

GSA Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Committee (GAP FAC) Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee Meeting

March 28, 2023

The General Services Administration (GSA) Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee convened for the eighth public meeting at 3:00 PM on March 28, 2023, virtually via Zoom, with Nicole Darnall, Chair, and Anne Rung, Co-Chair, presiding.

In accordance with FACA, as amended, 5 U.S.C. App 2, the meeting was open to the public from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM EST

Subcommittee Members Present:

Nicole Darnall, Chairperson	<i>Arizona State University</i>
Anne Rung, Co- Chairperson	<i>Varis, LLC</i>
Darryl Daniels	<i>Jacobsen Daniels Assoc.</i>
Mark Hayden	<i>New Mexico General Services Department</i>
David Malone	<i>Director, Procurement & Supply Management</i>
Kristin Seaver	<i>General Dynamics Information Technology</i>
Clyde Thompson	<i>GovStrive, LLC</i>

Absent:

Gail Bassette and Steven Schooner

Guest Speakers & Presenters:

Danielle Hinz	<i>Executive Government Advisor, Procurement & Contracting, Amazon Web Services</i>
Charleen Fain	<i>Branch Chief, Engineering Branch, Procurement Division, Depart. General Services, State of California</i>

GSA Staff Present:

Boris Arratia	<i>Designated Federal Officer</i>
Stephanie Hardison	<i>Deputy Designated Federal Officer</i>
David Cochennic	<i>GAP FAC Support Team</i>
Skylar Holloway	<i>GAP FAC Support Team</i>
Jamie Pelligrino	<i>Closed Captioner</i>

Rachel McGarry Owens
Jill Lamoreaux

ASL Interpreters
ASL Interpreters

CALL TO ORDER

Stephanie Hardison, Deputy Designated Federal Officer, opened the public meeting by welcoming the group before reminding the public that there would be time for comments and statements at the end of the meeting. Stephanie then performed a roll call to confirm attendance and a quorum. After meeting the quorum, she turned the meeting over to Chairperson Nicole Darnall.

WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

Chairperson Nicole Darnall welcomed the committee and reviewed the presenters for today's meeting.

Co-Chairperson Anne Rung introduced Danielle Hinz, and Nicole Darnall introduced Charleen Fain before moving into questions and answers.

GUEST SPEAKER Q & A

Questions for Speakers

Q: Nicole Darnall - What training has your organization done that has advanced you all into sustainability and procurement? What has worked? What would you change?

A: Danielle Hinz – That's an area for improvement. While at King County, we launched a training program where someone was hired and developed a host of training around procurement and payables. One piece of that was a sustainability program called Sustainable Purchasing. We knew we needed to embed that content into the training offered to internal customers. We offered a 101-level class for anyone in departments and agencies that had procurement responsibilities as part of their duties. They learned what they were supposed to do, as well as sustainable procurement policies and what resources were available to help them facilitate finding products that met specifications. What worked was this provided visibility to the frontline people in the department who are interfacing with end users, making purchasing decisions about the requirements, and providing them with the resources for those requirements. The challenge is that King County is a big county, and trying to reach everyone making real-time procurement decisions was daunting.

A: Charleen Fain – Our programs started in 2006 for environmentally preferable purchasing. In procurement for California, we have procurement engineers to write

specifications for competitive bidding. We use the knowledge and skills of procurement engineers to help leverage greener and more sustainable procurements. The challenge was how to address the decentralized spending and educate the department procuring on their own. Over time we've developed training programs for them. We've executed basic and executive training. We are getting ready to launch our intermediate training, which details what we do as procurement agents. We are going into training for small businesses in terms of environmental, social, and economic portions. Our Buying Green guide is statutorily driven and offers not only our contracts, so that local entities can use our leveraged procurement agreements but state agencies can also see a chain of specifications and look at what we brought to a contract. Some other things that drive where we go are executive orders. We are writing contracts centered around zero emission vehicles. We look to different California EPA agencies and departments for expertise and research to see how we can drive greener contracts.

Q: Nicole Darnall - Do you have specialized sustainable procurement certification/credentialing that can recognize those subject matter experts that connect to the different aspects of county services?

A: Danielle Hinz – Not when I was there, but there was a discussion around creating procurement subject matter experts from King County staff. When we talked about it, we spoke about starting on a macro level. There were issues with implementing the training by the time I left.

A: David Malone - We introduced category management at King County, which builds skill sets for people who are subject matter experts in a specific buying category. Not every category is right for sustainability, but there are opportunities within certain categories for sustainability. We target it based on categories.

Q: Nicole Darnall - What were your barriers with this?

A: Danielle Hinz – Our barrier was having to work through the union when we introduced something new, but we decided it wasn't where we wanted to focus our efforts at the time.

Q: Nicole Darnall – Charleen, do you have specialized sustainable procurement certification/credentialing for your subject matter experts?

A: Charleen Fain – We don't have a sustainability certification, but you are required to have a chemistry, engineering, or physics degree. I oversee the engineering branch, and we look at all expert areas of engineering.

Q: Nicole Darnall - What has worked and not worked with third party certifications? Are third-party certifications through different vendors rewarded or encouraged as it relates to sustainability?

A: Charleen Fain – To keep people abreast of sustainability principles, we have webinars and partnerships with people like EPA and industries like BIFMA. We are looking at different webinars to see what’s out there globally and what’s being taught, how it can be applied, and how it applies in the state.

Q: Nicole Darnall - Who curates that list? Is there a dedicated person looking for these educational opportunities?

A: Charleen Fain – I do vetting for educational opportunities. Not all training is created equal, so we partner with the US EPA to ask, which training they deem suitable. We implemented a requirement for staff to do a certain number of training per year, which is at least 15 hours.

Q: Nicole Darnall - What has worked and not worked with third party certifications? Are third-party certifications through different vendors rewarded or encouraged as it relates to sustainability?

A: Danielle Hinz – We rely on procurement organizations for sustainability training. We have a central program manager in procurement who is the sustainability lead for the county who gathered the information from organizations she was involved in and pushed that out to the department and agencies that could benefit from the relevant training.

Q: Anne Rung - Was the procurement 101 training required or encouraged?

A: Danielle Hinz – It rolled out as strongly encouraged but moved into holding their system access until they went through the training.

Q: Darryl Daniels - You mentioned 15 hours of annual training. How did you get to the number 15, and when did it start?

A: Charleen Fain – The policy has been implemented for ten years to ensure they are kept abreast of everything. When it comes to the buyers, we have a procurement academy where we create the entire training package and have the EPP training as part of modular training. It wasn’t mandatory, but a law that was implemented recently where it is now required. For them to get their credentials, they must take the training courses. If needed, we will send them out to do the training.

Q: David Malone - Can you pinpoint if the training impacts the metric?

A: Charleen Fain - We track how many people are training, and we've seen an increase in EPP staff. I can send those to you.

Q: Nicole Darnall - When your programs got off the ground, what worked and what didn't? What would you have done over again, given the chance?

A: Danielle Hinz – Executive sponsorship was key. Our county executives made this a primary initiative. Products that met sustainability products were more expensive, but these programs wouldn't have gone anywhere without executive sponsorship. We would send a report to give visibility to what we were doing with the environmental purchasing program. Having executive level sponsorship is critical.

A: Charleen Fain – We started by looking at creating a website that has our best practices manual and specifications that is publicly accessible. The challenge was if you wanted to increase a small business, they unbundled and dismantled leveraged procurement agreements so you could increase the economic accessibility to contracting with the state. This meant we lost the opportunity to go and write those specifications, which led us to rely on decentralized procurement. This led us to create purchasing standards to make it easy for people in departments that don't have engineering resources to look at those and implement them.

Q: Nicole Darnall - How did you align incentives? What awards did you create? Did you change job descriptions? What did you do internally?

A: Charleen Fain – We didn't change anything in procurement since we already have procurement engineers. We have an entire division dedicated to small businesses and they have advocates in each department.

Q: Nicole Darnall - You talked about using your enterprise service software to identify higher-performing individuals. How was this structured, and what was the ultimate incentive?

A: Charleen Fain – Since we write the contracts and agreements, different variables that are collected in the data system. You take those out, and you can calculate the total energy savings and greenhouse gas emissions. As you get the executive orders to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, you have the statistics to see if you are doing your job. The key driver is having statutes in executive orders, the challenge is addressing services, not goods.

Q: Nicole Darnall - Once you have this information and have calculated the total energy savings. If you're trying to reward high-performing units, what did that reward look like?

A: Charleen Fain - It's called the State Agency Recognition Award (SARA). It happens once a year where they give a physical award for making those achievements. It's called out and posted on our web to state that these departments have reached these quotas. We don't have mandatory requirements for EPP specifically, but we do for small businesses. The agencies, as part of the executive orders, must write sustainable business roadmaps that are posted on our page. That's in partnership with our real estate service division that oversees the operations of building. We work together and report on our sustainable business plan which is called the Governor's Sustainability Plan which is updated every two years. We are coming up on an update.

Q: Nicole Darnall – Danielle, how did you drive change internally through aligning incentives and creating awards or changing job descriptions? What did you do internally?

A: Danielle Hinz - The way they handled incentives and awards is we would report up to executives and they would share that out on both environmental purchasing and small business programs. Reports were done annually and went down to the division level on how they were achieving those goals in areas.

A: Charleen Fain – We have required metrics for the small business programs and if the state agencies don't meet those, they can be in jeopardy of losing their delegation authority which makes this a high incentive to make sure they meet that.

Q: Anne Rung – You mentioned there's training for different types of experts. Did you think about training around where the person is involved in the acquisition life cycle? Did you have a viewpoint on whether it's more important to get to the people earlier in the life cycle or did you think of it differently?

A: Danielle Hinz – Our tactic was to get as far upstream in that process as possible which starts with the folks responsible for developing specifications. By involving them in the requirements we were developing, it created a buy in on the accountability side. While I was there, we were doing a lot of process improvements and measuring what those meant. That culture was already there and tapping into that was important. As you're mapping out a procurement process and you get far enough upstream, you get to the folks when they are requesting the budget. We had the ability to wrap it into those efforts and say we're leaning into this space because it's the expectation that

we're going to do all this process improvement and measure how we're doing. That gave us the ability to bring them in.

Q: Anne Rung – When you say “them”, what do you mean?

A: Danielle Hinz – The project managers.

Q: Clyde Thompson - You both have talked about the importance of top-level support for these initiatives. What about grassroots efforts? To what extent was that part of your overall change management strategy? How did you use people on the front lines to help communicate information and create change?

A: Danielle Hinz - A lot of the time, those folks became our subject matter experts. You need the grassroots effort.

Q: Nicole Darnall - How often were they meeting?

A: Danielle Hinz – Likely quarterly. Our procurement manager would meet with folks interested in doing that work in all the departments and agencies.

A: Charleen Fain – We use a variety of different work groups that meet quarterly depending on the specific procurement. For buyers to start procuring and processing in our system, they have to be given that access. To get that access, it's tied to their training.

Q: Troy Cribb - How do you approach making a big impact in terms of sustainability? How do you determine where your efforts go?

A: Charleen Fain – Our initiative is executive order driven, but we also create hotspot analysis and look at the highest spend and where it is central or decentralized. The executive orders are mostly state of California driven, but that doesn't mean we don't look at what happens within the federal government.

A: Danielle Hinz – It's a mix of picking where you can get quick wins and what is the more strategic, bigger elephant that you have to take bites out of to conquer with extremely limited resources to do this. The quick wins are what contracts do we have coming out that we think would be good to look at putting requirements into.

Q: Mark Hayden – We tried to design an algorithm to remove the thinking from the purchasing process. The idea would be that it's simple to use and you wouldn't have to rely on the teachings and training. Would something like this be a good idea?

A: Charleen Fain – The challenge is that there’s a new initiative to create new bidders and diversify the bidding pool. The system would have to be flexible to address these other initiatives. You still need to have staff to set the metrics to determine what is green and what is not along with other filters. These metrics would have to come from the manufacturers and not the suppliers and sometimes the information isn’t always entered correctly. It would need to be flexible and versatile.

REVIEW OF KEY TAKEAWAYS

The group moved on to discuss and reflect on what they’ve heard and to write down key items they should be mindful of as they continue to develop recommendations.

Nicole proposed to categorize the key points the group wrote down between now and the next Acquisition Workforce meeting. They will work to build out on the key items and to look at the specifics of how these different areas would work, recognizing that it’s a portfolio approach.

DISCUSSION/FINALIZATION OF DRAFT REPORT OUTLINE

The group shifted gears after writing their reflections down to talk about the outlines for the high-level recommendations.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Nicole Darnall opened the discussion up to the public, but there were no questions or comments.

CLOSING REMARKS

Nicole Darnall thanked the subcommittee for their participation and will work with Anne Rung to incorporate today’s feedback into a review document for the subcommittee to look over in order to stay aligned before they begin to message out to the broader committee on the direction they are going in.

ADJOURNMENT

Stephanie Hardison adjourned the meeting at 5:00 PM EST.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM EST.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

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Nicole Darnall

7/12/2023

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Nicole Darnall

Chairperson

GAP FAC Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee

DocuSigned by:

Anne Rung

7/10/2023

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Anne Rung

Co-Chairperson

GAP FAC Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee