies sales over one year, with two options to renew: Metro Office Products, Adams Marketing, George W. Allen Co., Corporate Express, Veterans Imaging Products, Future Solutions, Inc.; Stephens Office Supply, Staples, Impac Office Supplies, SITA Business Systems, Inc., IS. Group, Inc., Imaging Systems and Miller's Office Products.

Federal office supplies sales totaled \$322 million in 2006.

The Office of Management and Budget created FSSI in 2005, directing federal agencies to establish formal strategic sourcing programs. The FSSI includes more than 20 military and civilian federal agencies and is co-chaired by GSA and the U.S. Department

of the Treasury. FSSI aims to add value by increasing government-wide savings and socio-economic participation, working with industry to develop solutions, share best practices and create a strategic sourcing community of practice.

GSA Fire Shelters Save Two Firefighters

Fire gear purchased from GSA's Global Supply helped save the lives of two brave firefighters in the Lake Tahoe area fires in late June. The

FSSI was created in 2005 to direct federal agencies to establish formal strategic sourcing programs.

protective equipment comes through two GSA regions: FAS Southwest Acquisition Center in the Greater Southwest Region and Western Distribution Center in the Pacific Rim Region.

The life-saving equipment was a tiny “tent” made of aluminum and fiberglass that resembles the foil wrapper from a burrito. The firefighters were extinguishing spot fires when they found themselves surrounded by flames. They backed into a meadow, climbed under their fire shelters and were protected for nearly 30 minutes as the fire burned around them.

The fire, which started on June 24, burned approximately 3,100 acres near South Tahoe in late June, destroying 309 homes and other buildings near South Tahoe, California. Stories like this remind us of the life-impacting work that GSA and its industry partners do everyday.

GSA’s Wildland Fire Program stocks more than 250 items managed under the fire program, including:

- Water handling equipment and supplies
- Fire shelters
- Protective clothing, goggles, and safety glasses
- Canteens, field packs and tents
- Sleeping bag
- First aid kits

diversity and human resources. Established in 1988 and originally offering affirmative action and supplier diversity services to the private sector, JDG Associates expanded its core service area to include civil rights services to the Federal Government.

In 1997, JDG Associates was awarded a GSA Schedule contract under Schedule 738 X for EEO & HR Services, and within a year, JDG Associates was working with two federal

agencies to provide Title VI and Title VII EEO support. JDG Associates is now celebrating its 10th year as a GSA Schedule holder and is widely recognized as one of the leading firms specializing in EEO services for the federal sector. With solid past performance in several core EEO areas, JDG Associates has services available through the GSA Schedule to support the entire federal EEO process.

The GSA Schedule has been instrumental as a marketing

tool and procurement vehicle over the past decade, allowing JDG Associates the opportunity to expand the number of federal customers from just two agencies to more than 30!

John D. Gonzalez is President & CEO of JDG Associates, Inc. After beginning a career in investment banking and realizing there were many obstacles facing the minority community in terms of employment and business opportunities, Mr. Gonzalez established JDG Associates to promote equal opportunity and fairness. Mr. Gonzalez remains closely tied to the minority business community and continues to advocate for the increased utilization of small, minority and women-owned businesses.

The GSA Schedule has been instrumental over the past decade by allowing JDG Associates the opportunity to expand the number of federal customers to more than 30!

Small Business Success

JDG Associates, Inc. is a small management consulting firm specializing in civil rights,

Category 1: Contractor Assessment Initiative Report Card

1	Did the contractor demonstrate compliance with the scope of their contract?	Yes/No
2	Did the contractor demonstrate compliance with the Trade Agreements Act?	Yes/No
3	Is the pricelist being used by the contractor the current approved pricelist?	Yes/No
4	Does the contractor have a system in place that substantially identifies, tracks and reports GSA sales accurately and completely?	Yes/No
If #4 "No"	Do contractor sales records match GSA reported sales?	Yes/No
If #4 "No"	If there are dealers, are dealer sales being collected in the contractor's system and included in the 72A report?	Yes/No/NA
5	Is the contractor meeting or exceeding minimum contract sales requirement in accordance with the Contract Sales Criteria clause?	Yes/No < New
6	Does the contractor have a system in place to monitor the "basis of award" customer discount relationship?	Yes/No < New
7	Did the contractor charge customers the contract price or lower?	Yes/No < New
8	Is the contractor complying with the Economic Price Adjustment clause of the contract?	Yes/No/NA
9	If a Commercial or Individual Subcontracting Plan is required, did the contractor meet the goals specified in the plan or is the contractor progressing toward meeting the goals specified in the plan?	Yes/No/NA/ Not Delegated

The above items are deemed critical. Failure to meet any one (1) of these items will result in a rating of SERIOUS CONCERNS EXIST.

Category 2

10	Since the issuance of the most recent Report Card but no more than 36 months back, are the contractor's Reports of Sales on time?	Yes/No
11	Since the issuance of the most recent Report Card but no more than 36 months back, has the contractor remitted the Industrial Funding Fee on time?	Yes/No
If #11 "No"	Since the issuance of the most recent Report Card but no more than 36 months back, is the contractor free of ACO issued claims?	Yes/No < New
12	Is the contractor up-to-date on GSA Advantage!?	Yes/No
13	Is the contractor delivering timely based upon a sampling of orders?	Yes/No/NA
14	Is the contractor honoring warranty terms of the contract?	Yes/No/NA
15	Is the contractor capable of accepting the Government-wide Commercial Purchase card?	Yes/No/NA
16	Is the contractor's records location and administrative representative information correct? (e.g., address, phone, fax, email, etc.)	Yes/No
17	Has the contractor complied with Change of Name and/or Novation Agreement requirements?	Yes/No/NA
18	Since the issuance of the most recent Report Card but no more than 36 months back, is the contractor free of cure notices issued by the Schedule Contracting Officer (PCO or ACO)?	Yes/No < New
19	If there are participating dealers, are the dealers listed and current in the contract pricelist and GSA Advantage!?	Yes/No/NA
20	If the contract has prompt payment discounts, are the prompt payment terms shown on the invoices?	Yes/No/NA New

Items in Category 2 are mandatory, but not critical. If all Category 1 items are met: failure in one (1) item in Section 2 will result in a VERY GOOD rating; failure in any two (2) or three (3) items from this section will result in a SATISFACTORY rating; failure to meet four (4) or more items in Category 2 will result in a MARGINAL rating.

Category 3

21	Is the contractor being proactive in proposing to add and delete items from the contract?	Yes/No/NA
22	Does the contractor accept credit cards over the micro-purchase threshold?	Yes/No
23	Is the contractor using all applicable e-contracting tools (e.g., e-Mod, e-Buy, ePay)?	Yes/No < New
24	Does the contractor offer second tier pricing discounts on blanket purchase agreements issued against this contract?	Yes/No/NA
25	If there are contractor teaming arrangements, do these arrangements address how customer service and warranty issues will be resolved?	Yes/No/NA
26	Is the contractor free from bankruptcy proceedings?	Yes/No

EXCEPTIONAL rating: Must be Very Good and no more than one (1) failure in Category 3.