



Federal Acquisition Insight

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Editor: Judy Steele

Featuring the Latest Acquisition Workforce News and Events

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From the Desk of the Director -- by Gloria Sochon

FAI is busy planning for the 2003 Federal Acquisition Conference (FAC 2003) to be held June 12 – 13 at the Sheraton Premiere in Tysons Corner, Virginia and June 17 – 18 at the Marriott in Huntsville, Alabama. Included in this month's newsletter is an article about training and events planned by JWOD for both FAC sessions. This edition of the newsletter also includes the second "e-Gov Corner" article which features a discussion of the Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS), one of the first successes of the Integrated Acquisition Environment. As we celebrate Earth Day this month, we hope you will note the featured article discussing training opportunities on "Green Purchasing." "Green Purchasing" is also the topic of the next Lunchtime Learning Seminar scheduled for Tuesday, April 22, 2003 at the main GSA auditorium. There is more information on this upcoming seminar in the article included below. We are also including several articles on the latest rules and proposed rules to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and an article about GSA's Applied Learning Center.

We hope you find this information useful. And be sure to share it with your colleagues. We welcome any comments and suggestions for articles for publication in *FAI Insight*. If you'd like to submit an article for publication in the newsletter, please contact the Editor, Judy Steele, at (202) 501-4994 or judy.steele@gsa.gov.

Catch Up with JWOD at FAC 2003! – by Annmarie Hart Bookbinder

Catch up with the latest Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program news at the 2003 Federal Acquisition Conference and Exhibitor Fair (FAC). This year's JWOD training at FAC includes a unique breakout session entitled "Small Business Acquisition—JWOD/SBA" that will cover both the JWOD Program and small business topics. Hosted by Dr. Rita Wells, Deputy Executive Director, Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, and Linda Williams, Associate Administrator for Government Contracting, Small Business Administration, this session will feature new and innovative techniques on performance based service contracting, prime vendor contracts, privatization, purchase cards, and other topics to assist contracting/acquisition professionals in meeting socioeconomic goals. The speakers will also share success stories of JWOD-associated agencies and small business firms mobilizing to meet the demands of Federal agencies, including security needs. The latest information affecting small business procurement programs will also be included.

FAC 2003 is being held in both the metro Washington, D.C. area at the Sheraton Premiere at Tysons Corner, VA, June 12-13, and in Huntsville, AL at the Huntsville Marriott, June 17-18. The "Small Business Acquisition—JWOD/SBA" breakout session is scheduled for the second day of the conference from 2:30 p.m. to 3:45 p.m. The complete agenda, as well as information on exhibitors, hotels and transportation, can be found on the FAC 2003 website at www.fac2003.org.

For more information on JWOD, check out the JWOD website at www.jwod.gov!

e-Gov Corner: Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS) – by Lisa Cliff

The Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS) was launched to enable the Government to make the best award decisions and to reward high quality industry performers. This past performance tool is one of the first successes of the Integrated Acquisition Environment (IAE), President Bush's e-Government initiative aimed at streamlining the Federal acquisition process. It is one of the many systems providing supplier data that make up the Business Partner Network (BPN).

PPIRS is a web-enabled application that provides the acquisition community timely and relevant past performance reports on contractors in order to make effective source selection decisions. Confidence in a prospective contractor's ability to perform satisfactorily is an important factor in making a best value selection. This system is the central warehouse for final performance assessment reports received from various collections systems such as the National Institutes of Health's Contractor Performance System (CPS) used by most civilian agencies; the Army's Past Performance Information Management System (PPIMS) used by

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(E-Gov Corner: PPIRS, cont.)

the Army, Defense Information Systems Agency, and the Defense Intelligence Agency; as well as the Contractor Performance Assessment Rating System (CPARS) used at the Department of Air Force and the Department of the Navy. There is controlled access for all source selection officials across the entire Federal government. The information is “Sensitive But Unclassified” and user IDs and passwords are required to access the system. Decision-makers can look up contractors’ performance on contracts for the same or similar goods or services and determine the probability of receiving high-quality products and services on time and within cost. The information can be used to choose between different suppliers, conduct meaningful discussions, establish the competitive range, and make award decisions.

Industry plays a vital role in providing the information that goes into PPIRS. In most cases, contractors can comment on their report card or performance assessment and provide additional information to ensure the Government has relevant and current details. Contractors should be certain all information is accurate. The report card process is used to communicate feedback and additional performance incentives for ongoing contracts. Contractors obtain access to PPIRS through the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) process, another facet of the BPN. This access provides the means to review their own assessments. The OFPP Guide to Past Performance, as well as agency supplemental regulations, mandates when assessments are required on contracts. One goal of e-Gov is to ensure contracting officers and source selection officials have access to the best data possible across agency lines. It is a goal of the e-Gov effort to make industry aware of the information and enable them access to enhance accountability for all involved in the procurement process.

PPIRS is playing an important part in the e-Gov mission of simplifying and unifying business processes within the Federal government acquisition process. For more information on PPIRS, visit www.PPIRS.gov. For more information on IAE, visit www.egov.gsa.gov. To contact IAE, email integrated.acquisition@gsa.gov

Green Purchasing Training Opportunities – by Dana Arnold, OFEE

Understanding the myriad green purchasing programs and what is required of purchasers can be very frustrating for the acquisition community. The Office of the Federal Environmental Executive (OFEE), the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP), and others offer green purchasing training to agency contracting, purchase card, environmental, and facilities staff. Individual agencies also offer green purchasing training for their staff. This article highlights some of these training opportunities.

CON 301: OFEE provides a 1.5 - 2 hour green purchasing session as part of the Defense Acquisition University's CON 301, Executive Contracting course. This session covers the reasons for Federal green purchasing programs; myths about green purchasing; the legal mandates; the applicable FAR provisions; the basics of buy recycled, environmentally preferable purchasing and buy biobased programs; product sources; and lots of examples of how agencies are implementing the green purchasing programs. The session also includes a demonstration of product samples.

Green Purchasing: OFEE and OFPP will offer our green purchasing training to individual agencies upon request. The PowerPoint presentation is available on our website, www.ofee.gov, under Green Purchasing. Several agencies, including the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Air Force, have also made their green purchasing presentations available on-line. Like the OFEE training, these courses cover the legal and FAR requirements, the basics of various green purchasing programs, product sources, and examples. They also cover agency specific policies. There are links to agencies' green purchasing programs from the OFEE website, under "Related Links."

Train-the-trainer: Developed by OFEE and the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM), this course is designed to train agency staff in how to provide green purchasing training. Environmental or procurement staff from the Departments of Commerce, Energy, Interior, Transportation, Veterans Affairs, Justice, Coast Guard, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Defense Logistics Agency, AMTRAK, GSA, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Air and Space Administration, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Architect of the Capitol recently completed the train-the-trainer course. In addition to the topics covered in CON 301, it also addresses targeting different audiences, program implementation strategies (with an emphasis on tracking and reporting), metrics, and compliance. The PowerPoint presentation and accompanying script is available on OFEE's website under Green Purchasing. OFEE and USACHPPM will offer the course again in the future if we receive sufficient requests.

Purchase Card Training: OFEE, OFPP, and USACHPPM offer green purchasing training tailored to purchase cardholders. Several agencies, including the Department of State and EPA, offer electronic versions of green purchasing training for their purchase cardholders. There are links to these agencies' green purchasing web pages from the OFEE website, under "Related Links."

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(Green Purchasing Training, cont.)

Other Sources: Green purchasing training is available from both public and private sector sources. The following is a list of some public sources of green purchasing training. Contact these sources to discuss the scope of training and costs:

--Dana Arnold, White House Task Force on Waste Prevention and Recycling, arnold.dana@ofee.gov: OFEE's green purchasing and train-the-trainer courses.

--Cynthia Vallina, OFPP, vallina@omb.eop.gov: Greening the Government Executive Orders and comprehensive green procurement.

--Susan Weber, White House Task Force on Waste Prevention and Recycling, susan.weber@ofee.gov: Buying recycled content products, environmentally preferable purchasing, biobased products, affirmative procurement programs.

--Pat Rippey and Beth Martin, U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine, pat.rippy@apg.amedd.army.mil or beth.martin@apg.amedd.army.mil: USACHPPM's green purchasing and train-the-trainer courses.

--Richard Langston, DOE, richard.langston@hq.doe.gov: Environmental procurement policy.

--Alison Thomas, DOE, Federal Energy Management Program, alison.thomas@ee.doe.gov: Energy-efficient products.

--Shabnam Fardanesh, DOE, Federal Fleet AFV Program, shabnam.fardanesh@ee.doe.gov: Alternative fuel vehicles, alternative fuels, energy efficiency, FAST Federal fleet data collection system.

--Richard Keller, Maryland Environmental Service, rkell@menv.com: Buying recycled content products, recycling contracts, affirmative procurement, environmentally preferable purchasing, waste prevention and recycling – with an emphasis on state and local programs.

--Sandra Cannon, DOE, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, sandra.cannon@pnl.gov: Environmentally preferable purchasing/life cycle purchasing.

Restructuring of FAR Committees -- by Jerry Zaffos

The FAR Council will soon make improvements to the procedures for developing changes to the FAR. The Civilian Agency Acquisition Council (CAAC) and the Defense Acquisition Regulation Council (DAR Council) serve as the FAR Council's administrative bodies. They are responsible for proposing recommended FAR changes for FAR Council approval. Twenty-eight standing committees, responsible for drafting the initial recommended FAR changes, support the CAAC and DAR Council.

The FAR Council is reorganizing these 28 committees into five teams. Each team chair will be organizationally accountable to one of the FAR Council signatories—DOD, GSA, or NASA. In addition to representatives from both military and civilian agencies, the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) will participate on each team as well. Team responsibilities will be the priority work of each member, enhancing responsiveness and quality of team recommendations to the CAAC and DAR Council. The Councils will review team recommendations concurrently as opposed to the current sequential review practice. And finally, the FAR Council will provide upfront guidance to teams and may, when appropriate, refer uncomplicated changes directly to CAAC and DAR Council staffs for drafting. While maintaining the benefits of the current process of full deliberation and agency coordination, the FAR Council expects these revisions to enhance its responsiveness to requests for FAR changes.

For more information on this or the following FAR articles, contact Jerry Zaffos at gerald.zaffos@gsa.gov or (202) 208-6091.

FAR Update by Jerry Zaffos – FAC 2001-13 Published

Federal Acquisition Circular (FAC) 2001-13 has been published. FAC 13 amends the FAR as follows:

--Contract Types for Commercial Item Acquisitions: indicates that award fee and performance or delivery incentives based solely on factors other than cost may be used in conjunction with firm fixed price and fixed price with economic price adjustment contracts and do not change the nature of those contracts.

--Preference for U.S. Flag Vessels: Subcontracts for Commercial Items—ensures compliance with cargo preference statutes if ocean cargo is destined for Government use without disrupting commercial delivery systems.

--Federal, State and Local Taxes: clarifies the use of and updates the language in the FAR clauses pertaining to Federal, State and Local Taxes.

--Progress Payment Requests Under Indefinite-Delivery Contracts: requires contractors to account for and submit progress payment requests under individual delivery orders as if each order constitutes a separate contract, unless otherwise specified in the contract.

FAR Update by Jerry Zaffos – Proposed Rules on Contract Bundling

FAR Case 2002-029 proposes to implement the recommendations of OMB report “A Strategy for Increasing Federal Contracting Opportunities for Small Business” by:

- Applying the definition of bundling to orders under an indefinite quantity contract awarded to two or more sources of supply under a single solicitation; and also to orders placed against an indefinite quantity contract under a Federal Supply Schedule contract, Governmentwide acquisition contract (GWAC), or multi-agency contract (MAC).
- Requiring coordination of the acquisition plan with the small business specialist and OSDBU when substantial bundling is involved.
- Reducing the threshold for “substantial bundling” to \$7 million or more for DOD; \$5 million or more for NASA, GSA and DOE; and \$2 million or more for all other agencies.
- Revising documentation requirements to support substantial bundling to include identification of alternative strategies that would reduce or minimize the scope of the bundling and the rationale for not using the alternatives.
- Requiring OSDBUs to conduct periodic reviews of an agency’s small business program, adequacy of documentation justifying bundling, and efforts to reduce justified bundling.
- Requiring an assessment of contractor compliance with subcontracting goals in performance evaluations.

Concurrent with the issuance of the proposed changes to the FAR, the Small Business Administration issued proposed parallel changes to its regulations (13 CFR 125). The proposed rules are available at <http://www.arnet.gov/>

Federal Supply Schedules Opened Up to State and Local Governments

On January 23, 2003, GSA published a proposed rule to implement Section 211 of the E-Government Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-347). Section 211 authorizes the Administrator of GSA to provide for the use by State and local governments of its Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) to acquire automated data processing equipment (including firmware), software, supplies, support equipment and services. State and local governments include any State, local, regional, or tribal government, or any instrumentality thereof (including any local educational agency or institution of higher education). Participation is voluntary on the part of FSS contractors. Contractors would have the option of deciding whether they will accept orders placed by State or local government buyers. Similarly, there is no obligation on State or local government buyers to use the schedules.

GSA hosted a second public meeting on March 10, 2003, to continue the dialogue between the government and interested parties on the implementation of Section 211.

The proposed rule to implement Section 211 is found at:

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/14mar20010800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2003/pdf/03-1536.pdf>. The public comment period closed March 24, 2003. For more information, contact Linda Nelson of the FAR staff at Linda.nelson@gsa.gov or (202) 501-1900.

Lunchtime Learning Seminar on Commercial Item Pricing a Great Success!

FAI and the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) held a Lunchtime Learning Seminar on Commercial Item Pricing on Tuesday, March 25, 2003 at the Department of Interior Auditorium. The two speakers were Patrick Conley, Contract Price/Cost Analyst from GSA's Federal Supply Service, and Deborah Bartlett, Contracting Program Director, DAU. The seminar, which was very interactive and included two demos, was well received and well attended. The powerpoint presentations from the seminar will be posted online shortly to the FAI website at www.gsa.gov/fai.

The next Lunchtime Learning Seminar will be April 22, 2003 and will feature Dana Arnold from the Office of the Federal Environmental Executive (OFEE), speaking on "What is Green Contracting." The lunchtime learning seminars provide a quick and easy way to find out the latest on "hot topics in acquisition," as well as creating networking opportunities and a way for professionals to fulfill their continuous learning requirements. The seminars are part of the FAI/DAU ongoing partnership on acquisition workforce development. To register for the April seminar, send an email to Judy Steele at judy.steele@gsa.gov or call (202) 501-4994.

What is GSA's Applied Learning Center?

The Applied Learning Center (ALC) concept was born out of a number of needs experienced by GSA. First, the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 set educational requirements for acquisition professionals and only approximately 23% of GSA met those requirements in June 2002. Second, as part of its workforce transformation strategy, GSA is shifting its focus from attending training to demonstrating proficiencies in key competency areas. The ALC offers a mechanism to address both of these needs.

The solution is a program of online assessments and simulations that allow GSA associates to demonstrate their proficiency while also gaining college credit for what they know. This provides a win-win for both GSA and its associates. The assessments and simulations (which require the application of knowledge in designed scenarios) are very rigorous, which one would expect if successful completion equates to college credit. GSA will support its workforce in meeting Clinger-Cohen requirements and ensure competency in key areas, while associates can get credit for what they have learned and demonstrate readiness for promotion.

GSA is testing the ALC concept in a pilot that runs from Oct 2002 to April 2003. Over 400 contracting professionals have taken or are taking the assessment. The program allows associates to prepare for accredited assessments through pre-tests and study aids. When ready, they take assessments which offer up to 9 college credits toward the 24-hour business requirement of Clinger-Cohen, and simultaneously demonstrate competency in 3 of the 11 mandated GSA training courses.

The ALC is completely on-line and self-paced. Associates can spend as much time in preparation as they need, utilizing the specific study aids that are identified with each competency. These study aids are also entirely on-line. Only when associates successfully pass the pretest are they allowed to take the corresponding accredited assessment.

For the pilot, assessments were developed for 30% of the competencies identified by FAI for the 1102 series. The results of the pilot will be presented to a Board of Directors, who will decide whether the concept is viable for launch into full development of all competencies identified for the 1102 series. Should the Board decide to move forward, the 1102 program will be fully developed, possibly followed by programs for other series.

Initial findings of the pilot are very encouraging, with a number of associates gaining college credit. GSA is still collecting data, but the initial indications are that this is the beginning of a very beneficial program for both GSA and its associates. For more information, contact Carol Koffinke at (202) 275-4273.

