

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

February 15, 2023

The General Services Administration (GSA) Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Industry Partnerships Subcommittee convened for the sixth public meeting at 3:00 PM on February 15, 2023, virtually via Zoom, with Kristin Seaver, Chairperson, and Farad Ali, Co-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

Committee Members Present:

Kristin Seaver, Chairperson	<i>General Dynamics Information Technology</i>
Farad Ali, Co-Chairperson	<i>Asociar, LLC</i>
Denise Bailey	<i>Milligan Consulting, LLC</i>
Nigel Stephens	<i>U.S. Black Chambers of Commerce</i>
Dr. David Waggar	<i>Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries</i>
Dr. Kimberly Wise White	<i>American Chemistry Council</i>
Nicole Darnall	<i>Arizona State University</i>

Absent: Gail Bassette, Susan Lorenz-Fisher, Mamie Mallory, Deryl McKissasck, and Stacy Smedley

Guest Speakers & Presenters:

Antonio Doss	<i>Director, Strategic Planning and Economic Development, Office of Field, SBA Operations</i>
Dr. Donna Peebles	<i>Associate Administrator for the Office of Business Development, SBA</i>

GSA Staff Present:

Boris Arratia	<i>Designated Federal Officer</i>
Stephanie Hardison	<i>Deputy Designated Federal Officer</i>
Skylar Holloway	<i>GAP FAC Support Team</i>
Lanora Fairman	<i>Closed Captioner</i>
Daniel Swartz ASL	<i>Interpreters</i>

CALL TO ORDER

Boris Arratia, 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 participating before going over the agenda and diving into the discussion.

GUEST SPEAKERS

One of the questions the committee has been asking is what works well in engaging and enabling small businesses to participate in the federal procurement process in the marketplace. Some of it is on the agency side, where they need to be clear and communicate early about the contracting opportunities. These contracting opportunities are developed over a series of months and years. The procurement person's availability is also an issue and was one of the challenges faced during the pandemic. Another issue is about the small business mindset. If you are looking for small businesses in that mindset, you can find them. If there are businesses that exist that can perform the contract as a small business, there are typically available vendors that can do that work. The contracting folks must be willing to see they exist; they typically do that through market research.

In addition to the small business mindset, what works well with engaging and enabling small businesses to succeed in the federal marketplace is working closely with other resource partners, specifically the network of procurement center representatives and the agency office of small and disadvantaged business utilization. Those are the agencies' key small business representatives who can help those firms assess those markets. It's a multi-functional team consisting of small business professionals, contracting and acquisition personnel, and the senior procurement decision makers to do what they can to assess the market for potential suppliers. It ties back to that market research as foundational evidence agencies can use to decide on the most effective business strategy. From there, it's back-to-back commitment and calls to action to be decisive to find a way to make those awards for small businesses. With the OMB coming out in 2022, the call to action was clear and directed the agencies to be more intentional about making a plan and committing to that plan for agency

requirements for small businesses. It helps to elevate those firms and create new entrances. The top of the organization can drive this. The president announced they would increase their goal for small, disadvantaged businesses contracting from 5% to 15%. His action spurred many other activities and helped OMB put forth executive communication.

Knowledge and experience of contracting officers who know small business programs can be a barrier. Our teams work with procurement officials to ensure they understand our programs and can leverage them. Additionally, the consolidation of contracts and bundling has had and has had an impact on the participation of small businesses. And we've been doing research within our office of government contracting and business development to look at how bundling has negatively impacted women-owned small businesses. Those types of tools and data help us to spur changes. In addition, agencies through their office of small and disadvantaged business utilization, must have the director of their small business office report directly to the head of their agency. This communication path is critical because small business senior or business officials can help assist and have more eyes on the contract bundling or consolidation activities occurring across the procurement offices. Through that direct reporting chain is an important relationship with the agency leadership that ensures small businesses have the institutional power to seek intervention when things happen. That communication path can help reduce that barrier.

The 8A business development program section 8A of the small business act requires us to afford maximum opportunity for small disadvantaged businesses. It's a 9-year business development program created to assist firms owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. The sole purpose of the 8A program is to help small disadvantaged businesses compete in the economy. Especially in federal procurement and government contracting through business development. Once the firms are certified and receive 8A certification from the small business administration, they have nine-years to grow their revenues, build their business plans, pursue revenues in the federal marketplace, and build a mix of government and non-government revenues. Through the nine-years of their certification, business development training and technical assistance are key tools made available to those firms. What is unique about the 8A program is that a firm that receives certification is partnered one-on-one with a business opportunity specialist.

The focus is once we get the firms in, we help them build their business plan and decide on their path and strategies. Recently my office looked at our data from fiscal year 20, and there we had about 1571 firms that completed the program three-years

prior to our data point. These are firms that exited the 8A program between 2014 and 2017. Out of those 1571 firms, 1293 are still active generating over \$2 billion in revenue across that region and tied to over 36,000. The business development the firms receive contributes to the ability to thrive in federal contracting and continue to do well.

We are a small agency, but we advocate for small businesses and provide them with resources. We have a host of resources we work with, some funded by SBA or through partnerships that help guide prospective business owners looking for contracts on how that works. We have small business development centers that advise small businesses on various topics, including federal contracting. We have an organization called Score, which are mentors and volunteers who dedicate their time to preparing and succeeding in contracting. We have a women's business center and a veteran's business outreach center. Through the 7J program, we train to ensure businesses have a very focused number of opportunities available for government contracting. Section 7J requires us to provide technical assistance and ensure the firms get what they need as they focus on their business plans.

For example, we have a grant with Net Quarry, which has a tool called Bidspeed which is a market intelligence tool. They've trained over 14,000 small and disadvantaged businesses on how to go through preparing market proposals, understand agency forecasts, and more.

When it comes to government contracting vehicles sized for small businesses, we have under GSA 8A stars three, which has over 1000 task orders issued to 8A firms. We have Vets, too, which are veteran and small business contracts reserved for those firms. Those are examples of how agencies have specifically strategized how they want to maximize opportunities for small businesses.

At the National 8A conference, the SBA & GSA announced their agreement for a special 8A pool under contracts under the GSA schedule, which would allow all 8A firms to have access through the GSA schedule, which will make it easier for contracting officials to identify firms and take advantage of companies already in that pool.

We are also looking at training on sustainability and climate. The potential FAR rule could impact small businesses' reporting data around their climate and sustainability items, as it would be expensive for small businesses. The larger businesses would be okay, but we need to find a better alternative for smaller businesses.

GUEST SPEAKER QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q: Kristin Seaver – What is the secret sauce for the agencies to do robust and rigorous market research and for the community to understand what those market research levers are to be seen?

A: Antonio Doss – The small business administration has a team of employees that are Procurement Center Representatives (PCR) and meets with the buying activity personnel when a contract requirement is being put together. The PCR makes sure the conversation gets steered back to the small business space to have more small businesses participate in getting these federal contracts.

Q: Farad Ali – How does the PCR & OMB work?

A: Antonio Doss – There's a lot of communication that takes place between PCR & OMB. The PCRs are a little more in the background and not so much public due to the volume of work they must do to secure these small businesses requirements.

Q: Kimberly Wise White – How many companies typically go into the 8A program?

A: Donna Peebles – On average, hundreds apply to the 8A program and we certify 600 firms per year on average. We have 105 days to review applications, and once in the program, they go through onboarding and briefing and then hit the ground running, focusing on the business plan and strategies.

Q: Kimberly Wise White – Are there specific benchmarks they need to meet over the nine-years?

A: Donna Peebles – During the 9 year program, years 1-4 are their developmental years. Years 5-9 are their transition years. The goal is to help position the firms so that the majority of the revenue isn't coming from direct award contracts or sole source contracts, which is a key business development tool in the 8A program. During years 5-9 the goal is to help them maximize their business development and trajectory.

Q: Kristin Seaver – How is everyone feeling about the new and existing climate and sustainability requirements? What recommendations can we make to ensure we don't have those unintended consequences of narrowing the field due to the climate and sustainability obligations? Could you tell us what SBA is looking at as far as incorporating that into existing programs?

A: Antonio Doss – Part of it is understanding the way rule making is in the federal space. FAR establishes what we are going to do and how we are going to do it in contracting. SBA is an interested party, but not a member of the FAR council. We have input in the process and are constantly engaged with the FAR council around any items

we think could have an impact on small businesses. We have a team within our office that is their major point of activity.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Maria Swaby – It's hard to see the actual connection between the small business office of the agency and the contracting personnel in a way that directly helps small businesses in general. Many small businesses contact the agency and give you their capability statements. I don't see how usable that is to the contracting officer. It seems to be government-wide and I'm struggling to get them out of that mindset. It doesn't lead them to where they think it is. Do you have insight into how to move those businesses from that mindset?

Donna Peebles – At the National 8A Conference in New Orleans, there was a council at the event that gave advice that it's not an effective strategy, but it's more about understanding market agency and how better to get in front of those agencies. There has been the implementation of face-to-face industry day sessions where they have firms talk to the technical program expert directly and give a pitch day. They've done a great job of honing into specific firms they want to see that they bring them in to get them in front of key decision-makers to hear from them face-to-face. It's an energizing process for the firms to do this. The agency doing this makes the biggest impact instead of having capability statements that won't be looked at.

SUBCOMMITTEE BUSINESS

Kristin Seaver reviewed the timeline of upcoming events with the subcommittee before diving into the interview sheet for questions to ask presenters along with upcoming speakers the group is anticipating hearing from. The group used this time to formulate questions for upcoming speakers.

After creating more questions, they moved on to review recommendations and created questions to refine which recommendations they could move forward with.

CLOSING REMARKS

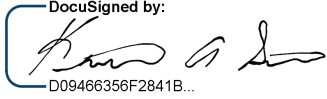
Cassius agreed the presentation was great and informative. He's looking forward to seeing those who can participate in person at the full committee meeting in May.

Kristin Seaver thanked the subcommittee members for their participation and remarks today.

ADJOURNMENT

Boris Arratia adjourned the meeting at 5:00 P.M. EST. The

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

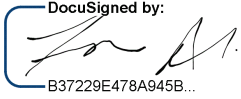
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Kristin Seaver

Chairperson

GAP FAC Industry Partnerships Subcommittee

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6/16/2023

Farad Ali

Co-Chairperson

GAP FAC Industry Partnerships Subcommittee