

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

**December 20, 2022**

The General Service Administration (GSA) Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Committee (GAP FAC) Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee convened for the second public meeting at 3:00 PM on December 20, 2022, virtually via Zoom, with Darryl Daniels, Chair, and Nicole Darnall, 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:**

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

**Absent:** n/a

### **Guest Speakers & Presenters:**

Brennan Conaway	<i>Branch Chief Acquisition Policy Division Office of Policy and Compliance Federal Acquisition Service, GSA</i>
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### **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>
Adam Sheldrick	<i>GAP FAC Support Team</i>
Skylar Holloway	<i>GAP FAC Support Team</i>
Steve Heller	<i>Closed Captioner</i>
Daniel Swartz	<i>ASL Interpreters</i>

Jill Lamoreaux

*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. She also stated that written comments could be submitted through regulations.gov. Stephanie then performed a roll call to confirm attendance and a quorum. After the quorum was met, she turned the meeting over to the Chairperson Darryl Daniels.

## **WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS**

Chairperson Darryl Daniels welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda before discussing the previous meeting.

## **GUEST SPEAKER REMARKS**

Boris Arratia introduced speaker Brennan Conaway.

Brennan Conaway opened his discussion by talking about what the Federal Acquisition Service (FAS) is doing to address climate change through its acquisition solutions.

Federal Acquisition Service North Star Goals are as follows:

- Creating tremendous value for our customer's mission
- Creating a thriving innovative, compliant, and equitable marketplace
- Make it dead easy to do business with FAS

Sustainability and climate tie into all three of these goals, with sustainability being a key part of compliance and an equitable marketplace in 2023. We incorporate sustainability and climate at the acquisition solution level or master contract level to make things easier for our customers.

Climate and sustainability are an administration priority, but other priorities are being worked on to implement within the acquisition system. We have an executive order tracker that watches for anything that impacts acquisition or procurement. It covers domestic sourcing, equity, labor, and national security. These are being incorporated into the acquisition system in addition to the three keys: performance, price & delivery.

What FAS is currently doing for sustainable acquisition:

- Providing a marketplace for green products and services
- Reducing supplier emissions

- Managing climate risks

There is a Green Procurement Compilation tool managed out of GSA when it comes to facilitating the sale of green products and services within GSA. This allows the acquisition workforce to type in what they want to buy, and this tool will tell them the sustainability requirement. This saves them the time of having to search EPA and DoD websites. We have also expanded this for vendors to use. There are trainings available on this website.

Another tool we have is the Sustainable Facilities Tool Product Search. It is similar to the Green Procurement Compilation, where you can type what you are looking for, but this will give you a list of compliant products. It's not a purchasing tool, but they can get a list to incorporate into their market research or acquisition planning.

The last tool to highlight is GSAAAdvantage!. This is where you can buy products awarded to GSA's Multiple Award Schedule contracts. We have an environmental aisle where they can search by specific environmental programs.

An area of opportunity is accurately identifying compliant or sustainable products. A huge success we've had is when we partnered with the EPA and some of their programs that have a qualified list of good product lists with product information. To improve accuracy, we ingest that list on a quarterly basis and run it through one of our data analytic providers in GSA to make identifying products more accurate. Those products go to GSAAAdvantage!, where we have seen accuracy greatly increase. We've implemented this for all the programs with a list, but we are currently trying to make progress on the ones that don't. We are currently partnered with the Safer Choice program, which has a decent list, but it is not up to the level of Energy Star in terms of accuracy. The approach we are using with the Safer Choice program is the Verified Products Portal, where we partner directly with manufacturers to get their product information directly into the portal. This will show which GSA contractors are authorized to sell in the product portal. It will reduce counterfeit and risky products. There are also sustainability fields added for manufacturers to be able to list those. Safer Choice is working on getting their manufacturers to go into their Verified products Portal, select the products they have, and show their designation. We haven't received the results of how effective that is, but that's an approach we are aggressively pursuing.

FAS has prioritized reducing supplier emissions and climate risk in our major acquisition vehicles. We have a federal contract review process for any of our major acquisition vehicles. Anything that is government-wide over \$100 million must go

through a process with market research acquisition planning, pre-solicitation phases, and there's also a post award review. We are leveraging that process to incorporate GHG reduction requirements and climate risk requirements. The benefit of this is that we are working toward the net-zero procurement goal established by the executive order. Suppose our vendors are reducing emissions, and you place an order through us. In that case you are automatically reducing scope three emissions (Scope 1 & 2 are the emissions you generate onsite at your facility or that you purchase to generate onsite. Scope 3 is your supply chain emission). There are increased efficiencies associated with this after conducting a GHG inventory and disclosing.

Performance, price, and delivery are all impacted by climate change, so by managing climate risk, we can reduce the negative impacts associated with climate risks.

Finally, there's an element of this for the greenhouse gas requirements where we are getting our contractors in our industry base to start disclosing the target reductions. This is getting us ahead in the FAR case for everyone to comply by the time it becomes effective.

In 2016 we started reducing supplier emissions. This approach, which was led by Alliant 2 (Alliant 2 is a big IT contract that GSA manages), requires vendors as a post award deliverable to conduct a GHG inventory with scope one & two emissions two years after contract award, set a reduction target, and report out on their progress toward their target over the life of the contract. This approach has been successful, and we've incorporated this into numerous acquisitions. This requirement can be done for any purchase since we target vendor emissions.

Another approach we are taking is to award offerors points in the pre-award evaluation phase for certain achievements associated with greenhouse gas. For example, one point is awarded for those that can demonstrate their scope one and two emissions and another point is awarded for showing the scope three emissions since that is harder. Other factors that will earn another point are publicly disclosing science-based reduction targets and certification to relevant multi-attribute standards.

To manage climate risk, we require awardees to send us a plan on how they will manage it. We are asking them about their process for identifying, assessing, and responding to climate risk. What have you identified? What is your business continuity plan? For many folks, this isn't on the radar, so this gets our vendors to consider this and take action. After sending the plan, they will send us a report about actions taken or opportunities identified to manage climate risk.

For FY23, the FAS office is looking to supply direct acquisition support. We are looking to continue to partner with the acquisition team to integrate the greenhouse gas and climate risks requirements in new major FAS acquisitions. We are looking for those already integrating it to support them and see how they administer it. Another major initiative is, inviting our major suppliers to voluntarily disclose to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), which many do. To determine which contractors we invite to share this information, we prioritize by sales and climate impact. Thirdly, we are rolling out our federal wide climate and sustainability training for the acquisition workforce. We took a training we had previously and updated it with new requirements. It's a key component of supporting the acquisition workforce. Another priority is developing a supplier climate risk plan template. We are trying to formalize and structure this to give them something they can work from. Lastly, we continue to lead an internal FAS sustainability worker group with representatives from different acquisition centers within FAS that meets once a month. The goal is to make sure they're aware of everything going on around sustainability and climate, as well as to build subject matter expertise. The idea is to have an expert in every acquisition center that can support their acquisition teams.

The Green Procurement Compilation is expecting a lot of things to come through with the potential FAR 2023 case that will be issued regarding developing issues such as plastic reduction or anything the workforce needs to consider when purchasing.

Potential challenges for the Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee to consider:

- What actions can GSA take to better identify green products for customers?
- What can GSA do to encourage acquisition teams to prioritize sustainability and implement innovative approaches
- What are the next steps for GSA to move up the supply chain risk management maturity curve?

## **GUEST SPEAKER QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

**Q:** Darryl Daniels: There's a great deal of focus on the acquisition professional, but what about the program/project managers that have something to procure? Are they considered part of the team? How are we looking to change the mindset of that group of professionals and not see this as a barrier?

**A:** Brennan Conaway: I include both when I say acquisition team, but that is an issue that's been raised. In terms of innovative approaches or sustainability goals, both are required.

**Q:** David Malone: On the requirements, you have for the contractors and suppliers, are they given credit for good faith effort? If they do have a goal they are to be achieving, are you accepting good faith efforts?

**A:** Brennan Conaway: The full test of that for the greenhouse gas emissions is that it will be reported out in the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS). We do include language about identifying barriers to implementation. The only teeth we had for that was CPARS reporting in terms of timely and complete submission. For the pre-award for the point system was self-attestation, so good faith effort wouldn't apply to that one.

**Q:** David Malone: What would you want from this committee? You listed three areas we should focus on, but which is the most important?

**A:** Brennan Conaway: Climate risk. What does that look like moving forward? We've started the process, but we don't know what our plan is going to look like.

**Q:** Anne Rung: When the supplier submits a climate risk plan, is the procurement specialist reviewing the plan? How do they have the expertise or knowledge to know if that's the right plan given they aren't experts in sustainability and climate issues?

**A:** Brennan Conaway: We haven't done it yet for that specific requirement since we haven't received that report yet, but we are working through how we are receiving that. We aren't looking at the plan to evaluate whether it is a good one but whether or not it is responsive and meets our requirements.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall: What are the opportunities for automation that are either structural or administrative solutions that would really make sustainable acquisition part of the default? What are some ways we can automate so this committee can have the biggest punch?

**A:** Brennan Conaway: Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS) is limited in its sustainability reporting, which is applied to the contract level. It's hard to track what we're buying through that system. We are trying to leverage other sources of data. Changing that would be great. In terms of automating things, contract writing systems are another opportunity. COM is the one being rolled out in GSA, but other agencies use PRISM or other ones. This was an EPA/DOD led initiative we partnered on to incorporate it, which didn't get off the ground but could be revisited to help increase compliance.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall: How is the green procurement compilation invoked as the default? How about requiring RFPs to include sustainability language before getting clearance to go into SAM.gov? I'm also wondering about integrating SF tools into the green procurement compilation. How can we make this process easier for the acquisition workforce?

**A:** Brennan Conaway: For the acquisition, you can include the clause in the solicitation, but one question is whether it is being enforced on the back end. Contract administration plays a role there. A lot of this stuff is being procured through service or solution type contracts. We have some volume going through GSAAAdvantage!, but the bulk of the products are being delivered, supplied, or used as part of a service. I went through the three tools which are great, but functionally they should all be combined. I'm not sure how GSAAAdvantage! ranks their products in terms of the green products being suggested first, but that is an opportunity.

**Q:** Steve Schooner: What is GSA thinking in terms of investment in training and expertise at FAI? Is GSA advocating for some/any of these issues being deemed a core competency such that it would be basic knowledge that 1102's (acquisition workforce) would need to get, for example, their FAC-C certification? This ties into FPDS & Sam.gov. If you have numerous data fields, how important is it to the government?

**A:** Brennan Conaway: Our goal with FAS is to have the training and to make it a requirement. There is a huge amount of interest in sustainability training.

Brief Overview of FAS Acquisition: we have multiple acquisition teams, awards schedules, 1102s, contract specialists, assisted acquisitions, and global supply that have implications for sustainable purchasing because they deal with national stock numbers where environmental attributes are assigned somewhat more accurately.

**Q:** Anne Rung: You've mentioned that GSA sought voluntary disclosures of certain environmental standards from major GSA contractors. You alluded to their impact on the climate. How do you assess major contractors in terms of its impact on climate? Are you focused on certain categories?

**A:** Brennan Conaway: We prioritize by sales instead of looking at their impact on the climate. We are looking at ways to prioritize based on impact. We have done it before by using a life cycle analysis to prioritize at a high level, and based on categories, see which contractors are the most intensive with their impact.



**Q:** David Malone: Is there a way for us to get a view of the acquisition workforce organizational structure on how decisions are made and how the culture is influenced by hierarchy?

**A:** Brennan Conaway: We can find resources about how we're structured. We have ways the acquisition process is done. I'm not sure if we have anything documented available on that, but we can look.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall: I'm curious about the types of training you think are most needed to embed sustainability and environmental considerations into acquisition decisions. Should we be thinking about distinguishing different types of training for different classifications of federal acquisition workers? As you're looking at opportunities on the horizon, what do you think is the most needed?

**A:** Brennan Conaway: We only provide training on what it is they need to know, but they still need to figure out what it is exactly that they need to be focused on.

Anne Rung commented about an exercise called walk the store where you have an end user walk us through how they search for a green product, how they search it from beginning to end. It would be good to have an acquisition professional walk us through GSAAAdvantage! and the e-commerce platform. That would give insight into how we can do better.

Brennan Conaway agreed it would be good to expand that since the products purchased through GSAAAdvantage! are low. If there is a way for them to walk through that, it would be extremely helpful.

**Q:** Darryl Daniels: Are there other industries where you submit plans that might be a model here?

**A:** Brennan Conaway: For the GHG disclosure, that is quantitative. There's no way to evaluate the climate risk now. We need to figure out how to get suppliers that are managing their risk and how do we get there.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall: What other individuals in this space would be useful to talk to in terms of areas of opportunity?

**A:** Brennan Conaway: Adina Torbenson is one person, but I will follow up with more names later.



**Q:** Gail Bassette: One of the key recommendations for Global Review 2022 was to advance all aspects of sustainability. How will the federal acquisition and sustainability acumen evaluate equity, diversity, and inclusion?

**A:** Brennan Conaway: GSA has a DEI plan that might be publicly available. In terms of evaluation, the plans outline a lot of steps GSA is taking to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. A lot of that is, for example, making sure the acquisition vehicles are given access to small disadvantages, and different socioeconomic categories and making it easy for them to go through this evaluation process.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Chair Daniels opened the floor to the public for questions, but there were no comments. He then reviewed the Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee Mission & Priorities.

## **ACQUISITION WORKFORCE SUBCOMMITTEE MISSION & KEY PRIORITIES DISCUSSION**

Chairman Darryl Daniels asked if there was any follow up to finalizing the mission statement and any priorities moving forward.

Draft mission: Empower and equip the Federal acquisition workforce to prioritize environmental outcomes and promote sustainability throughout the acquisition lifecycle.

The subcommittee voted and agreed on the draft mission statement before Nicole Darnell moved on to key priorities. The intention today is to see how we can focus our time. In reality, we will only be able to tackle a few of these.

Comments:

- Some of the priorities aren't consistent with the mission statement. #1 speaks to evaluation criteria only when we want to focus on the acquisition life cycle. Do we need to focus our efforts on one of the three areas: green procurement, sustainability, and climate? Green procurement is the most mature, and climate is the least mature.
- Certain priorities that can be grouped together. The priorities need to be refined.
- The greatest victory that this group can achieve is anything that pushes the mass workforce further along the learning curve. There's value in introducing vocabulary, concepts, curriculum, and topics. Until this is a core competency at FAI and DAU, we aren't going anywhere.

Chairman Daniels suggested working on refining the priorities list in the next meeting and not having a speaker before asking for any final calls on the priorities. Each subcommittee member will need to bring two priorities from the focus areas they believe are most important.

**CLOSING REMARKS**

Troy Cribb congratulated the subcommittee on an outstanding agenda and a great session. Looking across the subcommittee, everyone is trying to refine their mission and priorities, but we also have amazing Chairs & Co-Chairs for what the committee is charged with. The subcommittee members are engaged, and everyone’s efforts are appreciated. Stephanie, Boris, & Cassius will be talking about the expectations for each of the subcommittees going into the full committee meeting on January 12<sup>th</sup>.

Co-Chair Darnall will be uploading a google doc for subcommittee members to upload their top two priorities between now and January 3. This will be the basis for the next meeting.

The meeting was turned over to Stephanie Hardison for adjournment.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Stephanie Hardison adjourned the meeting and reminded everyone that the next Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee meeting would be on January 3, 2023, from 3 PM – 5 PM.

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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*Darryl Daniels* 6/20/2023  
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Darryl Daniels  
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