GSA steps

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Electronic Subcontracting Reporting System (eSRS) Update

The General Services Administration (GSA), along with the rest of the civilian government, began using the new government-wide eSRS system for accepting subcontracting reports on October 28, 2005. That means that all government contractors with subcontracting plans incorporated in their contracts must now submit their reports through this system at http://www.esrs.gov/. This long-awaited new reporting method was announced by an Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) memo and publicized through many government and industry publications and websites (e.g., http://www.gcn.com/vol1_no1/daily-updates/ 37476-1.html).

This web reporting system replaces the old Standard Forms 294 and 295. Hardcopies of those forms will no longer be accepted. All reports must be submitted via eSRS.

Some specific guidance from the OFPP memo we would like to emphasize:

Except as noted below, all contractors holding FSS contracts must submit Summary Subcontracting Reports for FY 2004 (the fiscal year that ended September 30, 2004). **FSS contractors that used our Vendor Support Center application to submit their SF295s for FY 2004 are exempt from this requirement. The data that was input into the GSA system will be uploaded into the eSRS.**

All contractors holding contracts with civilian agencies must use the eSRS for both their Individual Subcontract Reports (ISRs) and Summary Subcontract Reports (SSRs) for the period ended September 30, 2005. **Contractors may not use the NASA, GSA, DoE or any other electronic system for the September 30, 2005, reports. If you submitted your 294 or 295 Forms via the VSC website you must re-enter them into the eSRS.**

SBA will not require mid-year FY 2005 reports (March 31, 2005); the eSRS does have the capability to accept them. Here are some tips for using the system:

- Contractors must submit their Individual Subcontracting Reports (ISR, formerly SF294) using the DUNS number to which that contract is officially awarded. If you are unsure of what the correct DUNS number is, check your award documents or contact your Contracting Officer. A single registered user can, however, submit reports for multiple DUNS accounts for your company. When users submit reports they must enter the contract number and the DUNS number. ESRS will use the FPDS-NG database to validate that the DUNS number is the correct one for that particular contract.

- Please know the ACO, PCO or OSDBU officials responsible for your contract and their e-mail addresses. These are the same people to whom you previously were required to send the paper reports. When submitting the reports, you can enter their e-mail addresses and they will receive immediate notification that you have submitted a report for them to review.

- Any problems should be reported to the helpdesk online. Technical problems will be resolved by the helpdesk staff. Policy-related questions will be referred to either the appropriate Contracting Officer or the SBA Commercial Market Representative.

- Contractors must self-register with an e-mail address and a primary DUNS number.

If you are unsure of what the correct DUNS number is, check your award documents or contact your Contracting Officer.

However, with that registration you may report for federal contracts awarded to your company under multiple DUNS numbers. You must log-in under the primary DUNS number registration, but when you submit a report you can enter another DUNS number for your company under other or Summary Subcontracting Reports (SSR, formerly SF295) for multiple contracts.

The deadline for submitting timely reports was extended to December 31, 2005.

New Contractor Orientation Webcast Training at Your Fingertips

The GSA is committed to helping our Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contract holders be successful. In past years, GSA's Industrial Operation Analysts (IOAs) tried to visit every new contractor, soon after contract award, to discuss contract requirements and ensure that contractor personnel understand the Government's expectations. As the Schedule program continues to grow, that's not always feasible.

Last year we implemented New Contractor Orientation seminars that are given periodically across the country. The seminars have increased the number of contractors who receive the information that they need, while providing a group setting that fosters face-to-face interaction among attendees and presenters. Despite these efforts, we realize that we're still not reaching all of you!

The New Contractor Orientation webcast is the solution. This online presentation contains critical information on contract requirements and your responsibilities as a contract holder. It also provides links to various marketing resources to help you on your way. You can access the presentation at any time at this link:

http://www.vodium.com/goto/gsa/ncos.asp

The link is also available through our Vendor Support Center (VSC) website at http://vsc.gsa.gov. Webcast training is available when you are, 24/7/365.

The webcast is not only for new contractors. It's a perfect way for veterans of the Schedule program to brush up on contract requirements, or bring new employees up to speed. It can also serve as a quick refresher and resource guide.

Webcast training is available when you are, 24|7|365 at http:||vsc.gsa.gov.

We realize that watching a presentation on the web deprives you of the ability to ask questions and provide feedback. That's why we've decided to hold live, monthly online chat sessions that will give you the opportunity to ask questions and receive real-time answers from GSA personnel. After you register to view the webcast, you will get periodic e-mails alerting you of upcoming chat sessions.

We've also incorporated a feedback survey at the end of the presentation. We encourage you to provide comments and suggestions for improvement so that we can ensure that the New Contractor Orientation webcast is as informative and useful as it can be.

We hope that we've provided you with a beneficial and accessible tool to help you

navigate your road to success.

If you have any questions regarding the purpose or content of the presentation, please contact Sheri Meadema at 703.605.2577. Technical questions should be addressed to the Vodium helpdesk at 202.223.1800 or via e-mail at support@vodium.com.

Market Your MAS Offerings Worldwide Using GSA e-Tools

One of the biggest questions facing Schedule contractors is, "How do I market to the federal government?" As many of you know, receiving a GSA Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contract does not always mean immediate success-rather, it is the first of many steps to increasing your government sales opportunities. Our most successful contractors take advantage of all opportunities that GSA offers, including involvement with e-commerce as well as traditional selling. GSA can expand the visibility of your products and services via our major e-commerce tools used by over 400,000 registered buyers. These popular web-based tools are accessible 24/7 by federal government agencies and military services stationed around the world and provide mission support at all levels of government, including support to our troops home and abroad.

Here's an overview of GSA's major e-commerce tools:

- **e-Buy**, GSA's online Request-For-Quote (RFQ) system, simplifies the RFQ process

and expands the window of opportunity for sellers. It allows Schedule contractors to quote on any RFQ posted under their awarded Special Item Numbers (SINs), giving them the ability to compete fairly and openly within the federal marketplace. Buyers primarily use e-Buy to purchase services, large quantity or high dollar items, and items with complex requirements, in order to obtain discounts from the contract pricing. Each year, e-Buy's popularity among buyers and sellers grows significantly. Last fiscal year, the number of RFQs posted increased 61 percent from the previous year, reaching over 41,000 postings.

- **GSA Advantage!**, the federal government's premier online shopping site for products and services, offers a wealth of sales opportunity for Schedule contractors. After celebrating its 10-year anniversary in October, GSA Advantage! finished the year with over $350 million in sales-a 34 percent increase over last year. GSA Advantage! provides Schedule contractors the opportunity to sell any commercial product or service listed in their MAS Contract. The best way for Schedule contractors to market their products and services to these 400,000 registered buyers is to make sure each product has an excellent description, a clear photo, up-to-date pricing and correct contact information.

- **Schedules e-Library** lists all awarded contractors under the GSA Schedules, VA Schedules, and GSA Governmentwide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) program. It provides buyers with the latest award

eOffer allows contract holders to utilize GSA's systems for online contract maintenance.

information to perform market research by contacting sources by phone, e-mail, or by browsing the contractor's text file and website. It is important to keep this information up-to-date and to list the correct contact person. Text files are a great way to market products and services on e-Library. You can upload text files in many different formats and they provide a great place to display information such as your GSA Schedule price list and ordering information for customers.

- **eOffer** allows contract holders to utilize GSA's systems for online contract maintenance. Vendors establishing their contract for the first time with GSA may use eOffer. eOffer is one of the first web-enabled applications that allows companies to electronically prepare and submit a Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contract proposal to the GSA contracting officer. eOffer creates an interactive, secure electronic environment that simplifies the contracting process from submission of proposal to contract award with the use of digital certificates. It is currently available for the following schedules: Schedule 70 (Information Technology), Schedule 541 (Advertising & Integrated Marketing Solutions), Schedule 871 (Professional Engineering Services), Schedule 520 (Financial Business Solutions) and Schedule 874 (Mission Oriented Business Integrated Services).

- **eMod** is a web-enabled application that allows contractors to electronically prepare and submit contract modifications to all MAS contracts. Contractors who have a current MAS contract with GSA can use

eMod to modify their contract conditions, including their product price list.

Get started today using GSA's online systems! Go to http://www.gsa.gov/. Powerup to view the latest training tutorials or online webcasts. If you have any questions or comments, please visit the Vendor Support Center (VSC) website at http://vsc.gsa.gov or call toll-free 877.495.4849.

ePay: Pay Your Industrial Funding Fee Online Within Scope

Did you know that you can pay your Industrial Funding Fee (IFF) online? GSA is pleased to provide contractors with the option of paying online via electronic check (direct debit) or credit card. It's fast, it's easy and it's secure.

Paying online benefits both GSA and contractors by eliminating the expense of processing paper checks, the delays inherent in sending checks through the mail and the need for post-payment research due to incorrect payment amounts or incorrect allocation of payments to the proper contract and report period.

After you report your sales online, you will be given two choices: Pay Online Now and Pay Online Later. If you are ready to pay and you have your bank account or credit card information ready, click Pay Online Now. Enter the appropriate information and you're done. It's as simple as that! If you are not ready to pay, or if someone else in your company handles payments, click Pay Online Later. Using this option will save

Just remember that the IFF payment is due within 30 days after the end of the quarter.

the sales you just reported and will allow you (or another representative) to return to the website to pay at a later time. Just remember that the payment is due within 30 days after the end of the quarter.

Either way you choose, you just saved the time it takes to write, mail and process a paper check. Also remember that neither GSA nor the Department of Treasury will retain any account data entered into the IFF payment process.

For more info, and to report sales and pay IFF online, check out: http://72a.gsa.gov/.

ANSWER and Millennia Program Managers Meetings Held in Arlington, VA

The ANSWER and Millennia Quarterly Program Management (QPM) Meetings were held on October 27 and 28, 2005, in Arlington, VA. Representatives from the ANSWER and Millennia Industry Partners were represented, as well as the GWAC Center Procuring Contracting Officers (PCOs).

Mr. Tom Howder, Acting Transition Director for GWACs in the new Integrated Technology Solutions (ITS) organization, presented the keynote address at both meetings. Mr. Howder stated that he wants to move things forward and maintain the health of the current GWAC portfolio. Some of the things that GSA wants to accomplish include: Building on current GWAC successes, looking at best practices, establishing a firm national presence, managing GWAC

acquisitions and maintaining excellent vendor relationships. Additionally, part of the nationalization of GWACs will include standardization, collection of information and a focus on what is best for the customer. Furthermore, he stated that he will look at the entire GWAC portfolio to ensure efficient access to contracts and to ensure that the GWACs complement other GSA contracts with minimum overlap. Mr. Howder announced that Robin Bourne will manage the operational aspects of GWACs.

At the Millennia QPM Meeting, Mr. Bob Suda, Assistant Commissioner for IT Solutions, Office of IT Integration, followed with a Back to Basics presentation; and Lisa Akers, Director of FEDSIM, presented FEDSIM's new initiatives. FEDSIM provides the greatest number of requirements to Millennia as well as combined acquisition and technical expertise. FEDSIM and the Millennia Industry Partners have developed excellent and professional relationships that have been the cornerstone of the Millennia Program.

Topics discussed at the ANSWER QPM included a discussion of the state of the ANSWER contract, upcoming ANSWER modifications, Contract Fundamentals and Regional Program Meetings.

GSA representatives provided an update on the GWAC Vendor Support Center (VSC) and the Government Task Order Management System (GTOMS) and congratulated the ANSWER Industry Partners for completing 100 percent of all the VSC requirements. GSA will take action to ensure only authorized personnel

can use the GWACs via e-Buy.

The QPM Meetings provide a platform for the Industry Partners, Enterprise GWAC Center Associates and Regional representatives to communicate current issues, resolve potential problems, discuss business opportunities and review future and ongoing initiatives. Both the ANSWER and Millennia PCOs are committed to building productive, enduring relationships with the ANSWER and Millennia Industry Partners.

GSA will take action to ensure only authorized personnel can use the GWACs via e-Buy.

SECTION 508 Provides Challenges and Opportunities

In 1998, an amendment to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 went into effect. Section 508 requires agencies to ensure that: 1) Federal employees with disabilities have access to and use of information and data that is comparable to the access and use by Federal employees who are not individuals with disabilities; and, 2) Members of the public with disabilities seeking information or services from an agency have access to and use of information and data that is comparable to the access to and use of information and data by members of the public who are not individuals with disabilities.

The law impacts the development, procurement, maintenance or use of all Electronic and Information Technology (EIT). Initially a waiver of this requirement was in place for purchases under the micro-purchase threshold (usually $2,500). Effective April 1, 2005, the waiver has expired. All EIT purchases are required to

conform to Section 508. It is the responsibility of the requiring official to assure that, when acquiring commercial items, any requirement for EIT includes the applicable 508 standards to the extent compliance with those standards can be met with supplies or services that are available in the commercial marketplace in time to meet the agency's delivery requirements.

For indefinite-quantity contracts where the specific requirement is unknown at time of award, such as GSA's MAS schedule or GWAC contracts, FAR 39.203(2) provides an exception. Contracting offices that award indefinite-quantity contracts must indicate to requiring and ordering activities which supplies and services the contractor indicates as compliant, and show where full details of compliance can be found (e.g., vendor's or other exact website location). FSS has met this requirement by encouraging contractors to include the 508 icon on GSA Advantage! for those items that meet 508 EIT accessibility standards. Schedule contractors can self-certify 508 compliance for their services/products. Contractors that show the 508 icon will distinguish their products and services from those that have not met the standard.

To make this system successful, we must have an assurance that the 508 icon truly represents the availability of useful information for our customers. To meet the 508 objectives within the schedule and GWAC programs, we need to have as many contractors as possible participate. Unfortunately, a recent small sample of contractors' websites displaying the 508 icon did not lead to easy access to 508 information.

Section 508 impacts the development, procurement, maintenance or use of all Electronic and Information Technology (EIT).

This is our message:

- Including the accessibility information (508) on your websites will provide an important method for your customers to conform to the law and will increase your sales opportunities.

- The GSA Advantage! 508 icon for appropriate equipment will highlight and differentiate your products from your competitors at the point where acquisition decisions are being made.

- The 508 icon must lead to easy access to meaningful accessibility information in order for the program to stay credible and succeed.

For more information about Section 508, see http://www.section508.gov/. For information on adding the 508 icon to your GSA Advantage see the Schedule Input Program (SIPv6.3) on the Vendor Support Center at http://vsc.gsa.gov.

Acquisition Regulations Update

You are a busy GSA contract holder. You are marketing your GSA contract, educating ordering activities on your contract, performing contract administration, responding to RFQs and completing current task and delivery orders. With all of this going on it's hard to keep up with the latest acquisition policy changes affecting your GSA Contract. Here's

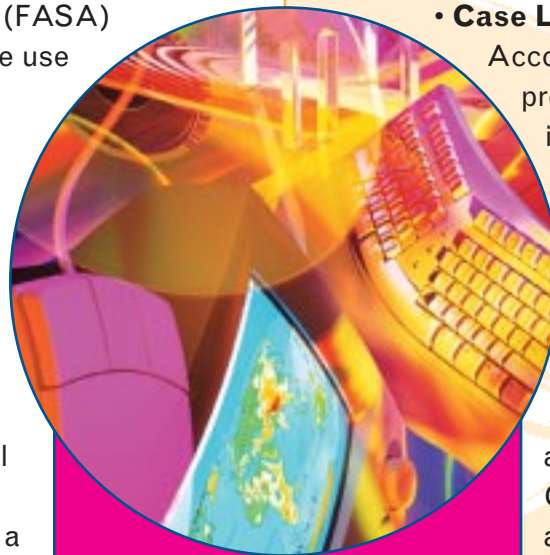a brief update to help you stay on top of current issues:

- **Additional Contract Types, Proposed FAR Rule**: This proposed rule is seeking to amend the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) to implement section 1432 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2004. Title XIV of the Act, referred to as the Services Acquisition Reform Act of 2003 (SARA), amended section 8002(d) of the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994 (FASA) to expressly authorize the use of time-and-materials (T&M) and labor-hour (LH) contracts for certain categories of commercial services under specified conditions. The proposed rule would allow an agency to purchase any commercial service on a T&M or LH basis if it has completed a determination and findings (D&F) containing sufficient facts and rationale to justify that a firm-fixed pricing arrangement is not suitable. A copy of the proposed rule is available at http://www.arnet.gov/far/ProposedRules/proposed.htm

- **Central Contractor Registration (CCR)- Taxpayer Identification, Proposed FAR Rule**: This proposed rule is seeking to amend the FAR to include the process of validating a Central Contractor Registration (CCR) registrant's taxpayer identification number (TIN) with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to improve data accuracy in the Federal procurement system. Interested parties should submit written comments to the FAR Secretariat on or before December 31, 2005, to be considered in the formulation of a final rule. A copy of the proposed is available at http://www.arnet.gov/GSAM/gsamproposed.html

- **Case Law Update**: A recent General Accountability Office (GAO) bid protest decision highlights the issues that may arise during administration of your GSA contract. In Quality Support, Inc. B-29464, December 13, 2004, there was a protest of the cancellation of an RFQ under the Federal Supply Schedule (FSS), after receipt and evaluation of quotations. GAO has ruled that a contracting agency only need to establish a reasonable basis for canceling a RFQ. In this case, the agency's lack of funding for the procurement established a reasonable basis for cancellation, because agencies cannot award contracts which exceed available funds. A copy of the case is available at http://www.gao.gov/decisions/bidpro/296716.htm

To be a successful contractor, it is important to be up-to-date on the latest acquisition policy changes affecting your public sector business. To learn more, please visit the websites referenced in this article.

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