

General Services Administration(GSA) Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Committee (GAP FAC) Full Committee Meeting

May 4, 2023

The GSA Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Full Committee meeting convened for a hybrid public meeting at 9:30AM on May 4, 2023, with Troy Cribb, Chair presiding.

In accordance with FACA, as amended, 5 U.S.C. App 2, the meeting was open to the public from 9:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. EST

Committee Members Present:

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| Troy Cribb, Chairperson | <i>Partnership for Public Service</i> |
| Farad Ali | <i>Asociar, LLC</i> |
| Denise Bailey | <i>Milligan Consulting, LLC</i> |
| Luke Bassis | <i>Port Authority of New York and New Jersey</i> |
| Richard Beutel | <i>George Mason Center for Government Contracting</i> |
| Leslie Cordes | <i>Ceres</i> |
| Darryl Daniels | <i>Jacobsen Daniels Assoc.</i> |
| Nicole Darnall | <i>Arizona State University</i> |
| Antonio Doss | <i>Small Business Administration</i> |
| Mark Hayden | <i>New Mexico General Services Department</i> |
| David Malone | <i>City of St. Petersburg Florida</i> |
| Dr. Amlan Mukherjee | <i>Michigan Technological University</i> |
| Jennie Romer | <i>Environmental Protection Agency</i> |
| Anne Rung | <i>Varis, LLC</i> |
| Steven Schooner | <i>George Washington University</i> |
| Kristin Seaver | <i>General Dynamics Information Technology</i> |
| Clyde Thompson | <i>GovStrive, LLC</i> |
| Anish Tilak | <i>Rocky Mountain Institute</i> |
| Keith Tillage | <i>Tillage Construction, LLC</i> |
| Dr. David Waggoner | <i>Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries</i> |
| Dr. Kimberly Wise White | <i>American Chemistry Council</i> |

Absent: C. Gail Bassette, Cassius Butts, Susan Lorenz-Fisher, Mamie Mallory, Deryl McKissack, Stacy Smedley, Nigel Stephens

Guest Speakers & Presenters: n/a

GSA Staff Present:

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| Robin Carnahan | <i>Administrator</i> |
| Krystal Brumfield | <i>Associate Administrator</i> |
| Jeff Koses | <i>Senior Procurement Executive</i> |
| 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> |
| Anne Thompson | <i>Closed Captioner</i> |
| Scott Merc | <i>ASL Interpreter</i> |
| Sarah Pelc | <i>ASL Interpreter</i> |

CALL TO ORDER

Boris Arratia, Deputy Federal Officer, opened the public meeting by welcoming the group before reminding the public that there will be time for comments and statements at the end of the meeting. He also encouraged the public to submit comments via regulations.gov and via email to gapfac@gsa.gov. Boris then performed a roll call to confirm attendance and a quorum. After the quorum was met, he introduced GSA's Associate Administrator for the Office of Government-Wide Policy, Krystal Brumfield.

GSA Leadership Remarks

Krystal Brumfield thanked the committee for their dedicated work in crafting their recommendations. GSA is leveraging the federal footprint and harnessing buying power to build and buy clean. We aim to reduce harmful emissions, buy sustainable products and services, and reduce waste and aim for a more resilient supply chain.

Krystal reflected on the efforts GSA has taken to implement Executive Order 14057, which requires federal agencies to procure carbon pollution-free electricity and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. She highlighted key GSA initiatives that exemplify the Agency's commitment to advancing the Administration's climate action and sustainability priorities.

Krystal expressed her gratitude and excitement in hearing the six recommendations from the GAP FAC's subcommittee's before introducing Jeff Koses who is GSA's Senior Procurement Executive.

Jeff Koses gave the background on how the committee was started. After settling on a climate and sustainability focus, it was important to ensure the right members were appointed to this important cause. GSA Administrator Robin Carnahan also emphasized the need for a wide range of viewpoints to be represented in the committee. She then kicked off the committee's inaugural meeting in September 2022, making the point that this was a rare moment as GSA had the money and the momentum to significantly advance this cause.

With a plethora of issues and Executive Orders that need to be addressed, GSA posed the committee with the task of finding the biggest opportunities for the Agency in the climate and sustainability space. Today we will hear from each subcommittee on an initial set of recommendations. GSA's goal today is to listen actively to fully understand the committee's recommendations and the thought process behind them. Jeff thanked the committee for all of their hard work in getting this far in a short time.

GAP FAC Chair & Co-Chair Remarks

Troy Cribb gave an overview of the work the committee has been doing over the past seven months. Today the public will be hearing six recommendations from the committee that will better enable the Federal Government to acquire innovative and efficient products and services for economic growth and to protect our environment. The three subcommittees are built around the pillars of what we see as fundamental to successful federal acquisitions: having a skilled acquisition workforce, having healthy industry partnerships, and having policies and practices that are clear and actionable. Each subcommittee will be walking through how they envision embedding sustainability and climate considerations into federal acquisitions.

Troy thanked the committee members for their work and dedication to the group as well as the GSA team that kept the committee on track and running smoothly. She turned the meeting over to Nicole Darnall & Anne Rung to present their Acquisition Workforce subcommittee recommendations.

Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee

Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee Chairperson Nicole Darnall started with this quote:

"Policy adoption is symbolic if it is not translated into action."

This is what our subcommittee focuses on – looking at how you take policy and translate it into action. That is where the federal acquisition workforce rests. The mission of the Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee is to empower and equip the Federal Acquisition Workforce to prioritize environmental outcomes and promote sustainability throughout the acquisition life cycle. As a subcommittee, we have identified two priorities to begin to tackle.

The two initial priorities the group will tackle are the following:

- Identify the essential pathways needed to make environmental and sustainability considerations a core competency in Federal acquisitions,
- Identify the critical levers needed to empower the acquisition workforce to prioritize environmental outcomes and promote sustainability with the least amount of effort.

The three recommendations from this subcommittee tackle the first priority.

The three recommendations are:

1. Implement a change acceleration strategy.
2. Make sustainability a core, foundational capability across the acquisition workforce.
3. Create acquisition sustainability experts.

The subcommittee talked with a suite of individuals across GSA including an acquisition workforce focus group for individuals at the front line making decisions day-to-day about what to purchase, what it looks like, and how to satisfy internal customer needs. The second focus group we talked to were individuals at the earlier stages of the acquisition lifecycle which included contract officers and program managers. We also engaged several individuals outside of GSA including individuals from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Federal Acquisition Institute, Office of Federal Procurement Policy, and state and local government. Katie Newhouse met with the subcommittee twice to talk about her work with the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

The subcommittee took golden nuggets from each conversation with speakers to vote on priorities to determine how to move forward. This leads to the first recommendation: implement a change acceleration strategy. The first step to this process is to communicate. It's important to do this when undergoing change acceleration. You need to establish and communicate interim goals. There's an endpoint to reach, but individuals within the workforce have a difficult time connecting with that distant endpoint. It's more relevant than to identify what those interim goals are because that can be incorporated into the day-to-day. Third is to form a powerful guiding coalition. GSA had a national environmental council that wasn't entirely formalized which led us to suggest reinvigorating this council with a focus on sustainability. This also will lead to the creation of regional sustainability councils with sustainability specialists. These are individuals who can form tag teams around critical issues. The key is to empower others to act which is how we formed recommendations two and three.

Once the communication is there and individuals understand, it's important to communicate the quick wins along the way and align sustainability acquisition recognition structures by creating rewards within the agency. The Presidential Federal Sustainability Awards can be a model. Once the other items are in place, it's important to align sustainability acquisition roles with performance reviews. This is especially important with higher level executives within GSA, because they set the tone and culture.

Co-Chair Anne Rung talked about the second recommendation: make sustainability a core, foundational capability. Training and development of the acquisition professionals are critical to the success of advancing sustainability throughout the acquisition lifecycle. Feedback from the frontline professionals is that there is an enormous opportunity to strengthen sustainability training, however sustainability is outside of their core training. Based on the feedback, we recommend sustainability be moved from being a special skill to being a core competency. We recommend three key actions. First, embed sustainability into Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) modernization. In doing so GSA can leverage best practices in modern

learning, training and agility and professional growth. GSA needs to create a centralized website for all sustainability training across the government.

The second key action is to curate learning to be relevant to acquisition roles. Sustainability training is not always relevant to day-to-day activities. To empower learners to develop practical skills that can be applied to their day-to-day jobs, curated learning should be tied to their role. Because of this, we recommend GSA curate for sustainability to the acquisition roles and recognize that they vary across the workforce and the acquisition life cycle. GSA should focus its early efforts on launching the core training, beginning with program managers and contracting officers to ensure that we're beginning to embed this core training within the earliest stages of acquisition planning. As a third recommended action, we recommend GSA leverage third party training. Sometimes workforce individuals must turn to third party training to keep pace with the rapid changes. Funding expert third party training or creating a curated and approved list of third-party sustainability training would help ensure the workforce receives quality training.

Our final recommendation is for GSA, in addition to establishing the core sustainability training, to create a team of sustainability experts who are trained and certified through a new GSA led sustainability acquisition certification program. These highly trained experts could be deployed to support peer-to-peer engagements across teams. This should be modeled after GSA's successful IT acquisition certificate program called ITAC. There are several key components of ITAC that we recommend for this program. We recommend building a cohort-based certification program, with training tailored to the cohort. Also, in building this certification program, GSA should assess the current state and gaps to create a competency framework. And finally, it's important to provide real world experiential training, which is crucial in facilitating specialized training.

Nicole then spoke to some challenges and solutions associated with these recommendations, such as assessing job descriptions to include expectations about the specialized training. We should be thinking about the learning objectives mapped into these trainings and doing pilot testing. Another challenge is automating change, which relates more to priority two, which is to identify critical levers aided to empower the acquisition workforce so that they can prioritize sustainability concerns with the least amount of effort possible.

The recommendations that we're moving forward are about bringing the people along and creating a sustainability mindset that leads to a culture shift that it's not an add on but instead the way things are.

The subcommittee opened the conversation up to the rest of the committee members for discussion, questions, and comments.

- One comment was that agencies drive change through having an agency priority goal which is above and beyond some of the major goals that the organization might have. This is another way to look at driving change.

- Anne and Nicole elaborated on the power of speaking with workforce individuals. It was important to talk to acquisition professionals before formulating these recommendations. These individuals reflected a diversity of thoughts and diversity of roles across government. Creating an open dialogue allowed us to begin to formulate recommendations. Then, as a team, we brainstormed and spoke about what we heard.
- Another question related to who might deliver the curriculum, and what modes would be offered. Nicole explained that the subcommittee wants to hear from individuals that are doing it, individuals that have thought about doing it, and individuals that have implemented it to hear how it has gone. We need to do more research before reaching that vital landing point.
- A final comment was that these recommendations also can be a model for states to follow.

Industry Partnerships Subcommittee

Chairperson Kristin Seaver introduced her subcommittee and thanked them before diving into their recommendations.

The Industry Partnerships subcommittee mission is to provide the full GAP FAC, and in turn GSA, with recommendations on how best to identify, engage and equip a broader and more diverse supplier base to achieve the government's goals of sustainability, environmental justice, economic equity, and a resilient domestic supply chain, with a specific focus towards small, mid-sized underutilized, underrepresented businesses as well as new entrants.

The subcommittee's first priority is to have impactful engagement to ensure anything recommended can be driven towards outcomes and that it would focus on the target market areas identified.

The second priority is metrics, motivations and methods that can be developed and deployed to validate meaningful progress, inspire action beyond mere compliance and share lessons learned and best practices across the federal supplier base.

After hearing from industry and government experts, and doing their own research, the subcommittee developed two recommendations:

- Identify, engage and onboard innovative new entrants.
- Sponsor a maturity model for embedding sustainability and climate risk mitigation in federal acquisition.
- Co-Chair Farad Ali went into detail about recommendation one. The group recognized ways to identify obstacles that might come with this recommendation.
- It is difficult to expand the federal supplier base with innovative new entrants specializing in leading edge sustainable products and services.
- These companies are not part of the familiar targeted pools and may have little to no experience working with the federal government.

- This challenge, along with the need for greater climate risk mitigation efforts, signals that expanded and different approaches are necessary.
- The group looked at how to promote innovation when addressing these obstacles:
- Target procurement initiatives under the climate change/sustainability portfolio.
- Fast track new entrants that can accelerate the current climate progress curve in federal acquisitions.
- Identify and expand the participation of small and midsize, innovate firms that can bring game changing technologies, products, or services.
- Focus on speed and impact.

In conclusion, by implementing this recommendation GSA will be able to attract businesses in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, enable startups to accelerate their growth, fuel the entrepreneurial spirit in the United States, send a strong demand signal for innovation, and make connections that count to maximize speed and positive impact on sustainability and climate risk mitigation efforts.

Kristin Seaver elaborated on the second recommendation. When it comes to administrative priorities and executive orders to drive sustainability and climate change, we heard from a number of speakers that the pathway to progress isn't always known. There is no compilation of best practices for people to look to, and because of that, our recommendation for GSA is to sponsor a maturity model for embedding sustainability and climate risk mitigation into its acquisitions. This would provide suppliers with clear pathways to progress and clear requirements, terminology and benchmarks.

The one model we kept referencing was the NIST Cyber Security Framework (CSF). In this case, to drive a large organization in terms of cyber security and get the business side on board, it was important for all to understand why investments in cyber security were needed. When people knew where they needed to go, how to get there, and the resources available, that is when momentum was gained in this space.

Our recommendation is for GSA to sponsor and not go at it alone. One thing that is critical is to be thoughtful from the domain perspective as to what are the core capabilities you want every industrial supplier to build out and what are those different phases of maturity you're trying to get to, and when. If you can be purposeful and clear about that, the supplier base can move on their own.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would be great partners in this process. There also needs to be more information gathered from third party providers as there is lots going on in the sustainability ecosystem. Capturing lessons learned from other agencies that have sponsored maturity models will also allow us to move this process forward.

The subcommittee gave a glimpse into future topics they are considering exploring:

- Create a connection among industry network groups, trade associations, and partnerships groups.
- Accelerate best practice repository development and sharing so that organizations can self-learn.
- Leverage the power of large suppliers to drive expansion and capacity by creating incentives for them to partner with small businesses and new entrants.
- Focus on data transparency and availability to ensure we are moving the needle.

The subcommittee opened the conversation up to the rest of the committee members for discussion, questions, and comments:

- Collaboration with existing groups within government is an outstanding way to move forward and great progress can be made in this regard. GSA's Center of Excellence is an example of this.
- We need to integrate new entrances into this process and give them the tools to be successful. One way to do that is to make sure there is a maturity model. And identifying the new entrants that haven't participated in this process is critical.
- One question was how the subcommittee is considering integrating existing government programs as part of its recommendation. Kristin explained that the recommendation is about having a laser focus on finding new and innovative entrants. We must first evaluate existing mechanisms to reach those organizations. We are also challenging GSA to create new mechanisms, if necessary, to reach those folks.
- It will be important to connect the acquisition workforce to these efforts.
- NGO partners are ready on the ground and happy to help with educating new entrants. Once GSA communicates the need, NGOs will follow.
- Training can help level the playing field, for example for women-owned businesses.
- It's important we look at barriers that exist in federal contracting as it is confusing and challenging for small businesses. The SBA offers a mentorship protégé program where you can create learning opportunities between experienced and larger businesses with small businesses. Perhaps there are ways to leverage this program.

Policy & Practice Subcommittee

Co-Chair Luke Bassis provided background on the subcommittee and how it arrived at its recommendation. The subcommittee's mission is to recommend actionable changes to GSA procurement policies and practices that encourage innovation and streamline the acquisition process to accelerate the demand and utilization of goods and services from a diverse supplier base to achieve measurable progress on climate and sustainability goals.

Luke handed it over to Jennie Romer, Anish Tilak and David Waggoner to introduce their recommendation, which is about reducing single use plastics. Plastic use and waste impose negative impacts on the environment, human health and climate. Much use of plastics is short-lived, including in shipping packaging that could be reduced without any change to product protection. Many single use plastics and packaging materials are difficult to recycle. As of 2018 EPA reported that only 9% of plastics were recycled. Not only is this an environmental issue, but

it's also an economic issue. Disposing of non-recyclable product packaging and shipping materials results in costs to federal agencies. We propose three ways to address the single use plastics issue:

- Move forward with a rulemaking process to reduce single-use plastics and packaging through government procurement.
- Develop procurement and facility-specific pilots.
- Follow EPA's materials management hierarchy of reduce, reuse, and recycle.

We need to identify the gaps and opportunities and provide an overarching roadmap that includes measurable goals and timelines to phase out single use plastics. Some considerations to keep in mind with this recommendation are:

- Avoid unintended consequences, including regrettable substitutions.
- Deploy life cycle thinking in weighing product substitution versus reduction to minimize adverse environmental impacts and maximize benefits.
- Ensure availability of, and acceptance by, local commercial composting programs before substituting compostable for plastics. Evaluate end-of-life implications for items marketed as biodegradable.
- Carve appropriate exemptions for disaster recovery, disability accommodations, medical use, and personal protective equipment.
- Engage with USDA on research, market development programs, and innovations in biobased materials, waste management, and BioPreferred procurement.

In conclusion we need to aggressively pursue rulemaking for single-use plastics and packaging to support the Federal Sustainability Plan's net-zero procurement goal by 2050 and the global goal of no additional plastic pollution by 2040. It's important to use federal procurement spending to reduce plastic demand and inspire private industry to tackle plastic and pollution. Improved recyclability of single-use plastics and packaging reduces landfill disposal and incineration, supporting sustainability goals when reduction and reuse are not feasible.

Steve Schooner then highlighted future considerations for the subcommittee: technology tools, utilization, connectivity and availability; considerations in the evaluation process; and knowledge capacity (centralizing education and best practices). These areas raise an intersection with the work of the other subcommittees.

Steve also emphasized that while this recommendation focuses largely on reduction, we also favor adding language and policy guidance that would increase the recycling and reuse of single-use plastics as well. As the largest purchaser in the world, GSA has a great opportunity to encourage the development of recycling infrastructure, particularly in cases where eliminating single-use plastics is not feasible or practical.

The subcommittee opened the conversation up to the rest of the committee members for discussion, questions, and comments, which included:

- We should make sure we're thinking about this recommendation from a circularity and lifecycle standpoint. We should be piloting to see whether these are effective ways to mitigate the plastic solution problem. We should address this holistically, not make regrettable substitutions, and where there is opportunity to recycle look to strengthen the infrastructure to increase recyclability.
- Looking at the micro-thresholds and simplified acquisition thresholds connects with bringing more diverse firms in, not only at the federal level.
- The subcommittee tried to strike a balance between longer-term initiatives such as rule making with shorter term wins and that's encouraging.

Public Engagement

The discussion was opened to the public. Comments made were:

- In thinking about industry partnerships and supplier diversity, we should think about contractors and labor partnerships in providing good jobs with good wages in sustainability.
- There are lots of ways to get to sustainability. The government should let the supplier base demonstrate through different metrics that they are sustainable.

Vote on Recommendations

Twenty members voted in favor of providing all six recommendations to GSA, while one member abstained from voting. Therefore, the committee approved providing GSA the six recommendations that were presented.

Closing Remarks

Troy thanked the subcommittees for their participation and work done so far. The public is encouraged to submit feedback and access records of previous meetings on the GAP FAC website.

Krystal Brumfield thanked the subcommittee and expressed her appreciation for the different perspectives they have provided to GSA.

Administrator Robin Carnahan thanked the committee members for their work as well as the public for being involved. There were two tasks presented to the committee: (1) How to streamline and improve how the government buys goods and services and (2) How the government can use their buying power in ways that will advance policy decisions. She looks forward to reviewing the recommendations and seeing how it can enhance the work of GSA.

Jeff Koses thought the recommendations were well thought out and looks forward to expanding more on each recommendation. It's a huge milestone that the committee members have accomplished today.

Adjournment

Boris Arratia reminded the public that the GAP FAC web site is where all the meeting agenda, slides, notes, and meeting recordings will be located for public review. He then adjourned the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 P.M. EST.

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

DocuSigned by:

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Troy Cribb
Chairperson
GSA Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Committee

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