

A Six-Part Guide To GSA Contracting

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Foreword

Over the last few years I have worked with well over 200 wonderful companies as a business development counselor and consultant. It is always energizing to meet people who want to get ahead by starting or growing a business. By writing this guide to GSA, I hope to help you decide if GSA is right for you, and if so, how to go about making an offer they just can't refuse.

The original version of this guide was sponsored in 2006 by the Florida Small Business Development Center Network (FSBDCN) and the Defense Economic Transition Assistance (DETA) program at Brevard Community College, Melbourne, Florida. It has been my great pleasure to work with them for the last six years.

This guide is composed of six parts

Who needs this guide?

You are the right person to read this guide if you have an existing business, a good track record, and decent financials. Oh yes, you must have patience. We'll touch more on that important note a little later.

I have helped many businesses, large and small, win GSA contracts. But GSA is not magic, and it is not too complex for most of us. It takes time, close attention to detail, a grasp of government contracting, and an awareness of the health of your business.

Here's the good news, I have found that when any given company wins a GSA contract they will have:

- A solid price list
- A great list of customer references
- An awareness of their financial status
- A killer Capabilities Statement
- Up-to-date federal registrations
- An opportunity to market to the world's largest buyer

Not everyone is granted a GSA contract. After all, the "value" that GSA adds to federal buyers is that GSA has checked you out. If you are not a healthy established business, willing to market actively, you are not likely to get an award. Let's take a moment to learn the ways to use this delightful guide to GSA.

How to use this guide

Obviously, you can read through the hard copy, but this guide will be more interactive if you are using it on a computer, and especially if you have an active Internet connection.

Many links to Internet web sites and resources are provided here. When you click-out on a link, just use your browser's Back Button to return to the guide.

Note: Internet links change, so keep that in mind. This is especially true for links within government web sites.

For example, the Small Business Administration main web site www.sba.gov changes internally from time to time, as does GSA's main web site (www.gsa.gov).

If a link in this guide appears to be broken, you can still usually find what you are looking for by using a search keyword at a main web site.

There are also links to other parts within the guide so you can take whatever path suits you. Use the [Table of Contents](#) to go to any section instantly.

I suggest you use the latest version of Adobe Reader to view this guide interactively. To download the latest version, click here: www.adobe.com.

The game plan

I hope that you will allow me to escort you through the process, and I will do my best. I'll start by introducing important general concepts in government contracting and then I'll help you decide if GSA is right for you - or for that matter, if you are right for GSA.

From there you will learn how to analyze the information to help determine which of the 50 or so schedules is right for you. Once we have picked the right schedule, I'll list and explain ten steps that will move you toward your goal: Sending a quality offer to GSA.

Where's the money? I'll help you understand how to find GSA buying agencies so that you can market to the right people in a competitive market. Getting awarded a GSA contract is just the start; to actually get revenue, you must market actively.

Finally, what fun is government contracting without the red tape and paperwork? In the last section of this guide I'll introduce you to those dreaded reporting requirements. But, as I often tell my clients: "It's their baseball, bat, and ball field, so we play by their rules." The trick is to know the rules, stay inside the boundaries, and never make the umpires confused or angry.

Good luck to you all!

Gary Beckert, Business Analyst

November, 2006

Part 1 - How do you spell GSA? - *An Introduction to GSA contracting*

To understand GSA, you’ll need to understand a few basics of government contracting. And even if you are already a player, the following information will be of value to you.

One thing we need to get past right away is the terminology. In this guide, I deliberately use “GSA Contract”, “GSA Schedule” and just plain “Schedule” when referring to the GSA contract document. The “Solicitation” is the document you download from the Internet, and I use the term “Offer” to indicate your response to the solicitation. Maybe a picture will help describe the morphing GSA schedule.

The Amazing Morphing GSA

The actual GSA Schedule document behaves strangely. It changes its function as you go through the process. This little diagram shows this marvelous transformation.



You download the **Solicitation** document from The Internet, then use your word processor to fill-in the blanks and add information. When you send it back to GSA, it becomes the **Offer**. Finally, after submittal, clarifications, and final negotiations, it becomes a **Contract**.

There are also four distinct phases that you will go through on your GSA quest:

- **Make the Offer.** Prepare the documentation and send it in to GSA.
- **Clarifications.** GSA will probably ask for clarifications. For example, they may want to see invoices or more financial statements.
- **Negotiations.** Once the clarifications are satisfactory to GSA, they will enter into a “final negotiations” phase. They will ask for further discounts or concessions.
- **Award.** When final negotiations are complete, you will receive a contract award and be assigned a GSA Contracting Officer. You will work closely with the contracting officer to manage your contract. You can add or remove items, raise prices, and son on.

Government Contracting / GSA Terminology

Here are a few of the terms and acronyms. To get the most from this guide, make sure you are familiar with the following:

Term or Acronym	Description and additional information
FAR - Federal Acquisition Regulations.	Defines Buyer/Vendor Relationships. You can download the latest version of the FAR from www.arnet.gov . If you are serious about government contracting, you need to be able to use the FAR to research and understand the rules.
NAICS* industry classification codes	The “North American Industrial Classification System”. You pick the code that best describes your business. This code defines your business type and is associated with a “small business size”. Go to www.sba.gov and look for “size standards”.

Term or Acronym	Description and additional information
DUNS** - Dun & Bradstreet number for credit rating	You need DUN to register with the federal government Central Contractor Registry (CCR). Getting the DUN is free at www.dnb.com or call 1-866-705-5711 and tell them you need a number for government contracting.
DCAA	The Defense Contract Auditing Agency oversees small business goals set by prime contractors.
HUB Zone	The Historically Underutilized Business Zone defined by the SBA. The business main office and 35% of employees must live in the zone to qualify. Designated zones change from time to time. Go to www.sba.gov and search on HUB zone.
Prime Contractor	This does not have to be a large business. The term “prime” refers to the main contract holder. It is not unusual for a small business to be a prime, and a large business its subcontractor. Teaming with large businesses such as Harris, Boeing, Lockheed, TRW, and so on is the best bet for most small business contracts. Register as a Supplier with their Small Business Officer (SBLO).
Central Contractor Registry (CCR)	Usually, you must register with CCR to do business with government and prime contractors. CCR is used by prime contractors to find vendors, so your profile is a very important marketing tool. You fill out and maintain your own profile
Solicitation, RFQ, RFP, etc.	An invitation for you to bid. To see solicitations, go to www.fbo.gov .
GSA - General Services Administration	Provides a giant catalog of vendors to government buyers at www.gsaadvantage.gov . GSA is different from traditional contracting. “Getting a GSA Contract” really means being allowed into their catalog at “GSA Advantage!”

Are You Up for a Short Drive?

When I teach about government contracting, I often use a “road trip” metaphor. So hop aboard, and please keep your arms and legs inside the vehicle at all times.

Have you ever dreamed about jumping in your car and leaving on a moment's notice to discover adventure? Do not do that with government contracting!

If you compare government contracting to a road trip there are many similarities. Your vehicle (company) needs to be capable of getting you there; your knowledge of the area (services) and tools (products) will get you along the highway (sales).

Finding the best route is important in government contracting and driving. Choosing a dead-end route or encountering detours will cost you time and fuel (money). You can always get more fuel - but you will never recover the time.

The road is teaming with other drivers who want exactly what you want, and you can expect competition. Other drivers can be friends or foes in government contracting. They may be able to help

by teaming with you to pull a heavy load, or they may push you off the road. Remember that "situational awareness" is critical to a safe arrival.

Before we start our engines, remember that any marketing effort requires that you know what is important to your prospective client. When you sell to the government or prime contractors, they are interested in two things: Capability and Stability.

Be Capable. Be Stable.

Capability means that you can do what you say you can. Capability is assumed based on your past performance and qualifications. Capability becomes manifest as soon as the job starts, so never promise something you can't deliver.

Stability means that you can run a business and can finish the contract. If you stumble on a government contract, word will get out and future business will be jeopardized. Virtually every contract award will value past performance over price, so maintain your good reputation. Make sure you have enough resources (fuel) to get to the finish line before you submit that proposal. You might just win it!

Now that you have your business underway, you are ready to merge into the fast lanes. To arrive safely, you need to know where to steer your efforts, so let's talk about the people you need to know. In government procurement, there are roles that people play, and here are four examples.

These people are very important to you:

- **Users** are at the working level. They recognize the need for a service or product, but have no budget authority. They are very good to know, and can influence the buying decision, but you really need to find the people with money (managers).
- **Managers** should have a budget allocated to fill the need. If not, then keep in contact, but find prospects that identified a need but have a budget.
- **Buyers** get calls from managers to find a supplier. Often, there is already a supplier they know and trust (the "Winner's Circle"). Then the buyer will call that supplier. You need to get into the Winners Circle.
- **Small Business Liaison Officer (SBLO)**. Don't confuse the SBLO role with the Buyer. SBLOs find and register suppliers for their organization. Find out from the SBLO if their company buys your offerings, and if so, register as a supplier. To locate the SBLO, contact the small business (or subcontracts) office at each agency, military base, and prime contractor. To find a list of prime contractor SBLOs nationwide, go to www.sba.gov/gc . Click "Contact and Representatives," and then select "Subcontracting Opportunities Directory."

Now that you know who the players are, you are ready to accelerate and drive with the professionals:

- Don't leave home without market research. If you don't sell what the government buys, you are wasting everyone's time.
- Register with the government's Central Contractor Registry (CCR). All government contractors must register with CCR. If you are not yet registered, it is free and easy. Go to www.ccr.gov, and select "Start New Registration." Keep your profile up-to-date and complete, or buyers may never try to contact you.
- Contact the small business office SBLO at each agency, military base, or prime contractor you want to deal with.
- If they buy your stuff, register your company with them as a supplier.

- Find the buyers. SBLOs will usually give you buyers' names. Be nice to the buyers and make an effort to meet them. Never show up without an appointment.
- Market actively. You need a web site, business cards, brochures, and perhaps a line card. Have them ready at all times. Send cards and letters to your buyers. Keep in touch, but don't tailgate (bug) them.

We are moving along now, but don't go too much farther without making sure your prices will result in profits.

How much do I charge?

In government contracting, unlike many commercial contracts, you must know your cost structure before determining a price. Also, commercial profits can be anything you get away with, but the government will typically hold you to less than 10%.

To compete effectively, you must know your "Indirect Rate," which represents how much it takes to operate your company infrastructure. "Big Indirect" is bad. "Small Indirect" is good.

Detailed pricing strategies and methods are well beyond the scope of this guide, but the good news is that you can use the free, expert, and confidential assistance of a local:

- Small Business Development Center (SBDC – in Florida www.fsbdc.com)
- Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC – <http://www.aptac-us.org/new/>)
- Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE – www.score.org)

Roadside attractions

Now we are really cruising, and here are some roadside attractions you need to know about. We'll look at General Services Administration (GSA) contracts, Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants, and traditional contracting.

GSA

The GSA system is a giant catalog of suppliers (you). Thousands of federal buyers use this catalog to buy just about everything from ammunition to manure (seriously). This guide will help you to navigate GSA and arrive at your destination safe and sound.

SBIR / STTR

If you are the inventive type, try those wonderful SBIRs. Many government agencies publish a list of SBIR grants each year (listed on www.sba.gov/sbir). Each SBIR addresses a very specific need. If you have a great idea that is not on the SBIR list, contact the appropriate agency to see if they accept "Unsolicited Proposals."

A typical SBIR "Phase I" grant allows up to about \$100,000 for a 6-month research project. If your idea looks good, you may get a "Phase II" contract to build and test a prototype. These can be up to about \$750,000 and a year or more. Finally, "Phase III" is where you go to the marketplace.

Each agency has its own set of rules and requirements. Don't hesitate to ask questions as soon as the SBIR comes out, before the "blackout" period when the submission deadline has passed and proposals are under review.

Traditional Government Contracting

Our last scenic stop is traditional contracting. This includes all prime contractors and most federal agencies, making it the largest federal market. You receive a solicitation from the buyer, and you respond with a proposal or quote. Do you know that you can search for virtually all federal solicitations or receive them automatically? Here's how:

1. Go to www.fedbizopps.gov
2. Select "Find Business Opportunities"
3. Select "Vendor's Notification Service"
4. Enter your email address
5. Make your selections from the pull down menus... and there you go! Just what you need: more email!

Every solicitation has great information even if you don't bid. Note the buyer's contact information, because they buy what you sell. Make polite professional contact, and keep in touch with them.

Are we there yet?

Successful government road trips require planning, perseverance, and patience. Good drivers follow the rules of the road and know how to deal with the important players, including managers, buyers, and SBLOs.

On our brief tour you learned that profits are constrained by the government, and that you must always be aware of your cost structure when setting prices. It all takes work and attention to detail, just like a successful road trip. But the final destination is well worth the trip, whether it is GSA, SBIR, or traditional contracting. Be safe, drive carefully, and see you there!

What's coming up in the next installment of this wonderful guide??

In part 2, we will cover what it takes to be qualified for a GSA schedule. Do you have what it takes, and are you ready to make the commitment? Stay tuned and we'll help you'll find out.

Part 2 - Do you have what it takes? - How to determine if GSA is right for you

In Part 1 of this guide, we talked about some basic definitions of government contracting and learned about GSA, Traditional Contracting, and SBIRs. A very important topic was “who you need to know” where we covered key people in the procurement process. Now let’s examine what the GSA process entails.

GSA serves federal buyers. The value GSA provides to federal buyers is maintaining a giant catalog of “checked out” companies. Getting a GSA Contract actually means you have met GSA’s criteria for a stable and capable business and have been included in this giant catalog.

The catalog is available in “GSA Advantage!” and we’ll get to it in detail later. But for now, let’s take a side trip and do a little market research with *GSA Advantage!*

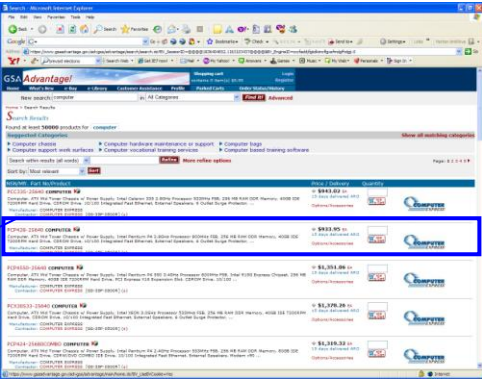
Perform Initial Market Research

Do you sell the things that federal buyers purchase? Can you be competitive? Use *GSA Advantage!* for this initial market research. You will be able to find essential information about your federal government market as well as your competitors.

1. Go to www.gsaadvantage.gov.
2. Under “What are you looking for?” enter a keyword from your industry. For example “computer”, “environmental services”, “portable building”, and so on.
3. A screen similar to the one below will appear. I used the keyword “Computer”.

There are lots of links embedded on this screen. You can find out more about a given company, their GSA prices, and details on their products.

Can you make a competitive offer for the same products or services?





PCP428-25640 COMPUTER

Computer, ATX, Mid Tower Chassis w/ Power Supply, Intel Pentium P4 2.8GHz Processor 800MHz FSB, 256 MB RAM DDR Memory, 40GB IDE 7200RPM Hard Drive, CDROM Drive, 10/100 Integrated Fast Ethernet, External Speakers, 6 Outlet Surge Protector, ...

Manufacturer: COMPUTER EXPRESS
Contractor: COMPUTER EXPRESS [GS-35F-0500R] (s)

\$933.95 EA
15 days delivered ARO

Options/Accessories 



Links

Figure 1. GSA Advantage! Links. You can use GSA Advantage! to research your competitors and to see the prices your products and services are going for.

4. Use the links found along each line. We won't go into any details on each of the links, but do some exploring on your own. Sometimes you find a treasure!

Know the Health of Your Company

What can I say to this topic that isn't obvious? But let me give you a case study from a real-life client.

A Case Study: *The Dead-End*, or, "Oops, I forgot to mention those darn liens and lawsuits."

Everything looked good. The company had a long history, client references were fine. And you should have seen their plant – modern, clean, large. The price list was finalized and GSA discounts were reasonable. The offer was as pretty as can be.

Off it went to GSA. We waited patiently for the first GSA response, which is typically a letter requesting clarifications or additional information. Finally it arrived, after only two months – a near record for promptness.

Anyway, the first few clarifications were easy... no big deal. Then came the death sentence based upon GSA's own research: *Pages of liens, lawsuits, and Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) filings. No apparent Line of Credit and little cash.*

"Sorry" comes the word from GSA. "Even though your prices are competitive and everything else is great, we don't feel that you are stable." And then, "Have a nice day." End of Story

The moral of this little saga is that you must take a realistic look at the overall health of your business before you invest the time and money pursuing a GSA contract. GSA will research your company and probably find those hidden skeletons. If you do have a troubled history, be sure to have the documented proof that old legal issues were resolved, debts paid, and so on.

There is some good news. There is an appeal process and a way to get a Certificate Of Competency from the SBA. So as long as things are really OK with your company, you can possibly overcome GSA's objections.

Be Ready to Market to GSA Buyers

Getting the GSA contract award is just the start. You have a contract, great, but there will be no revenue until you actually sell something.

When I say "Be ready" I really mean "Have adequate money and time for marketing." You can't be passive with GSA – if you don't make sales the first year, GSA can and will cancel your contract. I know of several cases.

When talking with these folks, I often hear "GSA has done us no good, anyway." When asked about their marketing practices, invariably they tell me that they did not have the marketing and sales resources to really do anything.

It's a competitive – big – market. Why do many succeed and a few fail? Because no one told the failing companies that they need to get out there and do the things it takes to make sales, especially locating buyers and forming professional relationships.

Gary's Mini-Lecture #1: *Buyers are people too.*

Even though we tend to think of the government as a single entity, when it comes to selling things, you end up dealing with a person at the other end of the phone or across the desk based on trust. I've seen it time and again - it doesn't matter if you sell desk mats or multi-million dollar products and services.

And contrary to popular belief, not all awards are based solely on price.

Do buyers have their pet vendors? Absolutely. Your job – if you are a player – is to form relationships where a buyer knows you, and knows that they can rely upon you.

In the section about “Selling Your Stuff” I’ll talk about finding GSA Buyers and some best practices for dealing with any government buyer.

Our next installment – Part 3 – will give you some guidance on selecting the proper GSA schedule(s). We’ll cover the common elements of the solicitations and show you how to select the “Special Item Numbers” (SINs) that relate to your offerings. See you then!

Part 3 - Only 54 to choose from? - *Finding the right GSA Schedule*

Welcome to Part 3 of the GSA Contracting series!

In Part 2 you may recall that we talked about determining if you have what it takes to get on schedule. In this chapter, we'll look at which schedules are available and how to select the "Special Item Numbers" (SINs) that you need.

The last time I counted, there were 54 GSA Schedules, listed in a few moments. While they all follow the same basic format, they can be very different from one another in the types of information you must provide with your offer. For now, I'll talk about what the schedules have in common. These common elements include:

- Basic Solicitation
- Special Item Numbers (SINs)
- Past Performance References
- Price Lists, Discounts, and Freight On Board (F.O.B.)
- Attachments

The Basic Solicitation

This is the body of the contract and can be anywhere from about 60 pages to over 140 pages, depending on the schedule. The first page is always the "1449 Form" or, "Solicitation/Contract/Order For Commercial Items". When you submit the offer, this form must be completed, signed, and dated. Following that, there are a number of "fill in the blank" spaces in the basic solicitation.

Some fill-in information is pretty generic about your company address, contact information, and so on. Other fill in the blanks relate to the types of service or products you offer, and if you provide overseas delivery.

You must carefully look at each page! If information is missing, GSA will ask for a clarification, or worse, reject the offer as not being responsive.

The basic solicitation also contains "instructions to offerors". Pay attention to these. You may be required to construct attachments in a certain way, or perhaps submit two copies of certain documents. If your offer is substantially incomplete in GSA's judgment, it will be rejected and you will have to re-submit the offer.

Finding the Right Solicitation

Sometimes the choice is obvious. For example, if you provide law enforcement supplies, you will use Schedule 84 (Law Enforcement Supply). In other cases, for example if you provide training, you may need to use the "MOBIS" Schedule (874), or perhaps Schedule 70, which has a SIN for technical training. The following table shows the current list of GSA Schedules.

Schedule Number	Description
00CORP	The Consolidated Schedule
03FAC	Facilities Maintenance and Management
23 V	Vehicular Multiple Award Schedule (VMAS)

Schedule Number	Description
26 I	Tires, Pneumatic (New), For Passenger, Light Truck, Medium Truck, and Bus, and Retread Services
36	The Office, Imaging and Document Solution
48	Transportation, Delivery and Relocation Solutions
51 V	Hardware Superstore
520	Financial and Business Solutions (FABS)
541	Advertising and Integrated Marketing Solutions (AIMS)
56	Buildings and Building Materials/Industrial Services and Supplies
58 I	Professional Audio/Video, Telecommunications, and security Solutions
599	Travel Solutions
66 II J	Test and Measurement Equipment, Aviation Instruments and Equipment Aircraft Components, Maintenance and Repair Services, and Unmanned Scientific Vehicles
66 II N	Chemistry, Biochemistry, Clinical Instruments, General Purpose Laboratory Instruments, Laboratory Furnishings and Accessories, and Related Services
66 II Q	Geophysical, Environmental Analysis Equipment and Services – Geophysical Environmental, Analysis and Hazard Equipment
67	Photographic Equipment – Cameras, Photographic Printers and Related Supplies and Services (Digital and Film-Based)
69	Training Aids and Devices, Instructor-Led Training; Course Development; Test Administration – Programmed learning devices
70	General Purpose Commercial Information Technology Equipment, Software, and Services – Pursuant to Section 211 of the e-Gov Act of 2002, Cooperative Purchasing provides authorized State and local government entities access to information technology items offered through GSA’s Schedule 70 and the Corporate contracts for associated special item numbers.
71 I	Office Furniture
71 II	Household and Quarters Furniture
71 II H	Packaged Furniture
71 II K	Comprehensive Furniture Management Services (CFMS)
71 III	Special Use Furniture
71 III E	Miscellaneous Furniture
72 I A	Floor Coverings – Carpet Rugs, Carpet Tiles and Carpet Cushions
72 II	Furnishings
73	Food Service, Hospitality, Cleaning Equipment and Supplies, Chemicals and Services – Food Service Equipment, Supplies, and Services
736	Temporary Administrative And Professional Staffing (TAPS) – Temporary Administrative and Professional Staffing Services
738 II	Language Services
738 X	Human Resources and Equal Employment Opportunity Services
75	Office Products/Supplies and Services and New Products/Technology – Schedule 75 now includes Videotapes, Audiotapes, tape Cartridges, Diskettes/Optical Disks, Disk Packs, Disk Cartridges, Anti-Glare Screens, cleaning

Schedule Number	Description
	Equipment and Supplies, Ergonomic Devices, Next Day Desktop Delivery of Office Supplies, and Restroom Products such as Roll Toilet Tissue Dispensers, Toilet Tissue, Paper Towels, Toilet Seat Covers, Facial tissues, and Soaps for Restroom Dispensers
751	Leasing of Automobiles and Light Trucks
76	Publication Media
78	Sports, Promotional, Outdoor, Recreation, Trophies, and Signs (SPORTS) – Trophies, Awards, Presentations, Promotional Products, Briefcases and Carrying Cases, Trade Show Displays and Exhibit Systems And all Related Products
81 I B	Shipping, Packaging and Packing Supplies – Bags, Sacks, Cartons, Crates, Packaging And Packing Bulk Material
84	Total Solutions for Law Enforcement, Security, Facilities, Management, Fire, Rescue, Clothing, Marine Craft and Emergency/Disaster Response – Marine Craft and Equipment
871	Professional Engineering Services
871 II	Energy Services
873	Laboratory Testing and Analysis Services
874	Mission Oriented Business Integrated Services (MOBIS)
874 V	Logistics Worldwide (LOGWORLD)
899	Environmental Services

Table 1. List of GSA Schedules. There is some overlap between schedules. Make sure that the SINs (see below) match your offerings before choosing a schedule.

Confess Your SINs

One thing that all have in common are “Special Item Numbers” (SINs). SINs describe the specific product or service related to the schedule. For example, in the “IT Services” schedule, SIN 132-8 is for selling computer products, while SIN 132-51 is for custom computer programming.

Once you find the schedule you want, you then select the SINs that are appropriate, it can be one SIN, all SINs, or any combination. A list of SINs is provided with each schedule. For example, the following table shows the SINs for the IT Services Schedule (Schedule 70) cross references to the appropriate NAICS code and small business size.

Table 2. IT Services SIN / NAICS / Size Chart

SPECIAL ITEM NUMBER(S)	NAICS	NAICS DESCRIPTION	SIZE
132-8	334111	Electronic Computer Manufacturing	1,000
132-8	334112	Computer Storage Device Manufacturing	1,000
132-8	334113	Computer Terminals Manufacturing	1,000
132-8	334119	Other Computer Peripheral Equipment Manufacturing (pt)	1,000
132-8	334210	Telephone Apparatus Manufacturing	1,000
132-8	334220	Radio and Television Broadcasting and Wireless	750

SPECIAL ITEM NUMBER(S)	NAICS	NAICS DESCRIPTION	SIZE
		Communications Equipment Manufacturing	
132-8	334290	Other Communications Equipment Manufacturing	750
132-8	334310	Audio and Video Equipment Manufacturing	750
132-8	335931	Current-Carrying Wiring Device Manufacturing	500
132-8	335932	Noncurrent-Carrying Wiring Device Manufacturing	500
132-8	443120	Computer and Software Stores (pt) – Retail	500
132-51 132-52	511199	All Other Publishing	500
132-32 132-33 132-34	511210	Software Publishers	\$23.0
132-52	516110	Internet Publishers and Broadcasting	500
132-52	517110	Wired Telecommunications Carriers (pt)	1,500
132-53	517211	Paging	1,500
132-53	517212	Cellular and Other Wireless Telecommunications (pt)	1,500
132-52 132-53	517310	Telecommunications Resellers (pt)	1,500
132-52 132-53	517410	Satellite Telecommunications (pt)	\$13.5
132-52 132-53	517910	Other Telecommunications	\$13.5
132-52	518111	Internet Service Providers	\$23.0
132-52	518112	Web Search Portals	\$6.5
132-52	518210	Data Processing Services (pt)	\$23.0
132-3 132-4	532420	Office Machinery and Equipment Rental and Leasing (pt)	\$23.0
132-51	541511	Custom Computer Programming Services	\$23.0
132-51	541512	Computer Systems Design Services (pt)	\$23.0
132-51	541513	Computer Facilities Management Services	\$23.0
132-51	541519	Other Computer Related Services	\$23.0
132-50	611420	Computer Training, except Computer Repair	\$6.5
132-12	811212	Computer and Office Machine Repair and Maintenance (pt)	\$23.0

Past Performance References

Past Performance is one of the most important parts of any GSA schedule. You will be required to provide 6-20 references, and each will be checked. Interestingly, this is the only hard cost associated with getting a GSA contract. The fee, payable to Open Ratings, is currently \$125.

Open Ratings (associated with Dun & Bradstreet) performs the reference check from the list of references that you supply. They will call and/or email each reference and prepare two copies of your “score card” – one for you and one for GSA.

In order to prepare a report, Open Ratings will need at least four of your references to respond, which is why you should submit at least six references. For the most part, if Open Ratings does not get four completed surveys, they will not process the information and you will not get the GSA award. Exceptions are very rare.

Below is a portion of a completed Open Ratings Report. You can see the categories they use for the surveys. How do you stand up?

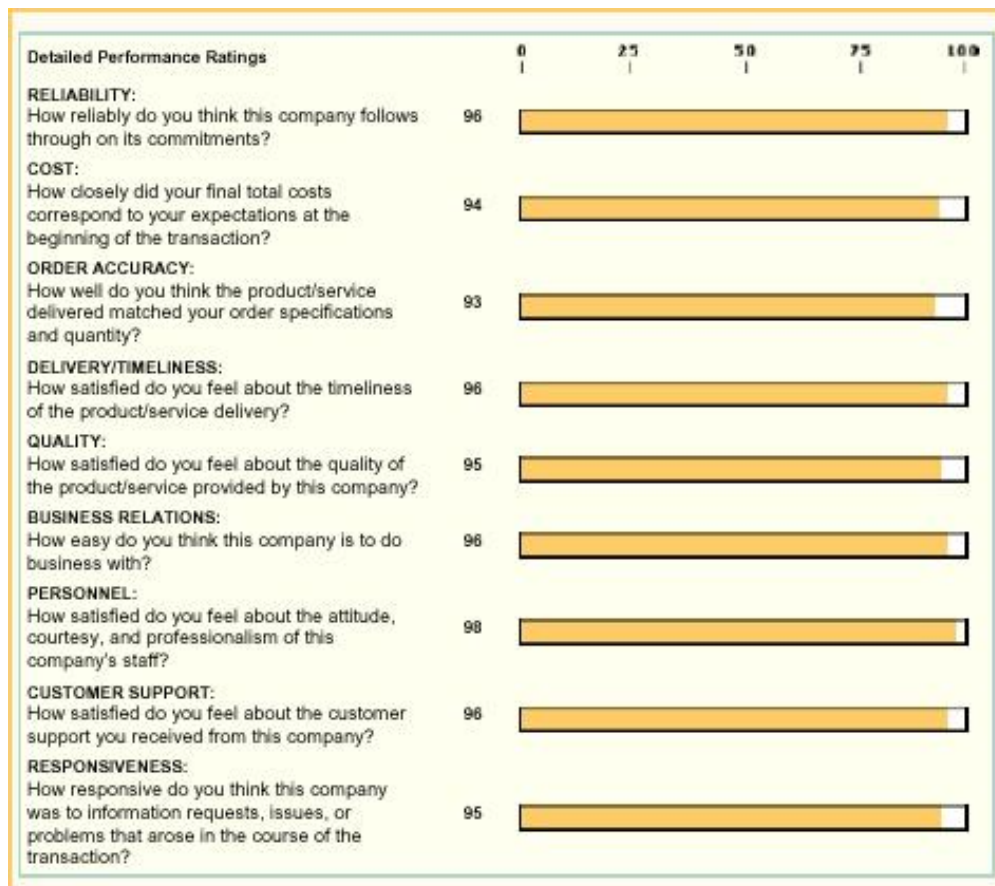


Figure 2. A portion of an Open Ratings Report, showing very high ratings. Open Ratings contacts each reference and asks questions about these aspects.

Price Lists, Discounts, and Freight On Board (F.O.B.)

Based upon my experience as a GSA consultant, coming up with a price list is far and away the hardest part for most businesses. The reason is usually that the company has not established a formal price list, and has had an informal process for giving discounts and covering shipping costs.

When you make the offer to GSA, you specify that the prices that you offer are the lowest given to anyone. In most cases, GSA asks for invoices to back up that claim. Further, GSA wants the same or better discount than you have given your “Most Favored Customer”.

Be careful when you set prices. I suggest you look closely at *GSA Advantage!* to see what similar services and products are selling for. Remember that GSA will expect you to discount even your lowest price. For most situations, I suggest to start low (2-3%), be resistant to negotiations, and try not to go more than 5% if you have to. What does a GSA Price List Look like? This is a generic example I use for training.

Table 3. Example GSA Price List for products and services. The gray areas indicate areas where your pricing information would be entered. Note that we calculate and add the Industrial Funding Fee (IFF) (currently .0075%) to the discounted list price. We also need to specify the origin of all products.

Products					GSA Price		
SIN	Part #	Description	Commercial Price	GSA Discount	GSA Price	w/IFF	Origin
426-1A	12345	Rubber Chicken	\$10.00	7%	\$9.37	\$9.44	USA
426-1A	12346	GPS Transponder	\$500.00	7%	\$468.49	\$472.00	USA

Services					GSA Price
SIN	Labor Category	Description	Commercial Rate/Hr.	GSA Discount	GSA Price
102-3	JP-1	Jr. Poobah	\$75.00	7%	\$70.27
102-3	P-1	Poobah	\$85.00	7%	\$79.64
102-3	SP-1	Senior Poobah	\$105.00	7%	\$98.38

Discounts can be based on quantity, how soon the invoice gets paid, and so on. Many businesses have never had to document their discounts. Now, they have to research, find, and document the discounts. Discounts can also be called “concessions”.

Finally, you must specify if you will pay the freight (F.O.B. Origin), or the customer pays for the freight (F.O.B. Destination). It makes a big difference, and can be a real issue in some cases. Some schedules require FOB Origin, some require FOB Destination.

Attachments

The types and number of attachments varies greatly from one solicitation to another. Be sure to send in all the proper, and fully-completed attachments. Your offer can be rejected if you forget any of them. An attachment might be a set of invoices, a company history, basic financials, and so on.

Are you ready for Part 4 of the GSA Contracting series? Now that we have covered the parts and components of a typical GSA schedule offer, we’ll look at ten steps to make it the best it can be. Check in next time for “10 Steps to a Delicious GSA Offer”.

Part 4 - GSA Recipe - 10-steps to a delicious GSA Offer

Thank you for coming back! This is Part 4 of the 6-part guide to GSA Contracting. In Part 5 we learned about the various solicitations and covered the components of a GSA schedule. Now we'll take a look at the process for building the offer.

Research, Locate, and Download the solicitation

By research, I mean find the best fit for your business. For example, if you have an industrial supply company, you might consider either the "Hardware SuperStore" (Schedule 51V), or the "Industrial Supplies and Services" (Schedule 56). To determine which is the best fit, look closely at the SINs and make sure there is a good match. If you are still in doubt, call the GSA information contact person listed in the solicitation and ask them directly. Here are instructions for the current GSA Internet web site.

To look at the SINs for any given schedule, click this link: [GSA Schedules E-Library](#), or access the library from the GSA main web site at www.gsa.gov.

Once you are at the Schedules E-Library, select your schedule from the pull down list under "QUICK SCHEDULE" and then click the "GO" button. This will take you to FedBizOps (www.fbo.gov) where you can view the list of SINs and download the solicitation files.

To download the solicitation files (usually there are several), click the "Vendors" button and you will then be able to download the solicitation. The files will typically be contained in a single "zip" file. Once you have the files downloaded, I suggest you create a special folder on your computer and keep all the GSA files in there.

Here is an example list of the files you might see:

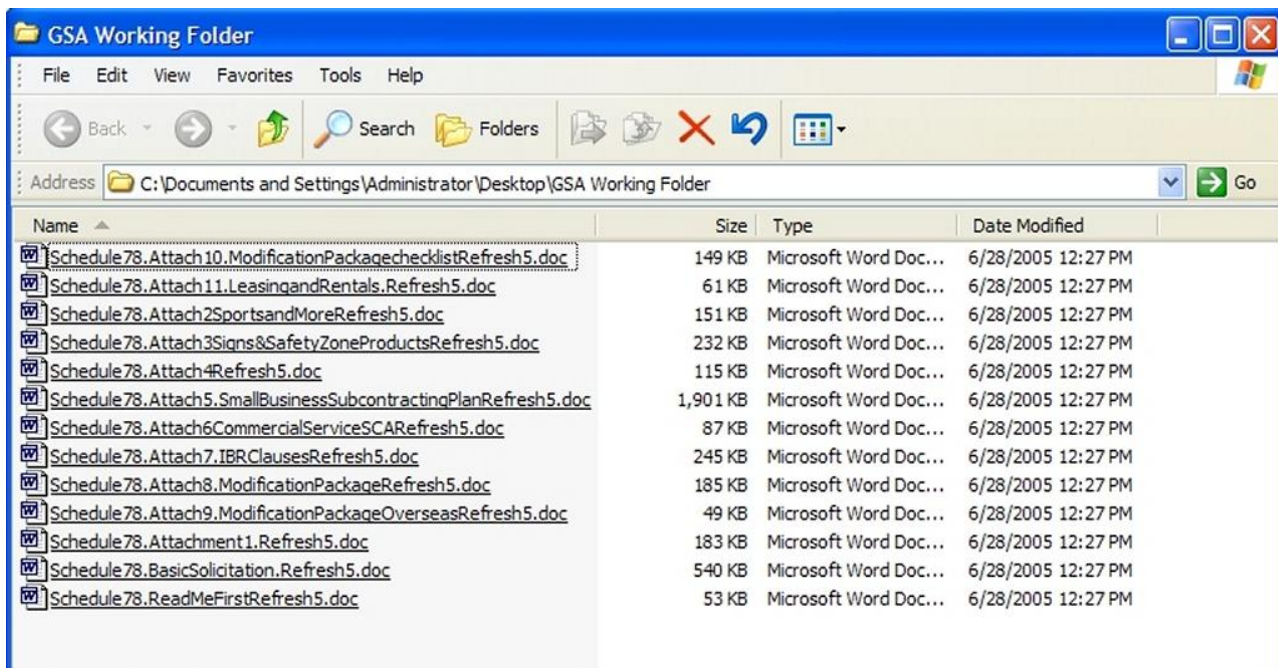


Figure 3. List of files associated with GSA Schedule 78 (SPORTS). Each of these files has a purpose; some are informational, and others must be printed, filled-out, and sent with your offer.

Look for the “read me” information files and take the time to read them. Note that several of the documents are attachments (for example “Attach7...” in the figure above). Which attachments you use depend in the SINs that you offer, and each attachment will be described in the basic solicitation. Some attachments are informational, and others have fill-in-the-blanks sections.

The key document is the “Basic Solicitation” and will have words like “basic solicitation” somewhere in its file name. In our example above, the basic solicitation file is second up from the bottom. Everything revolves around the basic solicitation, so that is the starting point.

Finally, note that the file names include “Refresh5”. This is very important. If you don’t send the latest refresh (version) to GSA, they will probably reject your offer and you have to start over with the new refresh. To make sure you have the latest refresh, download the files using the GSA Schedules E-Library. If you have been working on a schedule for several weeks, check to see that you have the latest refresh before sending in your offer.

Use GSA "eOffer" or Print and put into a 3-ring binder when allowed

GSA eOffer allows you to submit your offer electronically. To do this, you will need a "digital certificate" which allows your computer to "sign" documents. For more information, refer to <http://eoffer.gsa.gov/>. Most GSA offers are now being submitted electronically.

For printed copies, I have found that it is best to work from a hardcopy as well as the computer screen. Since we have to put our offer in a binder for GSA anyway, building a binder from the start saves a lot of time down the road. Below is a real-life example offer “cover sheet” describing binder contents.

GSA Offer Cover Letter

My Corporation

1234 Street - MyTown, Florida 32950 - (321) 433-5570

Friday, August 12, 2011

GSA/FSS IT Acquisition Center
Attn: BOOCO, Room 606
2200 Crystal Drive
Arlington, VA 22202

Re: GSA Schedule Offer

Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this offer. The included binders (original and copy) contain the following sections with the information required by the solicitation.

- Tab 1 – Basic Solicitation
- Tab 2 – Federal Supply Services Price List
- Tab 3 – Organizational Overview and Past Performance Information
- Tab 4 – GSA Price list showing SIN, List Price, GSA Discount, and GSA Net Price (including IFF)
- Tab 5 – Commercial Price List

Binder Inserts – This cover letter

Thank you again for your support and trust. Please contact us if you require additional information or clarifications.

Very best regards,

Iona Furm, President

My Corporation

MyTown, Florida

Figure 4. Example GSA Offer Cover Letter. This letter lists the binder contents to make it easy for GSA to find information. Note that the basic solicitation is the main document.



As you study and respond to the basic solicitation and attachments, you will see how the binder will need to be built. Most of the time, I use a 5-tab binder, but offers with several attachments can take more tabs. Neatness counts – make sure it looks professional!

Read and understand – content and responsiveness requirements

There are two types of requirements in almost any contract solicitation. The first is “content” – such as the basic solicitation, price lists, attachments, and so on. The second aspect is “responsiveness” – did you include the proper attachments, the right number of copies, use the right font, and so on.

Content usually consists of the basic solicitation, the commercial price list, the GSA Price List, and attachments. With some schedules you need a corporate history or perhaps financial information about your company.

But it is also important to understand that the offer must be “responsive” and comply with the instructions in the solicitation. For example, if two copies of a commercial price list are required, and you only send one copy, your entire offer may be rejected. You then have to re-submit the offer, which puts you back at the end of the line.

If you are familiar with traditional federal solicitations, you know there is a section called “Instructions to Offerors”. This is where you get the instructions to ensure your offer is responsive. Unfortunately, with GSA, the instructions may be distributed here and there throughout the documents. For example, in some solicitations they require two copies of the commercial price list – but the instruction for this is buried in a paragraph deep in the document.

To make sure to see all the instructions, open the document and do a search for the word “instructions”. It sounds obvious, but many people forget that trick!

The point is this: Make sure that you read all of the documents and locate the instructions. Your offer must be complete and responsive.

Send your past performance references to Open Ratings

Early in this guide we talked about how important it is to have several past performance references who will respond to the survey by Open Ratings (Figure 2.). From what I understand after talking to Open Ratings, they need at least four responses from your customers to make an evaluation. The requirement from the GSA solicitation is a minimum of six references and a maximum of 20. More is better.

It is important to get this started right away. It can easily take 3 or more weeks for Open Ratings to complete the evaluation and send it in. Open Ratings sends a completed evaluation to both you and

GSA. Obviously, you must carefully choose your references, and talk to them beforehand to make sure they will respond to the Open Ratings survey.

The form for Open Ratings is included somewhere in the solicitation. The cost for the report is currently \$125. You don't need a lot of information to send to Open Ratings. You will need at least:

- Customer Name
- Customer Contact Name
- Telephone Number
- Email Address

All of these items are required. For example, if you don't include email addresses or phone numbers, Open Ratings will not attempt to contact your references. And again, if Open Ratings doesn't get at least four references, they will not perform the research and you will not get the GSA contract. Note that the form also requests the DUNS for each of your references. My experience is that you do not have to provide this (it can be very hard to find).

I prefer to fill-in the form on the computer, print it, and then fax to Open Ratings (with credit card payment information). The fax number is on the form. You can also email the form or use the Open Ratings web site.

Finally, you will receive a receipt by email from Open Ratings. You can send the receipt along with your offer if your past performance evaluation has not been completed yet.

Fill-in the blanks – ask if not sure!

OK, now back to the basic solicitation. There are places here and there within the solicitation that require you to fill in the blanks. You must carefully look at each and every page to see where they are asking for information or have a "check-box" to be filled-in. Following is a section of a Hardware SuperStore (51V) section that has a place for a check-box, as well as a fill-in-the-blank section.

<p>(a) The offeror or respondent, in the performance of any contract resulting from this solicitation, [<input type="checkbox"/>] intends, [<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>] does not intend [check applicable block] to use one or more plants or facilities located at a different address from the address of the offeror or respondent as indicated in this proposal or response to request for information.</p> <p>(b) If the offeror or respondent checks "intends" in paragraph (a) of this provision, it shall insert in the following spaces the required information:</p>		
<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>PLACE OF PERFORMANCE (Street Address, City, State, County, Zip Code)</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>NAME AND ADDRESS OF OWNER AND OPERATOR OF THE PLANT OR FACILITY IF OTHER THAN OFFEROR OR RESPONDENT</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>PLACE OF PERFORMANCE (Street Address, City, State, County, Zip Code)</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>NAME AND ADDRESS OF OWNER AND OPERATOR OF THE PLANT OR FACILITY IF OTHER THAN OFFEROR OR RESPONDENT</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>PLACE OF PERFORMANCE (Street Address, City, State, County, Zip Code)</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>NAME AND ADDRESS OF OWNER AND OPERATOR OF THE PLANT OR FACILITY IF OTHER THAN OFFEROR OR RESPONDENT</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	

Figure 5. Example of a schedule "check-box" and "fill-in-the-blank" section. These are located throughout the solicitation and attachments, so read them carefully.

There will probably be places that are confusing or require information you do not have. The good news is that you can call (or email) the GSA contact person listed at the beginning of the solicitation.

These fine folks are usually very helpful and want to answer your questions. Be patient, though. For example, if you have to leave a voice message, they usually will get back to you within a day or two. It’s about the same with an email question – give them a day or two to respond.

Prepare your Price Lists (Commercial and GSA)

In the ideal world, you already have a solid price list, a printed catalog, and sales receipts that match the price list. Most of my clients have none of the above, and this is a big part of the effort.

In order to show GSA that your prices are reasonable, you must show them your “Commercial” price list compared against your “GSA Price List”. For each service or product that you sell, your GSA Price List will show the commercial price, the discount you offer to GSA, and the final GSA price.

For now, let’s look at a simple commercial price list that has both products and services.

Products

Part #	Description	Commercial Price
12345	Rubber Chicken	\$100.00
12346	GPS Transponder	\$1000.00

Services

Labor Category	Description	Commercial Rate/Hr.
JP-1	Jr. Poobah	\$75.00
P-1	Poobah	\$85.00
INST	Installation	\$1,000.00

Table 4. Simplified Commercial Price List.

In order to create the GSA Price List, we need to add some columns to the table. First, we list the SIN that relates to the item. Then we add columns to show the GSA discount, the GSA Price, and the Final GSA Price, which includes the “Industrial Funding Fee” (IFF).

Because you carefully looked at the solicitation, you know that you have to add the IFF to the discounted price to get the final price. Right? Don’t feel bad if you didn’t catch it.

At the time this guide was created, the IFF is .0075% of the GSA Discounted Price. For example, if the discounted GSA Discounted Price of your item is \$90, then you need to add .0075 to that to get the final price, resulting in a final GSA Price (GSA Price With IFF) of \$90.68.

The following table shows an example of a GSA Price List that includes both products and services examples.

Products

SIN	Part #	Description	Commercial Price	GSA Discount	GSA Discounted Price	GSA Price with IFF
123-1	12345	Rubber Chicken	\$10.00	10%	\$9.00	\$9.07
746-2	12346	GPS Transponder	\$100.00	10%	\$90.00	\$90.68

Services

SIN	Labor Category or Service	Description	Commercial Rate	GSA Discount	GSA Discounted Price	GSA Price with IFF
871-1	JP-1	Jr. Poobah (per hour)	\$75.00	10%	\$67.50	\$68.01
871-1	P-1	Poobah (per hour)	\$85.00	10%	\$76.50	\$77.07
871-3	INST	Installation	\$1,000.00	10%	\$900.00	\$906.75

Table 5. Simplified GSA Price List showing SIN, GSA Discount, GSA Discounted Price, and GSA Price with IFF.

In summary, the price lists are the heart of the GSA offer, and are probably the hardest task for small businesses. If you do not already have a baseline price list, you must create one for your GSA offer, and then maintain it. You can raise your prices periodically by coordinating with your GSA Contracting Officer.

Prepare the Commercial Sales Practices (CSP) form

Next to the price lists, the CSP may be the most important factor in your offer. In the CSP you must identify your “Most Favored Customer” (MFC) and the discounts (if any) that you offer them.

If you have never offered discounts, that is no problem, but you must state that in the CSP section. The following figure shows a portion of a real-world CSP section from the GSA IT Services (Schedule 70) Schedule.

Name of Offeror: **MyCorporation**

SIN(s): **132-8**

Note: Please refer to clause 552.212-70, PREPARATION OF OFFER (MULTIPLE AWARD SCHEDULE) [SEE E.5], for additional information concerning your offer. Provide the following information for each SIN (or group of SINs or SubSIN for which information is the same).

(1) Provide the dollar value of sales to the general public at or based on an established catalog or market price during the previous 12-month period or the offerors last fiscal year: **\$4,500,000**. State beginning and ending of the 12 month period. Beginning **1/1/2005** Ending **12/31/2005**. In the event that a dollar value is not an appropriate measure of the sales, provide and describe your own measure of the sales of the item(s).

(2) Show your total projected annual sales to the Government under this contract for the contract term, excluding options, for each SIN offered. If you currently hold a Federal Supply Schedule contract for the SIN the total projected annual sales should be based on your most recent 12 months of sales under that contract.

Special Item No.	132-8	Purchase of Equipment	\$ 450,000
Special Item No.	132-12	Maintenance of Equipment, Repair Service, and Repair Parts/Spare Parts	\$ 250,000

(3) Based on your written discounting policies (standard commercial sales practices in the event you do not have written discounting policies), are the discounts and any concessions which you offer the Government equal to or better than your best price (discount and concessions in any combination) offered to any customer acquiring the same items regardless of quantity or terms and conditions? YES **X** NO _____. (See definition of "concession" and "discount" in 552.212-70.)

(4) (a) Based on your written discounting policies (standard commercial sales practices in the event you do not have written discounting policies), provide information as requested for each SIN (or group of SINs for which the information is the same) in accordance with the instructions at Figure 515.2, which is provided in this solicitation for your convenience. The information should be provided in the chart below or in an equivalent format developed by the offeror. Rows should be added to accommodate as many customers as required.

COLUMN 1 CUSTOMER	COLUMN 2 DISCOUNT	COLUMN 3 QUANTITY/VOLUME	COLUMN 4 FOB TERM	COLUMN 5 CONCESSIONS
Government	5%	> 10 = 5%	Origin	< 15 days = 2%
Commercial	None	None	Destination	None

(b) Do any deviations from your written policies or standard commercial sales practices disclosed in the above chart ever result in better discounts (lower prices) or concessions than indicated? YES ___ NO **X** ___. If YES, explain deviations in accordance with the instructions at Figure 515.4-2, which is provided in this solicitation for your convenience .

Figure 6. Example Commercial Sales Practices Chart. This may be one of the most important parts of a solicitation.

Note the table in Figure 6. It shows that there is a basic 5% discount to government customers as well as a break for quantities greater than 10. It also shows FOB Origin and a prompt payment concession of 2% if the invoice is paid in less that 15 days. If you are unclear about FOB, here is how it works: FOB Origin means that you pay the freight. FOB Destination means the customer pays the freight.

Prepare the attachments

Attachment vary from one solicitation to another. In Figure 3. I showed a list of files that are downloaded from GSA for Schedule 78 (SPORTS). There are 11 attachments. Some are informational, and others require some fill-in-the-blanks.

The basic solicitation will tell you which attachments are appropriate. For example, the Industrial Supplies schedule (Schedule 56) has several different attachments. Which ones you use depend on the SINS you offer. Place the proper attachments in the binder and indicate in the GSA Cover Letter which tab relates to which attachment.

Prepare backup information

GSA often requests invoices and/or financial statements during the clarification phase. Be sure to have those prepared in case you need them. In general, you should not supply extra information to the government beyond that requested. Too much information can cause them extra work and generate more questions.

Make it all pretty and easy to locate information

Prepare the binder so that is easy to locate information. This is one of the primary reasons fro using a GSA Cover Page like the one shown in Figure 4. The following figure shows the actual Table of Contents for a company that sells and rents prefabricated buildings (Schedule 56).

<p>CONTENTS</p> <p>MyCompany, LLC 1217 MyStreet Melbourne, Florida 32904 (321) 433-5570</p>	<p>1 - Solicitation</p> <p>2 – Attachment 4</p> <p>3 - Attachment 10</p> <p>4 - Attachment 11</p> <p>5 - Attachment 12</p> <p>6 – Commercial Price Lists</p> <p>7 – GSA Price List</p> <p>8 – Supporting Documents</p>
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Figure 7. Sample Table Of Contents placed at the front of the binder that is to be sent to GSA. The idea is to make finding things as easy as possible.

Double check using the check list

Almost all schedules include a checklist. This list is used by the GSA contracting specialist to make sure that your offer is complete and responsive. The following figure shows the checklist for the GSA IT Services (Schedule 70).

**ATTACHMENT IV –
CHECKLIST FOR COMPLETION OF SOLICITATION**

NOTE: The following checking list is to be used as a guide for completing the solicitation. Per paragraph F.5, the entire solicitation must be returned, not just the following sections.

The following clauses need to have a response inserted:		
Section:	Description:	✓ Check One:
SF-1449	Only Fill in Blocks: 17a, 17b, 30a, 30b & 30c	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
A.3(c)	North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
B.2	Cooperative Purchasing	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
B.2	Products & Services Offered	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
C.4	Scope of Contract (Eligible Ordering Activities)	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
C.12	Delivery Prices	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
C.13	Commercial Delivery Schedule	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

C.50	Parts and Service (NOTE: This clause only applies to overseas coverage.)	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
C.62	Delivery Prices (NOTE: This clause only applies to overseas coverage.)	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
C.64	Contact for Contract Administration	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
G.1	Offeror Representations and Certifications – Commercial Items	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
G.3	Section (8a) Representation	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
G.4	Commercial Sales Practices Format	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
G.5	Authorized Negotiators	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
G.7	Ordering Information	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
G.8	Contractor’s Remittance (Payment) Address	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
G.9	Place of Performance	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
G. 12	Exemption from Application of Service Contract Act for Maintenance Contracts	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

These clauses indicate additional information that needs to be submitted with the solicitation response:

Section:	Description:	✓ Check One:
C.30	Submission & Distribution Authorized FSS IT SCHEDULE of Price Lists (See Attach I)	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
C.50	Parts & Service (Overseas only)	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
E.4	Submission of Offers Additional Information: (A-b-c-d-e-f-g).	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
E5.	Preparation of Offer/ Commercial price list	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
F2.	Past Performance (See Attachment II)	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
F3.	Dealers and Suppliers	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
F4.	Sales and Service Requirements	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
F5.	IT Professional Services Past Performance /Responsibility Determination	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Attachments Section:

Attachment I	<p>Guidelines for Formats and Content of FSS IT Schedule Price list.</p> <p>Two copies of the proposed Information Technology Schedule Pricelist must be submitted with your offer. Please Note: The proposed Information Technology Schedule Pricelist should be submitted as a document separate from this Attachment and it must, at a minimum be formatted in a font no smaller than 10 cpi (characters per inch).</p> <p>These guidelines prescribe the format and content to be used to create the Information Technology Schedule Pricelist. Offerors are advised to include only those terms and conditions applicable to the Special Item Numbers (SINs) being proposed.</p>	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
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Attachment II	Past Performance Evaluation Report DUN&BRADSTREET c/o Open Ratings, Inc. (See Section F.2)	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Attachment III	Guidelines for Developing A Small Business/SUBCONTRACTING PLAN Note: (To be submitted by Large Contractors Only)	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 8. Example Checklist from the GSA IT Services Schedule. Pay close attention to the instructions. Note the “guidelines” in the Attachments Section of this example.

You may be wondering... are we there yet? Almost... now that we have covered preparing the solicitation (and won the contract) we need to actually sell something. To do that, we need to market to the right people. In Part 5 there are simple steps that can make all the difference. Check back in for the next installment!

Part 5 - Selling Your Stuff - How to find and work with GSA Buyers

Hello there. Welcome back to the GSA Contracting series! In the previous chapter you learned how to create a quality offer and send it to GSA. After a few clarifications and negotiations, you won your contract. In this part, we'll talk about marketing – to the right people.

There are literally tens of thousands of GSA buyers. These fine people have Government Purchase Cards (GPC) Visa credit cards, which makes most transactions easy to complete. That's the good news.

The bad news is that there is no longer a comprehensive list of buyers like there was before the terrorist attacks of 9-11-2001. Back then when you got your GSA contract, you would get a CD ROM with thousands of buyer names.

Now you have to market actively, and that means finding the buyers that buy your stuff, and then making contact and keeping in touch. Below are a few hints that will help you with your targeted (like a rifle) marketing approach.

1. Identify federal agencies, organizations, and military bases that you want to sell to.
2. Contact the Small Business Liaison Officer (SBLO) at the agencies or base. To do this easily, call the agency or go to the agency web site and look for "Small Business Office". Each agency, military base, and large government office has a Small Business Office. The goal of the Small Business Office is to hire small businesses – so you are not making a "cold call". They want to hear from you.
3. Once you contact the SBLO, introduce yourself and ask if they buy your stuff. They will tell you if their organization buys, and if they do, the SBLO will usually register you as a supplier and give you the buyer's names. This can be tedious work, but it is the best way to locate potential clients.
4. Keep in touch with the buyers. There is a simple psychology to dealing with buyers as old as commerce itself. You need to establish a trusting relationship so they will keep coming back to you for more. Of course this is easier said than done, yet it is the way to succeed.

One of the best web sources for a list of federal agencies is at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/independent-agencies.html>

Most of these agencies use GSA contract holders to make purchases. As mentioned above, your job is to get in touch with the Small Business Office at each of the agencies and register as a supplier.

Although short, this section will help you maximize your marketing money and time. With active marketing comes the revenue that you so richly deserve. And of course... with the revenue comes the paperwork, which is covered in the sixth and last installment of our delightful GSA contracting series. See you next time for "Oops, What Report?"

Part 6 – Oops, What Report? - GSA Administrative Requirements

Welcome to the final installment of the GSA contracting series. I hope you have enjoyed the trip so far! Now that you are making revenue, here comes the paperwork. The good news is that you can work with your contracting officer for any questions you have. Most of them are very professional and want you to succeed. Follow their rules and you'll arrive safely!

Sales Reports

GSA requires that you file regular reports on your sales. First, they want information about what is being sold, and who is buying. They also want to know how much you are selling, because if you do not sell at least \$25,000 of products or services the first year, they may pull your contract.

Industrial Funding Fee

You are also required to track your sales and remit to GSA the Industrial Funding Fee (IFF) quarterly. The IFF is currently .0075% of the sales price.

If you remember when we talked about GSA Price Lists, I mentioned that you must include the IFF on the pricing spreadsheet. Here is a simple example. If your sales to GSA buyers totals \$100,000, you will have to remit .0075% (or \$750) to GSA. Remember that this cost is calculated on the GSA Price List and comes from your customer and not out of your pocket.

Price Lists

Here's a good question... Now that I have my GSA contract what do I do?

You will need to upload your price list to *GSA Advantage!*. Fortunately this is relatively easy using the GSA Schedule Input Program (SIP). This is software that you download from GSA. Your contracting Officer will help you with the process.

Once you have your baseline price list uploaded you will want to change prices and add/remove items from time to time. Coordinate any price list changes with your contracting officer.

GSA also allows schedule price updates once a year, but you can request a price increase if things change. For example, if your manufacturer raises prices significantly, you can request a price change out of the yearly cycle. Of course, your contracting officer will have to approve this. Lowering prices is no problem, but you need to work with the contracting officer.

Adding items is usually very easy, and once again must be coordinated with your contracting officer.

Summary

Thank you for using the GSA Contracting Guide. I sincerely hope that it has been beneficial. Of course, there is a lot of information about GSA that can't be included here because of space limitations, but with some of this knowledge you will be able to do your own research and learn more.

Very best wishes and GOOD LUCK!

Gary Beckert

September, 2007 - Summer 2011

Appendix:

Big Numbers - GSA Estimated Expenditures by Contract Type

The following chart comes directly from GSA and shows sales by schedule type. I sorted the list so that you can see the schedules by expenditure from highest to lowest.

Schedule Number	Description	Total No. of Contracts (9/30/05)	Value of Sales in FY 2005	No. of Contracts with Over \$25,000 in FY 05 Sales	No. of Small Business Contracts with Over \$25,000 Sales
70	General Purpose Commercial Information Technology Equipment, Software, and Services – Pursuant to Section 211 of the e-Gov Act of 2002, Cooperative Purchasing provides authorized State and local government entities access to information technology items offered through GSA’s Schedule 70 and the Corporate contracts for associated special item numbers.	5386	\$16,435,458,361	2851	2357
874	Mission Oriented Business Integrated Services (MOBIS)	1778	\$2,891,760,173	911	566
871	Professional Engineering Services	834	\$2,271,902,374	466	315
84	Total Solutions for Law Enforcement, Security, Facilities, Management, Fire, Rescue, Clothing, Marine Craft and Emergency/Disaster Response – Marine Craft and Equipment	1270	\$2,265,264,677	645	531
00CORP	The Consolidated Schedule	232	\$969,733,934	174	115
71 I	Office Furniture	452	\$861,254,835	309	228
520	Financial and Business Solutions (FABS)	424	\$766,571,098	196	117
36	The Office, Imaging and Document Solution	382	\$756,494,926	199	139
75	Office Products/Supplies and Services and New Products/Technology – Schedule 75 now includes Videotapes, Audiotapes, tape Cartridges, Diskettes/Optical Disks, Disk Packs, Disk Cartridges, Anti-Glare Screens, cleaning Equipment and Supplies, Ergonomic Devices, Next Day Desktop Delivery of Office Supplies, and Restroom Products such as Roll Toilet Tissue Dispensers, Toilet Tissue, Paper Towels, Toilet Seat Covers, Facial tissues, and Soaps	449	\$554,510,867	293	263

Schedule Number	Description	Total No. of Contracts (9/30/05)	Value of Sales in FY 2005	No. of Contracts with Over \$25,000 in FY 05 Sales	No. of Small Business Contracts with Over \$25,000 Sales
	for Restroom Dispensers				
56	Buildings and Building Materials/Industrial Services and Supplies	764	\$517,367,433	412	343
874 V	Logistics Worldwide (LOGWORLD)	266	\$442,510,185	137	63
48	Transportation, Delivery and Relocation Solutions	47	\$404,735,599	22	10
78	Sports, Promotional, Outdoor, Recreation, Trophies, and Signs (SPORTS) – Trophies, Awards, Presentations, Promotional Products, Briefcases and Carrying Cases, Trade Show Displays and Exhibit Systems And all Related Products	730	\$389,715,973	379	349
899	Environmental Services	847	\$378,225,228	360	210
541	Advertising and Integrated Marketing Solutions (AIMS)	757	\$350,692,807	233	185
66 II J	Test and Measurement Equipment, Aviation Instruments and Equipment Aircraft Components, Maintenance and Repair Services, and Unmanned Scientific Vehicles	152	\$260,720,823	100	71
66 II N	Chemistry, Biochemistry, Clinical Instruments, General Purpose Laboratory Instruments, Laboratory Furnishings and Accessories, and Related Services	218	\$244,653,475	161	110
58 I	Professional Audio/Video, Telecommunications, and security Solutions	253	\$200,234,069	156	129
73	Food Service, Hospitality, Cleaning Equipment and Supplies, Chemicals and Services – Food Service Equipment, Supplies, and Services	594	\$178,096,947	310	252
23 V	Vehicular Multiple Award Schedule (VMAS)	141	\$171,161,734	82	66
69	Training Aids and Devices, Instructor-Led Training; Course Development; Test Administration – Programmed learning devices	405	\$141,385,832	150	111
738 X	Human Resources and Equal Employment Opportunity Services	177	\$126,849,275	89	62
738 II	Language Services	95	\$120,922,259	45	36
736	Temporary Administrative And Professional Staffing (TAPS) – Temporary Administrative and Professional Staffing Services	236	\$113,157,450	132	132
71 II H	Packaged Furniture	67	\$97,470,170	48	38

Schedule Number	Description	Total No. of Contracts (9/30/05)	Value of Sales in FY 2005	No. of Contracts with Over \$25,000 in FY 05 Sales	No. of Small Business Contracts with Over \$25,000 Sales
81 I B	Shipping, Packaging and Packing Supplies – Bags, Sacks, Cartons, Crates, Packaging And Packing Bulk Material	123	\$95,348,977	75	62
71 II	Household and Quarters Furniture	98	\$88,402,541	48	41
76	Publication Media	95	\$87,033,074	65	37
599	Travel Solutions	66	\$81,146,173	26	13
71 III	Special Use Furniture	160	\$79,608,421	107	87
66 II Q	Geophysical, Environmental Analysis Equipment and Services – Geophysical Environmental, Analysis and Hazard Equipment	120	\$68,540,791	81	62
03FAC	Facilities Maintenance and Management	128	\$61,330,360	44	23
72 I A	Floor Coverings – Carpet Rugs, Carpet Tiles and Carpet Cushions	62	\$41,598,502	36	28
871 II	Energy Services	50	\$41,223,396	21	13
67	Photographic Equipment – Cameras, Photographic Printers and Related Supplies and Services (Digital and Film-Based)	100	\$36,706,685	50	37
71 II K	Comprehensive Furniture Management Services (CFMS)	124	\$29,796,496	52	38
71 III E	Miscellaneous Furniture	12	\$28,547,561	7	6
873	Laboratory Testing and Analysis Services	77	\$26,593,448	20	13
72 II	Furnishings	130	\$20,049,921	66	66
26 I	Tires, Pneumatic (New), For Passenger, Light Truck, Medium Truck, and Bus, and Retread Services	3	\$16,065,885	3	-
751	Leasing of Automobiles and Light Trucks	9	\$10,056,339	5	4
51 V	Hardware Superstore	311	\$588,170,	214	163

Figure 9. GSA Sales for 2005, listed highest expenditures to lowest.