



Federal Acquisition Insight

May 2004 Edition

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From the Desk of the Director

by Gloria Sochon

A key initiative of the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) is improving the training provided to the acquisition workforce. As part of this initiative, FAI is partnering with the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) to adapt DAU's curriculum for use by other agencies and to develop joint training on targeted issues. We will provide news on this initiative as it develops. In the meantime, we encourage you to explore and take advantage of DAU's Continuous Learning Center and Acquisition Community Connection. Look inside for more information on these excellent resources.

Other training opportunities available include:

- GSA's Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) Center for Acquisition Excellence Virtual Campus for up-to-date information on FSS acquisition programs.

General Services Administration (GSA) Hosts Republic of Korea's Procurement Delegation

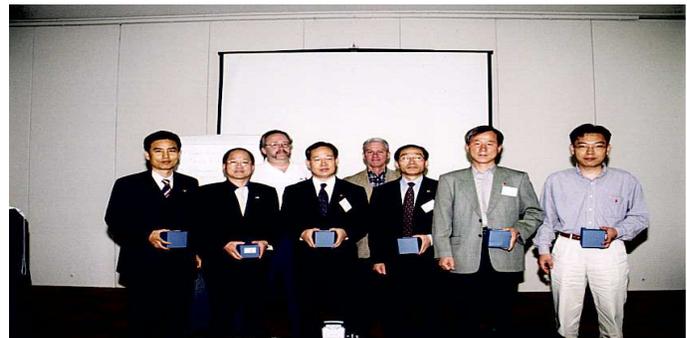
On April 19 and 20, 2004, David Drabkin, Deputy Associate Administrator for Acquisition Policy, General Services Administration, hosted the second bi-lateral meeting between GSA and the Public Procurement Service, Republic of Korea in Williamsburg, VA. This meeting was a continuation of the cooperative exchange between GSA and the Public Procurement Service, Republic of Korea. In the past, employees of the procurement group have worked at the GSA offices, and Mr. Drabkin traveled to the Republic of Korea for the first bi-lateral meeting in December 2003.

The purpose of this meeting was to exchange information about government procurement. Notably, officials from the Korean procurement delegation presented information on its UN-award-winning e-procurement system; and GSA presented information on its Multiple Award Schedules (MAS) program and workforce competency assessment tool.

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- The 2004 Federal Acquisition Conference and Exposition for information on Administration initiatives shaping the acquisition environment and new tools to help you achieve success. Learning how the JWOD program can support your agency's needs is just one example of the knowledge you will gain. Participants will also hear from the Federal Acquisition Council Working Groups. Inside, we highlight the activities of one of these, the Competitive Sourcing Working Group, and tools it has developed to help supervisors and employees understand the how and why of competitive sourcing. Learn more at FACE 2004!

This issue also features articles on the testimony of Mr. Safavian, the nominee for Administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy; GSA's cooperative exchange with the Republic of Korea's Public Procurement Service; and the benefits of online procurement services and blanket purchase agreements. ■



Procurement Delegation from Republic of Korea Visits



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Republic of Korea Procurement Delegation Visits *(continued from page 1)*

GSA associates Matthew Urnezis, Teresa Sorrenti, Neal Fox, Gloria Sochon, and Al Matera were guest speakers at this meeting. Among those present from the Public Procurement Service, Republic of Korea were Hyung-Jong Min, Director General, Planning and Management Office, Jae-Bo Ryu, Director, Procurement Policy Division and Myeong-Ki Baek, Director, Information Planning Division.

Future bi-lateral meetings are being scheduled with the Republic of Korea to focus on education and training and GATT Compliance. A future meeting is scheduled for August in Seoul, Republic of Korea. GSA is also investigating opportunities for other bi-lateral cooperative exchanges with our NAFTA partners, Canada and Mexico. ■

Inside the Federal Acquisition Council's Competitive Sourcing Working Group

By Scott Cameron, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, Department of the Interior

Federal Acquisition Insight is pleased to present a new in-depth series on the Federal Acquisition Council's Working Groups. Stay tuned for updates on other working groups in upcoming editions.

The Federal Acquisition Council's Competitive Sourcing Working Group has undertaken a number of projects since its inception. The first two products were a "Manager's Guide to Competitive Sourcing," and "What You Always Wanted to Know about the New Circular A-76." The "Manager's Guide" is intended to help a first or second level supervisor who is unfamiliar with procurement understand the basics of competitive sourcing. The goal is to inform the supervisor so that he or she can answer basic employee questions about competitive sourcing, as well as being aware of things that need to be taken into account from management's perspective as an organization undertakes competitive sourcing. The second document is intended for the federal employee who is unfamiliar with Circular A-76 and needs some basic information about what competitive sourcing entails and why the government is pursuing it. Both documents are available from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)/Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) website at the following address: www.acqnet.gov/AcqNet/Library/BestPractices/

The second edition of the "Manager's Guide," published February 2004, and available at www.results.gov/fac-manager-guide2.pdf, includes a flowchart that relates the connections between competitive sourcing, the annual FAIR Act inventory, the budget process, and strategic management of human capital. The important point with respect to this chart is that competitive sourcing should not be performed in isolation, but instead should be integrated with other management initiatives and business processes in an agency. It needs to tie into workforce planning, and be taken into account during the annual budget process. This second edition also includes a discussion of best practices in competitive sourcing identified at a number of federal agencies.

The working group has reviewed and provided comments on a four-day training course developed by USDA Graduate School that is intended to provide students with a detailed exposure to competitive sourcing. The working group ensured that this government-associated organization was effectively communicating both the content and tone of competitive sourcing in its training programs for government employees and other students with an interest in this topic.

The working group is currently working with the Federal Acquisition Council and OMB to develop a web-based video on competitive sourcing. The purpose of the video is to showcase agency best practices and provide basic information about competitive sourcing in a straightforward and easy to understand audiovisual presentation.

Discussions are also underway with OPM and OMB concerning the appropriate use of Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA), popularly known as "early out" authority, and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP) authority popularly known as "buy-out" authority, to assist any employee who may be negatively affected by implementation of competitive sourcing decisions. To date, the Department of the Interior and several other agencies have received such authority.

In the future, the working group will examine how to improve interagency consistency on coding under the FAIR Act.

For more information on the working group and its activities, please contact Scott Cameron at scott_cameron@ios.doi.gov. ■



By Annmarie Hart Bookbinder, Committee for Purchase From People Who are Blind or Severely Disabled

The Federal Acquisition Conference and Expo (FACE) is a forum for acquisition professionals and policy makers to share their insights and experiences. FACE also provides a full range of training on the latest acquisition issues and an opportunity to review exhibitors' products and services—including those of the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program.

Leon A. Wilson, Jr., Executive Director of the Committee for Purchase From People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, and ex officio member of the Federal Acquisition Council, will participate in a breakout session entitled "Using Interagency Contracts," a segment of the "Smart Contracting" track. During this session, Mr. Wilson will discuss why the JWOD Program is a viable option in meeting the needs of today's acquisition professionals.

Representatives of the JWOD Program will also be on hand in the exhibit hall to provide attendees with information on the latest products and services available through JWOD-participating nonprofit agencies, with an emphasis on meeting your agency's specific needs.

FACE 2004 will take place June 2-3 in Washington, D.C. and June 22-23 in Dayton, OH. For more information on the specific day and time of the "Using Interagency Contracts" session, or any other breakout session, please visit www.fai.gov/face. For more information on the JWOD Program, please visit www.jwod.gov. ■

Inside the Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) Center for Acquisition Excellence Virtual Campus

By Fran Suggs, Acquisition Program Support Division, Federal Supply Schedule, General Services Administration

Keeping up to date on GSA/FSS acquisition programs has never been easier. GSA opened the FSS Center for Acquisition Excellence Virtual Campus in March 2003 to provide Multiple Award Schedules training to a wider audience than those who attend traditional classroom training. The site has recently been redesigned to provide state-of-the-art online training offering expanded functionality, in-depth courses, reference links, bulletin boards, course surveys for user feedback, an Ask the Expert feature, videos, and it is 508 compliant. Online courses can be found in the Learning Center and students can register for classroom sessions as well.

The following GSA Schedule courses are now online and more are planned:

- Using GSA Schedules – Customers
- Cooperative Purchasing
- How to Become a Contractor – GSA Schedules Program

When students first access the FSS Center for Acquisition Excellence Virtual Campus, they are asked to register. The system can track accomplishments, print out training certificates, and maintain an ongoing training record for each student. Students have access to their own records.

The Virtual Campus provides accredited training, acquisition resources, expertise on GSA Schedules, and links to other training sites. It includes the latest GSA Schedules-relevant information for customer agencies authorized to order from GSA Schedules, for firms interested in becoming Schedule contractors, for FSS personnel doing GSA Schedules contracting, and for state and local governments interested in the Cooperative Purchasing Program. The FSS Virtual Campus is available 24-7 and online courses are available at no costs to students.

To access the FSS Virtual Campus, visit <http://www.fsstraining.gsa.gov>. For more information, please contact Fran Suggs at fran.suggs@gsa.gov. ■

Focus on Training

The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) offers several online options for continuous learning. These resources are available to anyone interested and there is no charge or fee to use them. DAU's Continuous Learning Center (<http://clc.dau.mil>) offers easy access to multiple continuous learning opportunities, performance support and information. The site offers courses that help fulfill continuous learning point requirements and does not offer certification courses. Completing continuous learning courses contributes to students' professional development and helps them keep up-to-date on new and emerging policies in acquisition.

Students first register on the site and then may visit the Learning Center link to gain access to a list of free classes. (Classes may be viewed without logging in, but logging in enables students to track their continuous learning points and receive a completion certificate.)

Classes offered through the Continuous Learning Center include: Performance-Based Services Acquisition, Commercial Item Determination, Market Research Training Modules, and Reverse Auctioning. To view a full list of courses visit the CLC at <http://clc.dau.mil>.

The Acquisition Community Connection (<http://acc.dau.mil>) is an additional DAU website which provides acquisition technology and logistics information and access to experts and peers. The Acquisition Community Connection also links to the Continuous Learning Center. Both sites are great resources for acquisition personnel! ■

Safavian Nominated for Administrator of Office of Federal Procurement Policy

On April 29, 2004, David Safavian testified at a nomination hearing before the U.S. Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs. At the hearing, Mr. Safavian, who is a nominee for Administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, outlined his priorities on improving the federal acquisition system and commitment to taxpayer confidence in the acquisition process.

Mr. Safavian stressed the importance of recruiting, retaining, and training acquisition personnel. He reinforced the exigency of the situation by highlighting that 40 percent of procurement professionals will be eligible for retirement in the next five years. He also mentioned a need for the establishment of a career development path for acquisition professionals. Mr. Safavian established his desire to strengthen the alliance between the Federal Acquisition Institute and the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) to leverage DAU's training resources for civilian agencies.

Other proposed initiatives include efforts to make the competitive sourcing process more transparent through a database on competitive sourcing data, opening federal contracting to more disadvantaged businesses especially those with service-disabled veterans, and full deployment of the next generation Federal Procurement Data System.

Mr. Safavian concluded his testimony by stressing his commitment to reviewing suspension and debarment policies to ensure that the government only works with responsible contractors. ■

OFPP Issues Memorandum Encouraging Use of Online Procurement Services

On May 12, 2004, the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) issued a memorandum (www.acqnet.gov/notes/commercialtechniques.pdf) encouraging agencies to acquire commercial items, including goods and services, through the use of commercially available online procurement services. The memo cited an increase in operational efficiency, taxpayer savings, and supplier participation with the current use of commercially available online procurement techniques.

Online procurement services are currently being used to automate the procurement process by assisting in the identification of potential suppliers, communication of specifications, and collection of bid response data. These online services also allow reverse auction functions and purchase from electronic catalogs. The Office of Federal Procurement Policy encourages agencies to reap these benefits by exploring the increased use of online procurement services. ■

Accreditation Paper Now Available on FAI Website

Standards for the contracting series (GS 1102) include academic education. FAI provides information to help you determine if a degree or college course is from an accredited institution. For more information, visit <http://www.fai.gov/pubres/research.htm> to download a copy of "Accreditation of Colleges and Universities in the United States," a background paper on the accreditation system for institutions of higher learning in the U.S. ■



The Benefits of Blanket Purchase Agreements

By Dana Arnold, Office of the Federal Environmental Executive

When the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) decided to create a Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) which directs EPA purchasers to green desktop office supplies, we first took a look at what other federal agencies had done in this area. The information we found was so interesting that we decided to compile it into a document to share with all federal agencies and others working to green their organization's purchases.

That document, "Buying Green Online: Greening Government E-Procurement of Office Supplies" is now available at http://www.epa.gov/epp/pubs/buying_green_online.pdf.

Here are some of the research findings highlighted in the report:

Many federal agencies (outlined in a chart on Page 10 - 13 of the report) are currently buying office supplies through Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPAs). BPAs are simplified methods of filling anticipated repetitive needs for supplies or services by establishing a contract or contracts with qualified sources of supply. Under BPAs, the office supplies are often accessed via agency or facility specific e-catalogs.

Agencies cited:

- 1) cost savings through group discounts,
- 2) reduced time spent on routine processing of orders,
- 3) improved tracking and monitoring capabilities, and
- 4) increased ability to direct purchasers to products meeting agency purchasing priorities as the main reasons for buying office supplies through BPAs.

Some agencies have made an effort to increase the number of green products available for purchase through these BPAs. Most of these have limited the products available for purchase to those meeting EPA's recycled content guidelines (CPG products). Here are some of the results:

- DOE's Sandia National Laboratories reported a 30 percent increase in CPG products from FY00 to FY02.
- NASA's Kennedy Space Center increased their purchases of CPG products by 20 percent between FY01 and FY02.

EPA has created a set of green criteria for office supplies which meet or exceed EPA's recycled content guidelines and include additional guidelines covering other product environmental attributes, such as process chlorine free, rechargeable, non-toxic, non-ozone depleting substances, etc. This criteria is located in Appendix A of the Buying Green Online Report.

Bottom line: BPAs for office supplies and other products and services represent opportunities to green organizational purchases efficiently and to improve tracking of the green purchases (and others, such as purchases from small businesses or from JWOD) made by your organization. The better the federal community understands these vehicles, the more chance we will have to use them to direct our purchasers to greener products and services. ■

See You at FACE 2004: Partnering for Performance!

The Federal Acquisition Conference and Exposition 2004 is fast approaching. This year's conference is being held June 2-3 at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City and June 22-23 at the Dayton Marriott. The conference features a great line-up of speakers, breakout sessions and exhibitors. FACE 2004 is a fabulous training opportunity, providing attendees with 10.5 CLPs. Acquisition professionals attending the Washington, DC venue may attend the awards dinner honoring the achievements of their peers. Conference pre-registration closes May 21, 2004 but on-site registration is available at both locations. For more information on the conference and to view the agenda, please visit www.fai.gov/face. We look forward to seeing you and your colleagues at FACE 2004! ■

We thank guest authors for their contributions and views and present these as part of Federal Acquisition Insight for our readers' information

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