

10/25/2012 Schedules Modernization Customer Focus Group

10/25 – 3 Customer Participants. Organizations represented included: Judiciary/U.S. District Court; DOL/OASAM; Dept of Homeland Security. 15 GSA participants including facilitator.

1. Facilitator opened the meeting by welcoming participants and discussing the key objectives of the session such as:
 - GSA's business drivers and the high-level objectives for the Schedules Modernization Initiative.
 - The four Solution Sets that have been identified as key tenets for the Schedules Modernization Initiative as shown below:
 - Data Driven Pricing
 - Flexible Contracting
 - Enhanced Service Delivery
 - Increased Knowledge Management Capabilities
2. The primary solutions sets that were the focus for the discussion were: Data Driven Pricing and the Flexible Contracting.
3. The crux of the Data Driven Pricing Solution Set is the introduction of pricing tools, policies, and procedures that will give better insight into pricing variability. The basic assumption is that such information could be helpful to customers and industry. Information regarding how the team developed the solutions was discussed.
4. Focus group participants were asked to respond to the following set of questions:
 - Is price, or price related factors currently your top priority in acquisitions? What is your perception of GSA's prices.
 - What pricing information would you want to access to better plan your procurement? For example, would you be interested in receiving any information on actual prices paid by other users?
 - Would you be interested in a tool that not only provided list price on GSA's contracts, but also of other major government-wide contract vehicles?
 - What do think of mandating tier volume discounts at the order level and/or contract level?
5. Highlights from the Data Driven Pricing discussion are shown below:

PRICING TOOL

- A participant commented that she likes the feature in Advantage that lets you compare three prices.
- Another participant stated that she can usually find the items she's looking for and the prices are competitive. Was also a user of Advantage
- Regarding award criteria, a participant stated that they are required to make awards based on "Lowest price, technically acceptable"; therefore, price is a significant factor.

- A participant noted that for comparative purposes and market research purposes, sometimes it is difficult to get comparative info.
- Several stated that getting prices paid by other Agencies would be a huge plus. In addition, other info such as warranty related and volume related information would also be very helpful.
- Several participants noted that a tool will be helpful for comparative purposes and market research purposes.

PRICING POLICIES

- Volume Tier Discounts were discussed. Volume discounts to reduce prices for all federal Agencies would be a benefit; however, volume discounts just at a single Agency may not be a huge benefit, particularly if the Agency simply does not routinely purchase a particular item.
6. The crux of the Flexible Contracting Solution Set reflects recognition from GSA that the current structure of over 30 separate MAS schedules makes it difficult for customers to navigate, particularly when their requirements cross multiple schedules. A draft solution set that reduces the number of schedules down to the following eight solution sets was offered:
- Facility & Security
 - Office and Furniture
 - Engineering, Environmental, Logistical, & Scientific
 - Business Management
 - Information Technology
 - Travel/Transportation
 - Automotive

7. Highlights from the Flexible Contracting discussion are shown below:

REDUCED NUMBER OF CONTRACTS

- Several agreed, the fewer the number of schedules, the better.
 - One participant stated that the proposed solution sets do cover their buying needs. Note: most of their needs are not complex buys.
 - Regarding another perspective on which schedules to consolidate, one participant stated that sometimes it is difficult to determine which schedule to use; however, if e-Tools and search functions were better, that may also help.
 - One participant commented that he is usually able to find whatever his needs are on schedule.
 - Several agreed that typically, there's a good amount of competition when using schedules.
8. Enhanced Service Delivery was discussed. The crux of this solution set area focuses on establishing a consolidated contact center, tiered support, and providing

access to subject matter experts throughout GSA. Focus group participants were asked to respond to the following set of questions:

9. Focus group participants were asked to respond to the following set of questions:
 - Modernization includes centralization & making things easier. We will begin consolidating customer contact functions where it makes sense. Will this help?
 - What level of customer services or support from GSA do you find necessary or unnecessary?
10. Enhanced service delivery, general discussion notes, other concerns, and other approaches discussed are shown below:
 - ODC policies make it difficult to acquire complex solutions. One customer actually went through a schedule solicitation process but because there were unanswered questions prior to award of ODCs, the schedule competition had to be cancelled at the last minute. Then, a totally new competition was required via another vehicle. Essentially, it took too long to get an authoritative response.
 - GSA response – Participant to be contacted by a GSA leader to help address unanswered concerns regarding wireless telecom service that is on schedule but no corresponding warranty support is on schedule.
 - One participant indicated he was very pleased the current level of customer support and typically had no problems getting the correct answer.
 - One participant noted that in some instances, she actually does not get enough industry responses.
 - In response to other areas of concern, one participant mentioned that it appears leases are being extended, 12 months at a time but with different terms and conditions that what are currently in place. This causes some additional expense and lapse in necessary services. GSA Response – Seems to be a PBS issue, will look into this.

The Transaction Level Data / Increased Knowledge Management (TLD /IKM) Solution Set was discussed very quickly, at a very high level. The crux of this solution set area focuses on compiling data at a transactional level in order to aid government buyers when making their purchasing decisions. TLD /IKM will also provide vital program management information and will provide other information that will help enable strategic sourcing. No specific questions were posed. No discussion.

11. Participants requested copies of the presentation and notes. Meeting adjourned.