

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

January 18, 2023

The General Services Administration (GSA) Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Industry Partnerships Subcommittee convened for the fourth public meeting at 3:00 PM on January 18, 2023, virtually via Zoom, with Kristin Seaver, Chairperson, 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:

Kristin Seaver, Chairperson	<i>General Dynamics Information Technology</i>
Nicole Darnall	<i>Arizona State University</i>
Denise Bailey	<i>Milligan Consulting, LLC</i>
Susan Lorenz-Fisher	<i>AmerisourceBergen Corp.</i>
Mamie Mallory	<i>Mallory & Associates, LLC</i>
Stacy Smedley	<i>Building Transparency</i>
Dr. David Waggoner	<i>Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries</i>
Dr. Kimberly Wise White	<i>American Chemistry Council</i>

Absent: Farad Ali, Gail Bassette, Deryl McKissack, Nigel Stephens, and Keith Tillage

Guest Speakers & Presenters: n/a

GSA Staff Present:

Boris Arratia	<i>Designated Federal Officer</i>
Stephanie Hardison	<i>Deputy Designated Federal Officer</i>
David Cochenic	<i>GAP FAC Support Team</i>
Skylar Holloway	<i>GAP FAC Support Team</i>
Cindy Thompson	<i>Closed Captioner</i>
Daniel Swartz	<i>ASL Interpreters</i>
Jill Lamoreaux	<i>ASL Interpreters</i>

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. Any written comments can be submitted through regulations.gov. Roll call was performed before the meeting was turned over to Chairperson Kristin Seaver.

WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

Chairperson Kristin Seaver welcomed everyone and thanked everyone for their participation before going over the agenda.

FULL COMMITTEE DEBRIEF/DISCUSSION

Kristin opened the discussion to hear from subcommittee members on the full committee.

Kimberly Wise White – The discussion was helpful, and it was great to hear the thoughts from the other subcommittees and see that we are connecting with the other subcommittees in terms of focus. As we are looking at our specific recommendations, it's good to see who the recommendations are targeted at. We can only provide recommendations to GSA, but we should be thoughtful of how other agencies can see our recommendations as well. We also need to understand what drives participation and success from people currently participating in the procurement system.

Kristin Seaver – It would be good to conduct an impact analysis to see who would be impacted by these recommendations.

Kristin asked how the group felt about the current position of the subcommittee in terms of the mission statement, priorities, and focus.

Boris Arratia reminded the group about the OASIS & Alliant speakers and how they are finding that not everyone is excited about putting sustainability considerations in the acquisition. He was curious to hear from the group on what insights there were listening to the two presentations and the potential roadblocks for small businesses.

Kimberly Wise White – A few things that stood out was the data collected for OASIS hasn't been translated to what it means. Understanding the metrics and seeing what it looks like and what it means would be important and that's something they haven't figured out yet. If you're participating in the procurement process and an agency is asking you for data, but you aren't sure how they will use it, it might not mean much to

those vendors. This could be seen as something that would discourage vendors from participating. There needs to be metrics for how to leverage the data.

Kristin Seaver – We have a significant supplier pool, but what do they know about what’s going to happen and where the government is going?

David Waggoner – Steven Schooner envisioned these difficulties, but does that make them not actionable? Is GSA ready to receive these recommendations?

Kristin Seaver – Or should our recommendations focus on lowering the barriers? Who are the major contributors to greenhouse gas? A lot of the work GSA is focused on is the professional service contracts and the IT segment. All the presentations are focused on that, whereas the building and construction are in a different process. It would be good to get validation on that.

Boris Arratia explained that a public building service advisory committee deals with leases and buildings. There would be a side of GSA interested in what this subcommittee is talking about in terms of greenhouse and emissions, but in terms of acquisition, there is a sector in industry that would be listening. It’s good to be listening to presentations on professional services.

FORWARD FOCUS DISCUSSION

Kristin reviewed the progress the group has made based on the previous meetings. Toward the end of the three minutes, the subcommittee finally found its voice and could interact and challenge each other to make decisions. She mapped out the subcommittee’s upcoming meetings in terms of what the group was expected to have completed leading up to the full committee meeting. The group needs to expand knowledge, compile top recommendations, refine recommendations and develop implementation vision/tools, prioritize recommendations for submission to the full committee, and prepare full committee output. Kristin opened up the floor to the group to see how they felt in terms of the next steps.

Mamie Mallory was curious about the goods and services that GSA procures and if there was a link to mid-size and small business operations, the dollars associated with those contracts, and the sustainability challenges with those areas. It could give insight into the barriers for small businesses or those needing to stay in the space and come up to speed.

The group shared part of the Acquisition Workforce committee that showed the number of spending for some of the contracts given their spend categories. The

presentation did not show if small business suppliers existed in that space so it was a question as to what the barriers were.

Kimberly Wise White - Thinking about the specificity of our recommendations, is there a benchmark on what the agency needs to do an analysis on and what does that look like for those small to medium size businesses to incorporate some of the sustainability and climate aspects? The second recommendation could be what the agency is striving to achieve.

Kristin Seaver mentioned that from a forward focus point, we are going to have a set list that we have to prioritize and be able to present.

Nicole Darnall – One of the items that came up in the Acquisition Workforce committee was Stephan Sylvan doing an assessment of small and medium size businesses that would be imposed as they moved different sustainability policies forward. It's a robust analyst and nothing has been done yet, but he would be willing to share it with us. It could provide us with data points with respect to specific policies the EPA is interested in moving forward. It would be beneficial for the committee to look at that document.

Kristin Seaver suggested it would be good for the Industry Partnership subcommittee to hear from Stephan Sylvan to focus on that data.

PRIORITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Kristin reviewed the two areas the subcommittee landed on for their priorities which were Engage to Expand and Measures Methods and Motivations. Recommendations should solve a problem, make something better, or advance the objective. She opened the conversation to see what the problem the group is trying to solve in the two areas would allow the group to focus on recommendations. Below was what the group came up with.

Engage to Expand:

- Do we know a knowledgeable and capable target audience on climate and sustainability requirements?
- Making sustainability easy for vendors. How do we do this? What tools are at our fingertips, if any?
- Do we know what effective engagement measures are?
- What are the best ways to increase suppliers' sustainability capacity?
- Who are the folks we want to engage with? Should it be the other way around to ask who wants to engage in the federal marketplace?

- How have other countries and/or states worked to expand supplier capacity around sustainability? What can we learn?
- What does good look like?
- What specific challenges have been for current participants in the procurement process?
- We cannot meet the target audience where they are – who are they, where are they?
- How do we communicate with contractors about what we want?

Measures, Methods & Motivations:

- Do we know exactly the GSA's current sustainability requirements of their suppliers?
- What tools and methods are GSA currently using to measure and motivate suppliers to engage?
- Do we know exactly what the GSA's sustainability requirements of their suppliers are currently?
- Are there other models we can draw on from SBA or other industry associations to help us learn about how to expand supplier capacity?
- What does good look like?
- There appears to be a lack of metrics and benchmarking currently available.
- What are the carrots that we can offer? What are the incentives and tools to get them to participate?

The group discussed some of their problems with making things easy for vendors.

Nicole mentioned the pilot program GSA conducted, where they worked directly with small businesses around greenhouse gas emissions. They invited a certain number of businesses to report their greenhouse gas emissions, and eventually, the program was disbanded due to a large amount of dropouts seen from small businesses. It was difficult for the vendors to address and there were limited capacity issues. If the subcommittee is trying to engage, expand and create opportunities for small and disadvantaged businesses, how do we help them do that?

Kimberly Wise White wondered about what specifically made these businesses drop out. Her biggest caution with any recommendation we put forward is putting barriers forward in the recommendations that leave out the small and disadvantaged businesses.

Stacy Smedley mentioned that it's hard work and a foreign topic to some businesses. If it's voluntary with no monetary outcome, it makes sense for the businesses to drop out. What can we offer to make this worth the time it would take these small businesses to learn? They also need to understand that once they learn this there is a tangible outcome that will help their business. We don't like making people do things, but that could be a detriment if we think about it like that.

Mamie Mallory mentioned that with her experience with the small business community, they see new entrance into the programs through a consulting base. We can also consider certifications to start building their knowledge base around sustainability.

Kristin Seaver asked if there is a group of contractors or consultants dealing with small businesses to whom the group can reach out. Boris and Stephanie are working on getting someone from the office of small business at GSA, however Antonio Heart is high up in the structure at SBA and likely has contacts that can help.

Nicole Darnall reviewed her notes and mentioned greenhouse gas management training for federal contractors. It's a three-part webinar, but it's not differentiated training. Do we need differentiated training? Do we know if small and underserved businesses have taken this training? It would be helpful to hear from those businesses, what it was like and what the constraints were and what would encourage them to step up to the call.

Kristin Seaver suggested a focus group of small businesses where they talk to the committee about their successes and struggles.

Kristin opened the conversation up to what recommendations the group could come up with given the two focus points.

Engage to Expand Recommendations:

- Develop and leverage a sustainability/climate risk maturity model tier that the supplier pool can work towards.
- Create differentiated training/capacity-building initiatives targeted toward encouraging small and diverse businesses.
- Create a climate risk/sustainability marketplace for target suppliers to gain knowledge, access, tools, and resources.
- Matrix the universe –
- Create an amplification roadmap to push out best practices.
- Create mentoring/incubation programs between large and small businesses to grow sustainability capacity.

Measures, Methods & Motivations Recommendations:

- Create templates for vendors to use when developing climate risk plans.
- Create a clear and consistent document outlining GSA's sustainability requirements as well as the tools used/needed to comply.
- Should the large contractors have more responsibility in partnering with the target supplier – incubate, innovate credit?

Stacy Smedly shared her concern about the group not knowing what is included in GSA's sustainability requirement that is already in place or in process with current funding. The definition of sustainability is so broad and it's great to know who we are going to talk to, but what we are talking about needs to be clear and concise. What does sustainability mean to this group versus what does it mean to GSA and what are the requirements currently in place or that are coming?

Kristin Seaver agrees with Stacy, but what is the most important thing to focus on? Even the government struggles with getting the requirement language in the contract mechanism. It's worth noting what we're trying to do and what is important.

Another point Kristin Seaver raised was instead of the government trying to motivate and reach everyone, is there a mechanism that can be placed on the large vendors to incubate the small and disadvantaged vendors? Can the process be improved where the large take on mentoring the small since the large has more resources?

Nicole Darnall is on a research project looking at technologies to advance sustainable procurement and many of the emerging ones are from startups or small businesses. When the startups and small businesses were asked about their struggles to partner with the public sector, they received feedback that there was no space in the room because of the giants already there. These small companies are partnering with the big ones to get space in the room. Does it have to be this difficult?

Mamie Mallory mentioned the other motivating factor is having those partnerships between the large and small businesses, there has to be an oversight that the small business plan was executed in dollars they are receiving as a result of these large contracts.

Kristin Seaver will refine the recommendations list and reach out to speakers the group feels will be important to advance their work.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Maria Swaby referenced Nicole Darnall's point about the pilot study conducted for vendors to report their greenhouse gas emissions. The speaker was Katie Miller and she suggested inviting her to get a more detailed conversation. GSA does have difficulty reaching the small and disadvantaged business population and needs help from industry partners to resolve this. GSA has money now, but they need to ensure small businesses can get a piece of the pie and have sustainability experience. GSA also needs to understand how to curate the content to be translatable and understandable.

She also mentioned that GSA has an office of small business utilization. They are the experts in reaching out to small and disadvantaged businesses, however the challenge is still on sustainability. How do we find those businesses that want to be in this space?

She advised Kristin Seaver to invite small businesses to focus on their successes and challenges. Companies are reluctant to come in front of the government to talk about the challenges they can't meet. If you were to do it, it would have to be in a non-public space and there would need to be reassurances and caveats about non-attribution. You need to make them comfortable with sharing and try to give as much information in advance, so they have time to prepare and provide a better response.

CLOSING REMARKS

Cassius Butts thanked everyone for their participation and the robust discussion around the small business community. It was great to hear the historical data from 2011 about what took place during that time and where the enthusiasts fell off. It would be interesting to see what practices we can implement to avoid losing that enthusiasm. It's a dialogue specific to this committee, and he looks forward to the follow-up.


Kristin Seaver appreciated the engagement of the team. She reminded the group of the administrative meeting next week and will work on speakers for the group before handing the meeting over to Stephanie Hardison.

ADJOURNMENT

Stephanie Hardison concluded the meeting. The next virtual Industry Partnership meeting will be held on February 1st from 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM EST.


Stephanie Hardison adjourned the meeting 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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6/16/2023

Kristin Seaver
Chairperson
GAP FAC Industry Partnerships Subcommittee

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6/16/2023

Farad Ali
Co-Chairperson
GAP FAC Industry Partnerships Subcommittee