



Benefits of the General Services Administration (GSA) Schedule



An introduction to the GSA Schedules Program and its process



Learning Objectives

- At the end of this module, you will be able to understand:
 - More about the General Services Administration (GSA) Schedule Program and how to use it to help your business.
 - Basic steps to become an approved supplier under a GSA Schedule.
 - GSA contract types awarded to vendors for products or services
 - Guidelines for formation of contract teams, particularly among small businesses, to provide solutions to government purchasers.

The logo of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) is located in the top left corner. It features a circular emblem with the text "FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION" around the perimeter and the year "1933" in the center. The emblem is set against a dark blue background.

About FDIC Small Business Resource Effort

- The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) recognizes the important contributions made by small, veteran, and minority and women-owned businesses to our economy. For that reason, we strive to provide small businesses with opportunities to contract with the FDIC. In furtherance of this goal, the FDIC has initiated the FDIC Small Business Resource Effort to assist the small vendors that provide products, services, and solutions to the FDIC.
- The objective of the Small Business Resource Effort is to provide information and the tools small vendors need to become better positioned to compete for contracts and subcontracts at the FDIC. To achieve this objective, the Small Business Resource Effort references outside resources critical for qualified vendors, leverages technology to provide education according to perceived needs, and offers connectivity through resourcing, accessibility, counseling, coaching, and guidance where applicable.
- This product was developed by the FDIC Office of Minority and Women Inclusion (OMWI). OMWI has responsibility for oversight of the Small Business Resource Effort.



Executive Summary

- Government agencies can establish government-wide contracts which simplify the contracting process by allowing federal agencies to acquire a vast array of products and services directly from commercial suppliers.
- The largest government-wide contracts are established by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) under its GSA Multiple Award Schedules (MAS) Program, or simply GSA Schedules or Federal Supply Schedules.
- Understanding and obtaining a GSA Schedule can be difficult, but rewarding for your business.



GSA Schedule: Overview

- Under the GSA Schedules Program, the GSA establishes long-term government wide contracts with commercial firms by establishing agreements at pre-negotiated better prices, thereby reducing administrative costs for government agencies purchasing goods and services.
- GSA Schedules provide access to over 11 million commercial supplies and services at volume discount pricing.
- Vendors can negotiate a contract to get on the GSA Schedule and then market the contract as a tool to all government agencies.
- The GSA Schedule contract is a very important vehicle for government contracting, bringing thousands of federal customers and vendors together.



GSA Schedule: Government Benefits *(Slide 1 of 2)*

- Government agencies receive many benefits for using the GSA Schedules Program:
 - **Lower Administrative Costs**
 - Receives the best value and knows the vendor has been vetted and completed the competitive bidding requirements for its products and services;
 - Acquires new goods and services more efficiently through the GSA Schedule than through other contracts, leading to shorter lead times; and
 - Easy payment options. GSA SmartPay® is accepted for all orders under \$3,000.
 - **Realize Savings**
 - Competitive market-based pricing that leverages the buying power of the federal government, with the ability to negotiate further discounts at the order level; and
 - Contracts directly with a vendor so delivery and lead times are reduced.
 - **Experience Flexibility and Choice**
 - Ability to customize terms and conditions at the order level;
 - Blanket Purchasing Agreements (BPAs) and Contractor Team Arrangements (CTAs) can replace indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contracts; and
 - Vast selection of contractors offering expert solutions for services and supplies.



GSA Schedule: Government Benefits *(Slide 2 of 2)*

– Save Time

- Quick and easy access to the right industry partners, allowing customers to make the most use of their valuable time.
- Contract awarded in a matter of days instead of months (**14 days vs. 268 days for conventional contracts**).

– Realize Transparency

- Electronic access to qualified contractors and assistance in reaching socioeconomic goals.
- Business intelligence into purchasing patterns when using GSA e-Tools.

– Procurement Control

- Agency contracting offices control requirements development, evaluation, award and administration.
- Agencies can place an order for any dollar amount.



GSA Schedule: Vendor Benefits

Small businesses (vendors) also receive many benefits from the GSA Schedules Program:

- Opportunities are increased as GSA is a major purchaser of products and services sold by small businesses - 80% of GSA Schedule holders are small businesses. They are also committed to increasing opportunities for small disadvantaged businesses, women-owned small businesses, HUBZone (Historically Underutilized Business Zone) small businesses, veteran-owned small businesses and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses.
- Contract periods last as long as five years, with up to three five-year options to renew. This can result in a 20-year contract with the government for your products and services.
- More than 11 million commercial items are available for purchase and probably includes your product or service.
- More than 19,000 contract holders are on the GSA Schedule. While this number is large, the actual number of competitors may be greatly reduced in your area of expertise.
- Leads to increased visibility and credibility for your business.
- Saves time and money with a simplified buying process and shorter award cycle.



GSA Schedule: Potential Concerns

- When determining if the GSA Schedule Program is right for your business, make sure you consider all aspects, including potential concerns:
 - The Application Process can be costly. Some contractors hire consultants to help prepare and negotiate their GSA offer.
 - Applying is time consuming and comes with a considerable amount of paperwork. Make sure you are prepared. Educate yourself about the rules, understand the consequences of those rules, research your firm's price offering and competitiveness.
 - Being an approved GSA Schedule contractor does not guarantee you will be awarded work. You will need to continue marketing your business after you are approved.
 - Changes in your pricing must be reported to GSA. If your price increased, you won't be able to increase your federal price because you signed a contract.
 - Various GSA rules and regulations are being debated. Make sure you understand the potential changes and how they may affect your business.



GSA Schedule: Buyers

- GSA manages more than 25% of the government's total contracting dollars and negotiates contracts that account for \$40 billion dollars worth of goods and services bought annually from the private sector.
- The following are some of the organizations that currently purchase from the GSA Schedule:
 - All federal and executive agencies.
 - Most Department of Defense agencies.
 - Government contractors authorized to spend federal dollars, such as fixed-price contractors that purchase security equipment.
 - Some institutions, such as Howard University and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, and international organizations.
 - State and local agencies that are eligible to participate in cooperative purchasing, disaster recovery purchasing, and some law enforcement purchases.



GSA Schedule: Listing

- The GSA's Schedule Listing, which is located on GSA's eLibrary site (<http://gsaelibrary.gsa.gov/> -), includes more than 40 schedules of products and services categorized by a Special Item Number (SIN).
- The GSA periodically updates or changes the listing and provides notices on the eLibrary.
- The eLibrary also includes an alphabetical listing of available contractors on the GSA Schedule.
- Some products mentioned in the GSA Schedule Listing include:
 - Computer technology
 - Office supplies
 - Advertising and marketing
 - Environmental
 - Management consulting
 - Professional engineering
 - Staffing
 - Training and educational



GSA Schedule: Is it for You?

- The first step would be to complete the mandatory Readiness Assessment training in the Vendor Toolbox (vsc.gsa.gov/RA/) which walks potential contractors through the following steps: Research, Analyze and Decide.
- Factors that increase your success as a GSA Schedule contractor:
 - 2 years of experience in federal contracting either as a prime or subcontractor;
 - Contacts and relationships within the federal contracting community;
 - Working with a mentor who is a successful GSA MAS contractor;
 - Attending GSA seminars and workshops on contracting; and
 - Investing between \$80K-\$130K to find and manage your initial government contract.
- The Challenges:
 - Competing for and winning government contracts is costly in both time and resources;
 - Not all government agencies use GSA Schedule contracts for their procurement; and
 - Allocating time, money, resources and sheer determination is needed to be successful.
- Companies considering the GSA Schedules program would benefit from the information provided by GSA's group "Schedules Contractor Success - Marketing Matters!" More information is available at: interact.gsa.gov/groups/contractor-success.



GSA Schedule: Negotiation and Approval *(Slide 1 of 2)*

1. Solicitations of offers for GSA/Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) contracts are electronically posted on FedBizOpps.
2. Individual offers or proposals are evaluated on their own merit. Offerors can submit supplementary information when deficiencies exist.
3. Prior to award, evaluators make a responsibility determination that may involve an examination of past performance and financial capability. Your discount practices will be examined and evaluated, with GSA's contracting officers identifying your "most favored customer" terms.
4. A price analysis is conducted where prices are determined fair and reasonable based on historical data, sales information provided, and other factors.
5. You will need to submit any proposal revisions based on negotiations.



GSA Schedule: Negotiation and Approval *(Slide 2 of 2)*

6. Contracting Officers reject unacceptable offers, determine if prices are fair and reasonable, and negotiate most favored customer pricing.
7. Awards are made to acceptable offers considering price and other factors. Your notification of award will include discounts, terms, and conditions of award.
8. If you are awarded a schedule contract, GSA will post your contractor information on the GSA Schedules eLibrary; you will distribute a pricelist/catalog; and your award information will be made available on GSA Advantage!



GSA Schedule: Contract Types

- **GSA Multiple Award Schedule (MAS)** – These contracts are awarded to multiple vendors with similar products or services to allow more choice for government buyers. When a business has a MAS contract, it can sell to any government agency with one source instead of having separate contracts with each agency.
- **Single Award Schedule (SAS)** – These generally include one supplier for items manufactured under Federal Military Specifications or Commercial Item Specific Geographic area. SASs are awarded as a result of sealed bidding.
- **Government Wide Acquisition Contracts (GWAC)** – These are task order or delivery order contracts for information technology established by one agency for government-wide use.



GSA Schedule: Issuing Task Orders

- Once you have been awarded a GSA Schedule contract, you have a contract vehicle against which task orders may be issued by authorized buyers in and outside of the federal government.
 - The request for quotation (RFQ) is transmitted to contractors who have been included on the solicitation list. Based upon an initial evaluation of catalogs and price lists, the ordering office should identify the contractors who might offer the best value and include them on this list.
 - An RFQ is prepared by the buying authority, generally the Contracting Officer, that includes a Statement of Work (SOW). A SOW outlines the work to be performed, location, period of performance, deliverable schedule, applicable standards, acceptance criteria, and any special requirements.
 - After responses have been evaluated by the contracting officer against the factors identified in the RFQ, the order should be placed with the GSA Schedule contractor that represents the best value to the government.



GSA Schedule: Teaming

- The GSA encourages the formation of contract teams, particularly among small businesses, to provide government purchasers with “total” solutions.
- A teaming arrangement increases a Schedule holder’s competitive edge by allowing them to pool their capabilities with companies possessing complementary skills, and to focus the Contracting Officer’s attention on their combined core capabilities.
- Under a Contractor Team Arrangement (CTA), two or more GSA Schedule contractors work together by complementing each other’s capabilities.
- The team responding to the RFQ should designate all team members, their corresponding GSA Schedule contract numbers, and describe the tasks to be performed by each team member, along with the associated proposed pricing.
- The teaming agreement between GSA Schedule team members should be developed in advance of preparing an offer to the RFQ, and should clearly and unambiguously define the terms of the arrangement.



GSA Schedule: Marketing

- Your marketing approach should reflect your knowledge of the benefits that GSA Schedules offer to buyers.
 - Know your GSA Schedule contract and its terms.
 - Understand your costs and rates, and understand the GSA task ordering process.
 - Understand the benefits to the customer of using a GSA Schedule contractor and incorporate these benefits into your marketing language.
 - Additional marketing support is provided by the GSA’s group “Schedules Contractor Success - Marketing Matters!” This group was created to help current GSA Schedule contract holders successfully market themselves to the federal government. More information is available at interact.gsa.gov/groups/contractor-success.



GSA Schedule: Vendor Support

(Slide 1 of 2)

- General Services Administration: GSA Schedules
 - A one-stop resource for all businesses with GSA contracts. Includes links to contracting assistance resources, training programs, small business assistance, and vendor support.
 - gsa.gov/portal/content/104447
- GSA Vendor Support Center
 - The central portal for accessing all online services provided to GSA contractors.
 - vsc.gsa.gov
- GSA Advantage!
 - GSA's online shopping and ordering system.
 - gsaadvantage.gov/advgsa/advantage/main/start_page.do
- GSA eLibrary
 - Formerly Schedules e-Library, is the online source for the latest contract award information.
 - gsaelibrary.gsa.gov/ElibMain/home.do



GSA Schedule: Vendor Support

(Slide 2 of 2)

- GSA Subcontracting Directory
 - This directory is a listing of GSA contractors with subcontracting plans and goals.
 - gsa.gov/portal/content/101195
- Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) Express Program
 - This site outlines how to participate in the MAS Express Program, which was designed to simplify, streamline and accelerate the process of obtaining MAS contracts.
 - gsa.gov/masexpress
- Vendor Payment Portal
 - This portal is operated by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) to provide invoice processing options, payment status and other critical payment information for GSA's vendors, contracting officers, service and staff offices.
 - apps.ocfo.gsa.gov/vendorpayment/index.htm
- Schedules Contractor Success - Marketing Matters!
 - This group was created to help current GSA Schedule contractors successfully market themselves to the federal government.
 - interact.gsa.gov/groups/contractor-success



Key Takeaways from This Module

- **There are five tips that will help you get on the GSA Schedule:**
 1. Complete GSA's mandatory training.
 2. Build relationships with your targeted government agencies and/or contracting officers.
 3. Do your homework.
 4. Organize your financials.
 5. Gain experience as a subcontractor.
- **Once you are on the GSA Schedule, you can follow these five steps:**
 1. Visit FedBizOpps to search for and obtain a copy of the GSA Schedule solicitation.
 2. Read the entire Schedule solicitation thoroughly and respond to all requirements.
 3. Make sure that all items offered are within the scope of the GSA Schedule solicitation.
 4. Obtain a Past Performance Evaluation.
 5. Be ready to negotiate the company's best offer.



Sources and Citations

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- Business.gov, *How to Find Contracting Opportunities*
- American Express, *GSA Schedule: A Tool to Help Win Government Contracts*
- Federal Schedule, Inc., *Getting on the GSA Schedule*