

Issue No. 6
Mar. 2005

GSA

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MAS Offers: Time Is Money

The Federal Supply Service (FSS) continues to track and evaluate cycle times on both Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) offers and modifications. We are using two systems to track all new electronic and paper submittals from contractors. The names of these systems are ORS and FSS Online, not that their names matter to you.

Previously, MAS offers have been tracked in FSS Online, but now all modification requests will be tracked as well. Mass modifications will continue to be tracked and monitored by the mass-modification tool.

Contractors with DUNS (Dun & Bradstreet) numbers who are also active in the CCR (Central Contractor Registration) will be loaded in the system automatically when they submit an offer or modification request. Do your part by providing complete offers and information.

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Small Business
Subcontracting,
Final Rule

SBA-Small Business Government Contracting Programs' Subcontracting Final Rule, 69 FR 75820, December 20, 2004.

Summary: This final rule amends the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) regulations government small business subcontracting to address comments received in response to SBA's proposed rule on subcontracting, which was published in the Federal Register on October 20, 2003. The final rule also addresses comments in response to SBA's earlier proposed rule on contract bundling, which was published in the Federal Register on January 31, 2003.

Specifically, this final rule provides a list of factors to consider in evaluating a prime contractor's performance and good-faith efforts to achieve the requirements in its subcontracting plan. The final rule also authorizes the use of goals in subcontracting plans, and/or past performance in meeting such goals, as a factor in source selection when placing orders against Federal Supply Schedules, government-wide acquisition contracts (GWACs), and multi-agency contracts. In addition, this final rule lists the various categories of small businesses that must be afforded maximum practicable subcontracting and SBA's Commercial Market Representatives (CMRs) under the subcontracting assistance program. The final rule supplies guidance on Subcontracting Orientation and Assistance Reviews (SOARs), which CMRs perform to assist prime contractors in their efforts to understand and comply with the requirements governing the small business subcontracting assistance program. This will be reviewed periodically by your Industrial Operations Analyst (IOA) and Administrative Contracting Officer (ACO) and during Contractor Assistance Visits (CAV) visits.

"These are changing times and the Federal Supply Service is changing along with the times."

541 (AIMS), and the Financial and Business Solutions, Schedule 520 (FABS).

- In December, approximately 3400 Electronic Authentication Certificates became available at no cost for the contractor community. Information on how to obtain a certificate can be found on the eOffer Web site (<http://eoffer.gsa.gov/compliCert.html>). Please visit this site or our eOffer/eMod home page (<http://eoffer.gsa.gov/>) to see if you qualify.

Why do we mention this and why should you care?

First, eOffer and eMod provide you with the ability to submit proposals and modification requests electronically to FSS contracting officers. This will, hopefully, help speed up the contract review process.

Second, with the use of digital certificates, both parties can create and sign a fully electronic contract or contract modification.

Is that cool or what?

In order to qualify for a complimentary digital certificate, you must agree to the following conditions:

- You must be currently registered at the Central Contractor Register (CCR) and have a valid DUNS. Each organization may receive two digital certificates per DUNS.
- You will utilize the complimentary Electronic Authentication Certificate(s) issued to you for submitting electronic contract proposal(s) or contract modification(s) via eOffer/eMod. We recommend you have two registered negotiators per submission in case one is unavailable.

FSS Systems Improvements

These are changing times and the FSS is changing along with the times. Check out some of our systems improvements below:

- eOffer now applies four schedules: Information Technology, Schedule 70 (IT), Professional Engineering Services, Schedule 871 (PES), Advertising and Integrated Marketing Solutions, Schedule

• You may procure additional certificates from the following approved source industry partners who currently provide ACES Certificates for the GSA vendor community:

Digital Signature Trust

http://www.digsigtrust.com/federal/aces_public_1.html

Operational Research Consultants (ORC)

<http://www.aces.orc.com>

GSA continues to work with the eGov/eAuthentication team to include more certificate providers. As they are approved, we will accept certificates from more providers and will provide you with that information.

Digital Certificates

No cost complimentary Digital certificates are available for a limited time. Go to <http://eoffer.gsa.gov/compliCert.html> for more information or visit our eOffer/eMod home page <http://eoffer.gsa.gov> to see if you qualify. It's worth the trip.

While You Were Not Looking

Effective February 7, 2005, the IFF Lockbox address changed to:

General Services Administration
Accounts Receivable Branch (6BCDR)
P. O. Box 9017
St. Louis MO 63197-9017

Reminder: Just Charge It!

It just seems to follow that we should take this space to remind all of our GSA contractors that you can make Industrial Funding Fee (IFF) payments online with your credit card or EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer). This payment plan is safe, secure and efficient. You no longer have to worry about lost or misallocated payments and you no longer waste time and money with paper checks. It's time to change.

For more information contact your Administrative Contracting Officer (ACO) today or visit our Web site at <http://vsc.gsa.gov>.

More Important than the IFF? How Could that Be?

The IFF is important to GSA, but even more important to all of us—contractors, GSA, Congress, customer agencies and taxpayers—is knowing and staying within the scope of your GSA contract.

As you know, GSA is the premier acquisition agency of the federal government. That means that our agency does the most business with government agencies and we want the taxpayers to have faith in us to support their government's needs with integrity, ethics and compliance. This is all a part of the "Get It Right" program. GSA has to make sure that we live up to our obligations as public servants. You, our business partners, are a primary part of this equation. You are "our face" to our customers.

So, first of all, if you haven't done it in the last six months, you need to go back and review your GSA Schedule contract to refresh your mind—and your staff—on what you have agreed to do under your GSA contract and

what your responsibilities are in regard to your agreement with us. What is the scope of your contract? Can you answer that without looking?

We are sure that you have heard the newspaper accounts about GSA contracts which have reportedly gone astray. As you know there is a big campaign being pushed by GSA, the Defense Department and GSA contractor organizations to “just say no” when government agencies ask you to use your GSA schedule contract for products and services which are not covered by your contract. Customer agencies are busy and they are usually looking for a quick and easy way to get what they need and may not know all the contract vehicles available to them. There are ways to handle requirements which are not covered by GSA schedule contracts without violating regulations or the terms and conditions of your contract. Most things are covered under contract somewhere, if you know where to find them. We all want to stay on the right track and protect the integrity of our contracts.

One of the ways that GSA checks on its contracts and contractors is by the Contractor Assistance Visits (CAVs). CAVs result in a Contracting Assessment Initiative (CAI) Report Card that documents how you are performing on your contract. This information is available to you, to GSA and to our federal customers. It is a valuable resource to customers when they are picking contractors to do their work and have thousands to choose from. If your score is good, it is a fabulous marketing tool with potential customers. The new Administrative Report Card is an attachment to the latest edition (Spring 2005) of the “Steps to Success” brochure, which can be found in

the Vendor Support Center, <http://vsc.gsa.gov>.

We have added two new questions to the Administrative Report Card (that makes 27 questions) which will be checked out by your Industrial Operations Analyst (IOA) on his next Contractor Assistance Visit (CAV). These two new questions are Number 6 and Number 7 under "Ordering Information" as follows:

6. Did the contractor demonstrate compliance with the Trade Agreements Act?

Information on the Trade Agreements Act can be found in the following documents:

19 U.S.C. 2501-2582
FAR 25.4
GSAR 525.4

7. Did the contractor demonstrate that they comply with the scope of their contract?

Excellence in acquisition is the top priority for GSA. The “Get It Right” Plan reaffirms GSA’s

deep commitment to ensuring the proper use of GSA contracting vehicles and services. Conducting acquisitions the right way is critical to everyone. The FAR 8.4 provides valuable reference material on acquisitions. Customers and stakeholders can rely on GSA to “Get It Right”. For additional training on “Get it Right” please visit the FSS Center for Acquisition Excellence Virtual Campus through our Web site www.gsa.gov.

“We have added two new questions to the Administrative Report Card.”

More Information on Contractor Assistance Visits

We have confidence in our industry partners. We

know that if you understand what it is that you are supposed to do under your contract, you will try to do it. We know that if you know what you are expected to provide to the Industrial Operations Analysts (IOAs) when they visit, the CAVs and CASI Administrative Report Cards become much easier and we all gain from the experience.

So, here is a list of the questions on the CASI Administrative Report Card and some of the information you will be expected to provide:

1. Based on a sample of orders, is the contractor delivering on time an average of 95 percent or greater of the time?

During the CAV, the IOA will take a representative sample of orders shipped and determine the percentage that were shipped on time based upon the delivery terms of the contract. This indication of items shipped on time is purely a sample but should provide a good gauge of how successfully a contractor is meeting the delivery dates on orders. The contractor should provide the IOA with a listing of all orders/contracts active within the last twelve months (from the date of the visit) with contract due dates and actual delivery dates.

2. If there are teaming arrangements, do these arrangements address how customer service and warranty issues will be resolved?

During the CAV, the IOA will ask the contractor's Contract Administrator (CA) if there are teaming arrangements in place. If so, the IOA will examine the written arrangements and purchase orders placed against them to ensure that each member of the team is properly reporting their portion of the sale and paying

their portion of the IFF. The IOA will examine teaming agreements for issues which are out of scope or detrimental to contract scope.

3. If the contractor has entered into Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPAs), have they offered additional discounts?

During the CAV, the IOA will ask the contractor's Contract Administrator if any BPAs have been issued against the MAS contract. The IOA will examine BPAs for extent of additional discounts offered and confirm this via BPA and purchase order review.

4. Is the contractor honoring the warranty provisions of the contract?

During the CAV, the IOA will verify that the contractor is honoring the terms of their warranty and determine whether any contract warranty repair/replacement actions have occurred and note evidence through purchase document/ invoice review.

5. Are warranty claims being handled promptly and efficiently?

During the site visit, the IOA will examine warranty claim files to determine whether or not claims are being handled promptly and efficiently.

6. Did the contractor demonstrate compliance with the Trade Agreements Act?

During the CAV, the IOA will look at company control systems to ensure it has procedures in place to determine the origin of products acquired and whether they are in compliance with the Trade Agreements Act. See the above article for additional information on this new question.

“The CASI Report Cards become much easier and we all gain from the experience.”

7. Did the contractor demonstrate that they comply with the scope of their contract?

During the site visit, the IOA will review a list of all orders issued to determine whether orders are within the scope of the applicable GSA schedule contract. It's the old "Get It Right" stuff. This is very important to all of us. See the article in this issue for more information on "Get It Right."

8. If there are participating dealers, are the dealers listed and current in the contract?

During the CAV, the IOA will discuss with the contractor's CA and verify that all participating dealers were approved by the PCO at the time of contract award, or by issuance of a formal contract modification after award.

9. Is the Contractor complying with the Billing Responsibilities Clause G-FSS-913?

During the CAV, the IOA will spend time to ensure that the contractor has a system in place for all participating dealers to report their sales and they are complying with these procedures.

10. Is the pricelist being used by the contractor the current approved pricelist?

Prior to the CAV, the IOA may call the contractor to obtain a copy of the latest approved FSS Price List and will compare the prices, terms and conditions of the approved price lists to those being charged/applied to ordering agencies.

11. Is the Contractor complying with the Economic Price Adjustment Clause of the Contract?

Prior to the CAV, the IOA will contact the PCO and discuss Economic Price Adjustment requirements of the contract. The IOA will review records to verify pricing.

12. Is the contractor being proactive in proposing to add and/or delete items from the contract?

During the CAV, the IOA will review sales of open market items to federal agencies, for further review with ACO and PCO. IOA will also provide suggestions on how to add items to GSA contract if applicable.

13. Prices as listed in GSA Advantage! match those on the current approved price list or GSA Advantage! updates in progress?

During the CAV, the IOA will compare the contractor's currently approved price lists with the information loaded in GSA Advantage! to verify that the information is current. IOA will provide information on how to update GSA Advantage! If needed.

14. Is the contractor free from bankruptcy proceedings?

Under Contract Clause 52.232-13, Bankruptcy, contractors are required to notify the government if they file for bankruptcy. During the CAV, the IOA will verify contractor solvency and that they have no apparent financial difficulties.

"The CAV will ensure a system is in place for all participating dealers to report their sales."

15. Has the contractor made arrangements to accept payment by the purchase card?

Accepting the Government Credit Card is a contract requirement for purchases by federal agencies at or below the micro-purchase threshold of \$2,500. During the CAV, the IOA will ensure that the contractor has agreed to the Government Credit Card terms and conditions of sales and fee structure and have trained their personnel who actually take the orders.

16. Does the contractor accept purchase card payments for orders above the micro-purchase threshold?

While not obligated to accept Government Credit Card sales above \$2,500, many contractors find this is a convenient way to do business. During the CAV, the IOA will discuss this with the contractor's CA and review sales to federal agencies where large credit payments have occurred.

“Accepting the Government Credit Card is a requirement for micro-purchases below \$2,500.”

17. In the most recent period of the contract, not to exceed five years, are the contractor's Report of Sales 90 percent or greater, on time?

FSS Online Reports are examined by the ACO to ensure that the contractor has electronically filed 72A Reports accurately and on time.

During the CAV, the IOA will request a copy of your company's procedure for receiving and tracking a sales order throughout the life of the order. You should, also, provide how your company designates a GSA sale from your commercial sales or other non-GSA sales. If the company at the time of the visit does not have written procedures, the company POC should explain

how sales receipt and tracking are performed.

18. If there are dealers, are dealer sales being collected in the contractor's system and included in the 72A report?

During the CAV, the IOA will examine the contractor's system of collecting dealer sales to ensure that sales of contact items by participating dealers were at schedule pricing and the sales were reported accurately and on time. They will also verify that all such sales are included in the 72A Reports and that the IFF is being paid on these items.

19. For the past period of the contract not exceeding five years, has the contractor submitted the Industrial Funding Fee 90 percent or greater on time?

This is an easy one. FSS Online Reports will be examined to ensure that the IFF payments were accurate and on time.

During the CAV, the IOA will request a copy of your company's procedure that describes how and where you collect data for determining your 72A (IFF) payment amount, who in the organization is responsible to make the payment and who ensures that payments are made timely and represent 100 percent of your GSA sales. (Hint: e-Payments are the quickest, easiest and historically most accurate method of payment.)

20. Has the contractor complied with Change of Name and/or Novation Agreement requirement?

During the CAV, and in the course of administering the contract, the IOA will note if the contractor

has undergone a change of name or has been purchased by another company and whether the proper procedures have been followed.

21. Is the contractor registered with Central Contractor Registration (CCR)?

Since October 1, 2002, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) mandated that all federal agencies must use CCR for vendor registration in place of using the SF-129. IOA will verify this registration and acceptance of the FSS modification. Plus, if you aren't registered you don't get paid. Nobody wants that.

22. Is the basic contract load information correct?

During the CAV, the IOA will review contract load information and discuss this with the contractor's CA. It is very important that all published contract data is accurate. Data elements including: contract number, contract begin and end dates, minimum and maximum

order levels, Special Item Numbers (SINs) and ordering address information must be correct in the contractor's price list, GSA Advantage!, e-Library and FSS On-line/Contract Master File. Most contractors go wrong here because they moved or changed phone numbers and did not inform the PCO.

23. Are the 72A records located where the contractor says they are?

The location of the complete 72A records dictates which IOA zone performs the CAV review. The IOA will confirm where the records are located with the contractor's CA during the CAV and make this a part of their report.

24. If a Commercial or Individual Subcontracting Plan is required, did the contractor meet the goals specified in the Commercial Plan or is the contractor progressing toward meeting the goals specified in the Individual Subcontracting Plan?

For contracts where administration of the Subcontracting Plans have been delegated to the ACO (IT Center, Furniture Center, and Fort Worth General Products Center), the ACO will be reviewing the current subcontracting plan (Commercial plans must be updated every year) to make sure that the contractor has submitted their subcontracting plan reports (SF 294/SF 295) timely and that they are either meeting their goals or progressing towards meeting their goals.

25. Are the DUNS Numbers correct?

During the CAV, the IOA will verify that the DUNS numbers are correct. The ACO reviews the CAV input and confirms that the DUNS numbers are

properly loaded.

26. Is the contractor's contact for contract administration information (address, phone, fax, e-mail) correct?

When the contractor's point of contact changes, the PCO must be notified immediately in writing, this will be checked by the IOA during the CAV visit.

27. The contractor reduced prices to customers effective January 1, 2004, to reflect the lower (0.75 percent) IFF rate?

During the CAV the IOA will request copies of

"It is very important that all published contract data is accurate."

purchase orders to verify that you lowered your prices to customers to reflect the reduction in the IFF which was effective on January 1, 2004.

Extra Suggestions on Preparation for CAV:

- Whenever possible provide the IOA with as much of the requested information in electronic format and before the date of the visit (via email or fax). This will allow the IOA to review documents prior to the actual visit and decrease the amount of time spent at your facility.
- Make sure your subject matter experts are available to the IOA on the day of the actual visit. Please do not schedule a visit when key personnel are not available.

• Remember, these are just a few of the questions an IOA may ask during a visit. Please review the requirements contained in the "visit confirmation" which was sent to you.

Being prepared for the IOA visit saves everybody time and money. If you didn't, the IOA will ensure that you have taken corrective action."

**This is Your Chance to Let
GSA Know What You Think!**

Participate in the 2005 Business Partner Satisfaction Survey ... Coming soon to you via e-mail! It's not just another questionnaire. We really want your feedback!

As part of the GSA "Get It Right" initiative and in response to requests from the Department of Defense, GSA has instituted a contracts online project. The ultimate goal is to make the contract terms and conditions visible to our customers.

GSA has broken this project down into two phases. Phase One is currently underway. The focus of Phase One is making sure that all existing schedule contracts include the most current set of terms and conditions, and display the key FAR, GSAR, and FSS clauses through e-Library.

Phase Two, will focus on bringing pricelists online, and will get underway towards the end of 2005.

Right now, Phase One is in process. Over the next several months, most FSS contracts can expect to see an electronic "mass" modification, bringing their contract

terms and conditions up to the common baseline. Contractors who accept the modification will then have a new icon show up in e-Library. This icon will demonstrate to our customers that your contract terms and conditions are available electronically. Our customers are really anxious to see this change.

Advertising and Integrated Marketing Solutions, Schedule 541 (AIMS) contractors have already been brought on line, with Professional Engineering Services, Schedule 871 (PES), Management Organizational and Business Improvement Services, Schedule 874 (MOBIS), Information Technology, Schedule 70 (IT), and furniture schedules to follow. The timeline for the rest of the schedules is evolving rapidly, as

"Get It Right" Update

We would be remiss if we sent out a GSA Steps newsletter which did not mention the "Get It Right" campaign.

While "Get It Right" has many parts, Contracts OnLine is of special interest to contractors.

FSS takes this significant step forward.

Ordering agencies will use the online tool as part of their market research and in assuring themselves that your contract will provide them what they need.

GSA continues to focus on making sure that our industry partners and customers use GSA contracting vehicles in the manner for which they were intended. We want to make sure that buyers and sellers know how to get the job done properly.

Just in case you have forgotten what this is all about, let us remind you of the major goals.

1. Secure the best value for federal agencies and the American taxpayers through an efficient and effective acquisition process, while ensuring full and open competition, and instilling integrity and transparency in the use of GSA contracting vehicles.
2. Make acquisition policies, regulations, and procedures clear and explicit
3. Improve education/training of the federal acquisition workforce on the proper use of GSA contracting vehicles and services
4. Ensure compliance with federal acquisition policies, regulations and procedures. Non-compliance is unacceptable!
5. Communicate with the acquisition community, including agencies, industry partners, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Congress and other stakeholders regarding the use of GSA contracting vehicles. It is your responsibility to know the scope of your GSA Schedule, GWAC or SOP contract, to refuse



orders which are outside of the scope, to refer customers to the appropriate area of expertise for the situation and to educate your workforce about the elements of “Getting It Right.”

GSA and you, our industry partners, will prove that the use of streamlined acquisition vehicles can be efficient and effective while also being in compliance with acquisition rules. Thanks for being on the “Get It Right” team.

Power up to the contracting process

GSA/FSS Presents: **NO COST** Digital Certificates!

Process your offers and modifications through FSS' eOffer/eMod system.

Receive a “no cost” digital certificate. Digital certificates are secure and ensure the integrity of your proprietary data.

Log onto <http://eoffer.gsa.gov> and click on the purple link to see if you are qualified to get an **Electronic Authentication Certificate (Cert)** at no cost. Supplies are limited, so don't wait.

For information:

eOffer/eMod:

<http://eoffer.gsa.gov>

Digital Certificates:

www.digsigtrust.com

Central Contractor Registration:

www.ccr.gov

Business Partners Network (BPN):

www.bpn.gov

Vendor Support Center:

www.vsc.gsa.gov

For help call: 866-472-9114