

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

**December 8, 2022**

The General Services Administration (GSA) Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Committees, Policy & Practice Subcommittee convened for its first public meeting at 3:00 PM on December 8, 2022, virtually via Zoom, with Steven Schooner, Chair, and Luke Bassis, 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:**

Steven Schooner, Chairperson	<i>George Washington University</i>
Luke Bassis, Co- Chairperson	<i>Port of Authority of New York and New Jersey</i>
Richard Beutel	<i>George Mason University</i>
Leslie Cordes	<i>Ceres</i>
Antonio Doss	<i>Small Business Administration</i>
Mark Hayden	<i>State of New Mexico</i>
Mami Mallory	<i>Mallory &amp; Associates</i>
Dr. Amlan Mukherjee	<i>Michigan Technological University</i>
Jennie Romer	<i>Environmental Protection Agency</i>
Stacy Smedley	<i>Building Transparency</i>
Nigel Stephens	<i>U.S. Black Chamber of Commerce</i>
Anish Tilak	<i>Rock Mountain Institute</i>
Dr. David Wagger	<i>Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries</i>
Dr. Kimberly Wise White	<i>American Chemistry Council</i>

**Absent:** n/a

## **Guest Speakers and Presenters:**

Adina Torberntsson	<i>Procurement Analyst General Services Acquisition Policy Division Office of Government-Wide Policy</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>
Chelsea Pete	<i>Closed Captioner</i>
Daniel Swartz	<i>ASL Interpreters</i>
Jill Lamoreaux	<i>ASL Interpreters</i>

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Boris Arratia, Designated Federal Officer, opened the public meeting by welcoming the group and reviewing the GSA GAP FAC full committee and subcommittee background. He then performed a roll call to confirm attendance and a quorum. After meeting the quorum, he reviewed the ground rules for public comment.

## **WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

Subcommittee Chairman Steven Schooner welcomed everyone and thanked everyone for their participation and efforts before going through the subcommittee member list for individual introductions.

Each subcommittee member introduced themselves before briefly speaking about their background and what their goals are for the subcommittee.

Subcommittee Co-Chairperson Luke Bassis thanked everyone for their introduction and expressed his excitement to work with the group. He then opened the floor for the guest speaker and subcommittee discussions.

## **GUEST SPEAKER AND DISCUSSION**

Boris Arratia introduced speaker Adina Torberntsson and briefly moved into her background.

Adina Torberntsson expressed her involvement in acquisition-related policy with a focus on sustainability. Hence, they've been working on single-use plastics and how they are addressed through federal acquisition. She stated GSA is looking to seek advice and understanding through the subcommittees to see what GSA should do and any potential unintended consequences.

She mentioned that last year GSA updated its policy manual to address packaging. After updating the policy, they received a petition from the center of biodiversity. The

petitions request aligned with the initial step taken in October about the numerous risks associated with plastic. The result was granting the petition in part and denying it in part. Action would be taken, but not the one, the center of biodiversity, was seeking.

Ms. Torberntsson explained the reason for considering packaging instead of other single-use plastics is that 40% of plastics are packaging. Plastic packaging is understood to be a single-use item, meaning you throw it out immediately once you receive it. There's no opportunity to reuse. A cost associated with the disposal is economic, social, and environmental.

She stated that GSA released an advanced notice about single plastic packing, and some industries viewed it as GSA looking to ban plastic. She clarified that there is a use for the material, and GSA is not looking to ban plastic. GSA wants to focus on the plastic that is polluting and bringing on an economic and social toll. When GSA did the rule making for plastic, they received numerous comments where the majority were in favor of taking action. Now they are looking at the problem from a policy aspect to reduce, reuse, and recycle.

She detailed some steps already taken by having a petition along with the proposed rulemaking with the comments asking for GSA to address this topic. GSA is seeking additional guidance from the Federal Advisory Committee on this topic. There are other government plastic policies in play. New Zealand, Scotland, Australia, California, Canada & Maine have also reduced single-use plastics but haven't banned them. The challenge identified is asking industry partners to update their practices and showcase that the goal is to reduce plastic waste instead of prohibiting it. They are looking to educate both industry partners as well as the government on how to address plastic waste and increase communication with the industry to keep this conversation ongoing. Before concluding, she mentioned that they want to go beyond existing regulations that could attach to plastics. For example, USDAs biopreferred program. That addresses plastic utensils or food containers in government cafeterias, which would fall underneath the biopreferred program.

Chair Schooner then yielded to questions for Ms. Torberntsson from the subcommittee members.

## **POLICY & PRACTICE: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

**Q:** Mark Hayden: What is Europe's best practice for plastics?

**A:** It depends on the country that we are considering looking at. New Zealand is separate from the European Union (EU); however, they have the most information regarding how they address it and its economic impact. There are a lot of examples in, say, Sweden & Norway, where they take their waste and divide it up to see if they can recycle it. They have a circularity that we see in their countries and not ours. They have

a program where you can bring your plastic bottles back to the store for money, where there is a financial incentive on the consumer, and the plastic goes back to the company to reuse. Many of these policies are moving toward reduction. Many of the Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking comments stressed that companies would like to get their product back.

**Q:** Mark Hayden: Can we use correction industries as a potential solution where they can earn money for sorting and recycling materials that other countries no longer accept?

**A:** For procurement, we do business with the federal prison industry. In terms of implementing an overall program like that, it would be outside GSA's scope. It's a reasonable initiation, but it's a matter of what's within GSA's ability to address change.

**Q:** Chair Schooner: The federal government could set up rebate programs at all post offices to incentive people to bring their plastics. Although the postal service is not part of the federal acquisition community, what part do they play in this conversation? If none, are we willing to accept the constraints of 90% of the answer to our problems being that GSA can't do it?

**A:** We have yet to reach out to the post office to ask about their participation.

**Q:** Leslie Cordes: Is there a market for recycled products? Are we looking at the requirements for recycled content so we are driving them more ambitiously?

**A:** My focus is only on the recyclability of plastic. Overall, for plastic to be recyclable, it needs to have a Mobius (chasing arrows) symbol. Some products that have the Mobius symbol, however, are not recyclable. It makes the consumer think it's a recyclable item when sometimes it isn't, which is misleading.

**Q:** Leslie Cordes: Is the federal government setting recycled content requirements so that all plastic wraps would have to have a minimum recycled content?

**A:** Within the federal acquisition requirement, there is information on recycled content. For example, paper should have a minimum of 30% recycled content; however, there isn't one for plastic.

Chair Schooner thanked Adina for coming and talking to the subcommittee and hoped the subcommittee would be able to apply input.

Co-chair Bassis thanked Ms. Torberntsson for presenting to the subcommittee before transitioning to the mission statement discussion of the subcommittee.

## **MISSION STATEMENT DISCUSSION**

Co-chair Bassis read the current mission statement for discussion.

Statement: The mission of the Policy and Practice subcommittee is to identify, develop, and recommend the most impactful changes to federal acquisition regulations, policies and practices to support robust climate and sustainability action.

The discussion moved into the subcommittee's thoughts on the mission statement, and below is the summary of comments:

- The mission statement needs the word actionable along with impactful because more than impactful is needed.
- Are we going to be focusing on GSA or other agencies as well? Should our mission statement include other agencies?
- Having a common approach and one that isn't confusing to work with multiple agencies is crucial.
- We need to introduce the idea of measurably impactful and actionable. Being able to measure or assess how effective our policies are will be important.
- The focus on climate change is important, but there is also resilience. Climate change and resilience sometimes, when it comes to a practical based policy, might not always provide us with an interface solution. Within each subcommittee, we need to have a definition of sustainability, especially if we are using resilience.
- Replace the end with "measurable sustainable results."
- We need to address what we're trying to do in a manner that grows or strengthens the US industrial base. As it grows and develops, we want to make sure all the country's capabilities are put to use, including small businesses, women minority businesses, rural communities, etc., so that it is sustainable from an economic & environmental perspective.
- The level of ambition needs to be addressed in the statement because it currently seems vague.
- We need to think about scalability regarding the actions we're thinking about putting in place.

Chair Schooner suggested the subcommittee member provide additional ideas into the shared folder, before moving to the next topic on the agenda.

## **DISCUSSION ON PRIORITIZATION, STRATEGY, PROPOSED CHALLENGES/FOCUS AREAS**

Chair Schooner opened the discussion on the topic of subcommittee priorities and future speakers. He shared a document on proposed speakers in the shared member's drive. In the shared members' drive were also the priority issues and mission statement.

As it relates to speakers, Chair Schooner stated that now that there is a rule from the FAR counsel out and it focuses on assessment disclosure and targeting, it would be helpful to hear from folks who are experts on scopes one, two, and three. They could also bring in numerous people to talk about the importance of our life cycle cost.

The discussion moved into the subcommittee's priorities, and below is the summary:

- We can leverage and learn from existing policies to help inform what we do and recommend
- We can add policy cleanup to the priorities because some of the procurement policies are difficult to achieve because of how redundant they are, and people look to seek exceptions.

As subcommittee members completed their discussion and review on priorities, Co-chair Bassis then transitioned to the next topic on the agenda, Public Engagement.

Boris provided listeners with a brief statement on the process for participating in this meeting segment before moving to open for discussion from the public.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Holly Elwood recommended an idea for the group to hear from the leads on the net zero emissions procurement goal at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). They have sub-goals under their sustainability goals under Executive Order 14057 in the government that everyone is currently focused on.

Chasity Hamilton suggested if the group is seeking private sector advisement or speakers, Persefoni has a great sustainability board (SAB), including Paul Dickinson (CDP), Curtis Ravenel (TCFD), etc., for carbon accounting frameworks specifically.

Co-chair Bassis concluded the public engagement segment and turned the discussion over to Chair Schooner for closing remarks.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**


Chair Schooner stated that it was a great first subcommittee meeting, and the engagement was great.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Boris Arratia adjourned the meeting and reminded everyone that subcommittee meetings would be every other week.

The meeting adjourned at 4:56 PM EST.

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

DocuSigned by:  
  
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2/1/2024

**Luke Bassis**

Co-Chairperson

GAP FAC Policy & Practice Subcommittee

Former Chair, Steven Schooner was succeeded by Luke Bassis on September 28, 2023.