# Procurement Times

**A Quarterly Publication by the Enterprise Governmentwide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) Division**

## Director's Corner

Alliant, GSA's flagship GWAC, finished with a flurry in Fiscal Year (FY) 2011, closing out September, the final month of the FY, with 25 new Task Order (TO) awards that pushed sales above the $8 Billion mark. This significant milestone was reached in 29 months. To give this proper perspective, the three highly successful and now expired enterprise legacy GWACs, including ANSWER, Millennia, & Millennia Lite combined, had $6.5 Billion in sales during the same time period.

As significant as this accomplishment to date has been, the Alliant GWAC program is not taking anything for granted. Given the uncertainty that comes with forecasting actual agency IT budget dollars that will be federally funded for existing and new IT requirements, about the only predictable thing in FY 2012 is knowing that this FY will be unpredictable.

Casey Kelley, Director
Enterprise GWAC Division

That said, our plan as we begin this new year is to continue doing that which we have found to be successful thus far:

- Inform, educate, and train both existing and new customers on the features and benefits of the Alliant GWAC.
- Provide technical & acquisition support as requested through GSA's Alliant Scope Review team.

Our plan also includes pursuing the following new initiatives to compliment the above:

- Target IT service acquisitions being conducted via open market and explore if Alliant may have been a candidate that could have saved significant time & money, and therefore be a viable alternative on the next IT service requirement.
- Offer Alliant GWAC refresher training to the over 1800 employees from 38 different federal agencies that have already taken Alliant Delegation of Procurement Authority (DPA) training. Through this refresher training, agencies can learn some additional best practices tips and guidance, as well as federal acquisition updates that are specific to GWACs.
- Continue adding to the 12 existing Alliant Statement of Work (SOW) samples that are posted on the GSA Alliant website thus far, which will include at least one example from each of the 16 different Federal Enterprise Architecture (FEA) service categories that fall under infrastructure, application and IT management as these actual redacted SOWs from awarded TOs under Alliant serve as an excellent and practical resource to customers.
- Promote the potentially new and very significant value add to the Alliant Program by helping achieve its ambitious goal of having 50% of all subcontracted dollars performed by small businesses. SBA is pushing to make socioeconomic credits easier for agencies to reach this goal by allowing the funding agency to receive credit towards its small business subcontracting goals. This SBA regulation was recently proposed and is currently out for public comment through the Federal Register.

So as you can see, in spite of the success that Alliant has had to date and the "predictable uncertainty" of IT appropriations in FY 2012, we have a plan in place to continue working hard to make Alliant the first consideration for your IT service requirements. We wish you all a very positive FY 2012 and look forward to the opportunity of serving you.

*– Casey Kelley*

## *Alliant... Moving At The Speed of Technology*

# Featured Article

# Why it's Important to Stay in Your Lane
# FAR 16.505 Ordering versus FAR 15.3 Negotiated
# Procurements

Every day we are challenged with doing more with less.  So, what choices are we given to help manage our workload efficiently and effectively? Well, one choice is to look at existing contracts such as GSA's Alliant GWAC that supports federal agencies in meeting their IT requirements in a streamlined manner.  You have heard us say many times "GWACs follow the streamlined ordering procedures in FAR Subpart 16.505 and NOT the processes in Subpart 15.3".   But, that statement may not resonate unless we better understand what it means at the task order level.  Remember FAR 16.505 affords the Contracting Officer broad discretion in determining the process for selecting awardees for individual task orders. The key is to ensure that the procurement process and evaluation criteria are included in the task order solicitation and that you, the Ordering Contracting Officer, follow through on your stated solicitation process.  Perhaps, the struggle for most of us is visualizing what a FAR 16.505 streamlined task order acquisition looks like.  The following information will help point to what typical mistakes to avoid so to better stay in your lane when ordering off GWACs and other IDIQ-type contracts.

COMPETITVE RANGE - There is no requirement to set a Competitive Range in FAR 16.505.  In fact, never mention that term in writing or orally when contracting off a GWAC.   This means that you can save yourself, the contracting officer   and the Industry Partners considerable time and money by conducting multiphased procurement in a manner that uses the least costly factors to initially down select the offerors.   For example, you may initially phase your procurement based upon a capability demonstration, a white paper submission, or a 10 minute telephonic presentation of an overall concept and its associated risk/s.

DISCUSSIONS - Since a Competitive Range is not established, there is no need to be concerned with the nature of exchanges between government and offerors.  Ordinarily in FAR 15.3 procurement, the contracting officer draws a distinction between Clarifications, Communications, and Discussions.  The Contracting Officer can engage in detailed exchanges about any aspect of an offer at any time as long each offer is treated equitably avoiding any perception of unfairness in the process.

SCORING, GRADING, OR RANKING OF OFFERS/QUOTES – The regulation states that "Formal evaluation plans or scoring of quotes or offers are not

required." FAR 16.505 (b)(1)(v)(B).   There is no reason to follow the FAR Subpart 15.3 process model when FAR 16.505 permits the use of a much simpler and sufficient  procurement process. This means that an evaluation system can be truly streamlined.  For example, a contracting officer can use any evaluation system they wish such as pluses and minuses or simply narrative statements so long as he/she can fully justify the ultimate selection.

 INCORRECTLY DEFINE "BEST VALUE" – Interpret the meaning of Best Value only by the broad definitions in the FAR, not the definitions as applied in negotiated procurements specific to contracting methods under FAR Part 15.  The broad definitions applicable to the entire FAR are: "Best value" means the expected outcome of an acquisition that, in the Government's estimation, provides the greatest overall benefit in response to the requirement - (FAR 2.101Definitions); The vision for the Federal Acquisition System is to deliver on a timely basis the best value product or service to the customer, while maintaining the public's trust and fulfilling public policy objectives - (FAR 1.102(a) Statement of guiding principles for the Federal Acquisition System).

EVALUATE TECHNICAL FACTORS UNLESS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY - Technical Capability is sometimes very costly to evaluate for the award of a task order to both the contractor and the government. It also adds extra time to the process due to the increased complexity of the evaluation. The government had previously evaluated the contractors' technical abilities prior to the award of the GWAC. Thus, the government already determined that the awardees are generally capable of doing any work ordered under the GWAC. Nonetheless, there are requirements that will arise, which will demand that a contractor's business/management approach be proposed and evaluated. In those cases, they certainly should be evaluated. Remember to consider only those evaluation factors that will truly discriminate among the contractor pool.

EVALUATE PAST PERFORMANCE IN ACCORDANCE WITH FAR 15.3 REQUIREMENTS – It is important to always evaluate Past Performance; however, there is no need to go overboard. The requirement to provide a neutral rating to an offeror without any past performance, as an example, is not required. Further, there is no requirement to document the file with your comprehensive rationale in the same manner as FAR 15.3. Yet, the streamlined approach in FAR 16.505(b (1)(v)(A)(1) recommends that the contracting officer should consider Past Performance on earlier orders under the contract, including quality, timeliness and cost control.

In summary, not using the FAR 16.505 streamlined acquisition processes diminishes the significant advantages afforded to the government in saving time, money, and resources.  For further information on contracting under FAR 16.505, please contact Mimi Bruce, Director of Client Support at 1-925-735-1641.

**On the next page** is a table listing the major differences between FAR 16.505 and FAR 15.3:

*"The vision for the Federal Acquisition System is to deliver on a timely basis the best value product or service to the customer, while maintaining the public's trust and fulfilling public policy objectives "*

**Table listing the major differences between FAR 16.505 and FAR 15.3**

| | FAR 15.3  Open market negotiated procurement | MA/IDIQ (e.g., GWAC) FAR 16.505 |
|---|---|---|
| **REQUEST METHOD** | RFP | Task Order Request/Delivery Order Request issued to all contract   awardees in the GWAC pool. |
| **BEST VALUE** | Best Value Continuum:  Best Value Lowest Priced Technically Acceptable or Best Value Trade Off | Only reference to Best Value is in 16.505(b)((iv)(D) for orders over $5M. |
| **COMPETITION** | FULL & OPEN  (See FAR 6 for sole sourcing) | Fair opportunity/ See FAR 16.505(b)(2) for exceptions.  Must provide each awardee a fair opportunity to be considered for each order exceeding $3,000  Exception to Fair Opportunity- >$3000 </= Simplified Acquisition Threshold (SAT): " Fair Opportunity Exception only need be documented by CO >Simplified Acquisition Threshold (SAT):  Do not have to follow format at FAR 6.303-2 but additional justification narrative required IAW FAR 16.505(b)(2)(ii)(B).  Justification approved IAW FAR 16.505(b)(2)(ii)(C). |
| **EVALUATION FACTORS** | Main and Subfactors-rank ordered. Price/non-price order. | You will usually use price or cost and non-cost factors.  16.505 (b)(1) states:  >Simplified Acquisition Threshold (SAT):  Basis upon which award will be made16.505(b)(1)(iii)(B)*(1)* >$5M  Significant factors and subfactors, including cost or price and their relative importance 16.505(b)(1)(iv)(C)  Suggest you always follow the >$5M guidance. |
| **SCORING SYSTEM** | Color, numerical, adjectival. Anything. | Not required per 16.505(b)(1)(v)(B).  When using a comparative evaluation approach, scoring is not necessary. |
| **EVALUATION METHODOLOGY** | First evaluate offers to stated evaluation criteria ; then rank order | No requirement to first evaluate to stated evaluation factor and then rank order.  May use comparative analysis as described in FAR 13.106-2 Evaluation of quotations or offers "Scoring" systems not required or necessary.  "Comparative analysis" means that you can immediately begin to compare the specifics of the offers without having to "score" them independently without reference to other offers. This is a very intuitive process that allows you to document offer differences (under each evaluation factor) without first having to construct and then utilize an artificial scoring system, e.g., colors, adjectives, etc. |
| **SOURCE SELECTION PLAN** | No FAR requirement, but usually a formal evaluation plan is used | Formal evaluation plans or scoring not required per 16.505(b)(1)(v)(B) |
| **SELECTION DOCUMENTATION** | Ranking w/ trade-off rationale/ Strengths, Significant Weaknesses, Deficiencies, Risks. | 16.505(b)(5):(i): The contracting officer shall document in the contract file the rationale for placement and price of each order, including the basis for award and the rationale for any tradeoffs among cost or price and non-cost considerations in making the award decision. (ii) The contract file shall also identify the basis for using an exception to the fair opportunity process (see paragraph (b) (2))  Use Best Value Trade off narrative that compares proposal specifics of the selectee with each of the non-selectees by evaluation factor.  This requirement is based upon case law.  FAR 16.505(b)(1)(iv)(D) is the only other specific reference to selection documentation:  >$5M:  Where award is made on a best value basis, a written statement documenting the basis for award and the relative importance of quality and price or cost factors. |

**Continued from previous page:**

| | FAR 15.3 Open market negotiated procurement | MA/IDIQ (e.g., GWAC) FAR 16.505 |
|---|---|---|
| **REQUIRED TERMINOLOGY** | Extensive list of terms and unique definitions (e.g. competitive range, discussions, communications, etc) | Fair Opportunity |
| **COMPETITIVE RANGE** | "Most highly rated" offers | Not required per 16.505 |
| **DEBRIEFING** | FAR 15.505 and 15.506 | Required for >$5M: IAW 16.505(b)(4)(ii)<br><br>Certainly, can be provided at any dollar value. |
| **EXCHANGES BETWEEN GOVERNMENT & OFFEROR** | Specific rules regarding exchanges:<br><br>Clarifications (only if award made without discussions)<br>Communications (occur before competitive range but no revisions allowed)<br>Discussions (Must be meaningful, i.e., reveal deficiencies, and significant weaknesses) | Since FAR 15.3 does not apply to FAR 16.505 procurements, there is no need to establish a competitive range in order to hold Discussions. In fact, the entire vocabulary of FAR 15.3 and the rules associated with each do not apply to 16.505 GWAC orders. The above also mentions the CO can contact the offerors at any time during the evaluation process without ever setting the competitive range.<br><br>The overriding emphasis should be on fairness and obtaining maximizing the best value for the Government when offer revisions are submitted. |

*- Mimi Bruce and John Cavadias*

# More About Cloud Computing - Questions On My Mind

At my desk, I am constantly reminded that the risk to government, when moving off to the Cloud, lies not in the selection of a service provider (especially when considering the transition to Cloud email), but rather with selecting a systems integrator. A misstep here can possibly create significant delays and high costs unnecessarily that can spin out of control and ruin a career! Demos and canned tests are perceived as contrived, and full blown pilots are way too expensive.

As a techie, I know there are no guarantees when dealing with the variants that might surface until after the onsite work begins; however, there are creative and affordable ways to create an environment that would alleviate many CIO/CTO concerns and ramp up this Cloud push. Is this a private or public effort? I don't know. Does government need to let industry into the enterprise to conduct "drills" and operational trials? I can't answer that question either.

So the question…

How can systems integrators help government understand and – therefore embrace – individual capabilities as this move off premises continues? What are your ideas concerning how any given agency can satisfy this question when committing and handing off such a tricky part of daily functional life as email, data storage, and infrastructure and so on?

I (we) would really like your input concerning this issue and I invite you to email me directly with your experiences, ideas and comments. Please – richard.blake@gsa.gov.

*- Richard Blake*

# GSA's Cloud Based E-mail Wins GCN IT Achievement Award

*"GSA has been named as the recipient of the 2011 Government Computer News Award for IT Achievement"*

The U.S. General Services Administration has been named as a recipient of the 2011 Government Computer News award for IT Achievement.  The award is in recognition of GSA's Enterprise E-mail and Collaboration migration project.  We are extremely proud of this achievement as it was competed and awarded under GSA's premier Alliant Government-wide Acquisition Contract.  Additionally, the five year project issued to Unisys Corporation demonstrated a collaborative environment as Unisys partnered with Google, Tempus Nova, and Acumen Solutions to accomplish this undertaking.

GSA successfully migrated all of its 17,000 email users to Google Apps for Government, a secure cloud-based email and collaboration platform making GSA the first federal agency to achieve an agency-wide move to the cloud. It is anticipated that GSA will save upwards of $15 million, which translates to a 50 percent savings over the next five years. Casey Coleman, Chief Information Officer for GSA responded, "Because no other federal agency had purchased cloud services for email and collaboration, GSA needed a procurement vehicle that was flexible and modern enough to handle the new requirements of this particular service.  Alliant was a great choice; a robust procurement process helped us obtain an innovative solution at good value for the taxpayer dollar."

As GSA continues to pave the way, congratulations for a job well done!

*- Tiffany Worthington*

# Requesting GWAC Award Data

Periodically we are asked to respond to data calls on the business volume of the Alliant GWAC, plus all other GWACs managed by the San Diego GWAC office.  GWAC award data can be retrieved by following the below instructions:

1.  Access the GWAC webpage to locate the GWAC Contract Holders' Contract Numbers.  www.gsa.gov/alliant  (click on Alliant Contract Holders and select the document List of Contract Holders)
2.  Note the Contract Numbers that you are researching.
3.  Access the webpage   www.ffata.org   and type in any of the GWAC Contract Numbers in the Search field.  This webpage is the best source for obtaining points of contact as well as GWAC task order specific data.  FFATA.ORG is the public portal to FPDS-NG, the data repository for government contract reporting. You may query by GWAC contract number or by task order numbers.
4.  View the resulting entries for dollar amounts and the specific agencies that have placed the Orders.
5.  You may convert the data using the CSV, or PDF feature on the upper right hand corner of the search results screen.

Alternatively you may access the USASpending.gov or directly from the Federal Procurement Data System to obtain the same GWAC data information.

*- Paul Martin*

# Alliant Contract Information

If you are interested in learning more about the Alliant GWAC Contract, please visit: www.gsa.gov/alliant.  Everything you need to know can be found with a click of a button!

If you wish to speak to someone, you can contact our Client Support by dialing (877) 534-2208. Another way to reach out would be to send an email to the Alliant mailbox:  alliant@gsa.gov

This is just an example of the many ways on how you can get in touch with us!

# Alliant Task Order Guidance When Using A Multiphased

Various mutiphased approaches are acceptable under FAR 16.505 and are mostly discretionary on the part of the Ordering Contracting Officer (OCO). This procurement method may be appropriate when the contracting effort required is resource intensive. As appropriate, price and non-price factors should be considered in the initial evaluation.

The multiphase procurement requires all contractors under the GWAC to be notified of the solicitation for IT services. Further notification is dependent upon the wording in the OCO's solicitation and how they identify the next phase of the process. OCOs should clearly identify the steps required to progress to the next phase and to the final award phase. There is no standard process for developing a multiphase procurement. In fact, FAR 16.404 provides agencies broad discretion in developing task order placement procedures. The approaches in the Alliant GWAC Ordering Guide and the templates that can be found on GSA's Alliant GWAC website have some samples but are not expected to be all inclusive.

Regardless of the solicitation approach, the instructions should clearly articulate the process and what is required from each phase of a multiphased approach. For example, in the "Opt-In, Opt-Out approach" the contractor makes an affirmative statement to either opt-in or opt-out of making an offer from the open solicitation.

Once a contractor chooses to opt-out, they will no longer participate in the full RFP process. As a contractor, the underlying premise for any approach is that you state what you are going to do and then follow through with your decision. As an OCO, you have the authority and flexibility to structure your multiphased procurement as you deem appropriate for effectively procuring the order.

In short, choosing a multiphased approach under an Alliant GWAC may be appropriate for a resource intensive task order procurement so to streamline the award process and to reduce administrative cost, time, and effort for the Government Acquisition Team and our GSA Industry Partners.

*- Roger Chapin*

# Event Highlights

**ACT/IAC Executive Leadership Conference (ELC) in Williamsburg, VA October 23—25, 2011**

Paul Martin, Richard Blake and Jennifer Jeans and many other GSA members attended the ELC conference where senior industry executives and government officials met to exchange information, support professional development, improve communications and build partnerships to enhance the government's ability to serve the nation's citizens.

# ITS Portfolio Corner

## GSA IT Schedules 70

Does your agency have pressing needs for state-of-the-art "commercial" IT products, systems, services, and support? GSA and its trusted industry partners can help through the use of the IT Schedule 70, a contract covered under the ITS Portfolio of contract offerings. IT Schedule 70 is a Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) contract offering customers state-of-the-art information technology products, services, and solutions. IT Schedule 70 is an are indefinite-delivery, indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contract for federal, state, and local agencies to use. These IDIQ contracts have has established pre-negotiated fair and reasonable prices, qualified the contract holders for eligibility, and established contract terms and conditions based on a broad range of commercial products, services, and solutions. This chart illustrates some of the main benefits and features of the IT Schedule 70. For additional information, please contact the IT Schedule 70 National Helpline at 1-877-446-4870.

*- Patricia Waddell, Deputy Director, GSA's IT Schedule Business Programs*

| GSA IT SCHEDULE 70 BENEFITS | GSA IT SCHEDULE 70 FEATURES |
|---|---|
| • Streamlined acquisition process that saves you time and money. <br><br>• Agency Customer interacts directly with the IT Schedule 70 Contractor on procurement. <br><br>• IT Schedule 70 establishes foundational contract terms and conditions that may be enhanced at the task order level. <br><br>• Prices are based on the aggregate buying power of the federal government, meeting your immediate purchase needs or serving as a starting point for negotiations. Prices are predetermined to be fair and reasonable. Competitive volume discounts are available. <br><br>• Nationwide network of resources, including complementary e-Tools and responsive regional GSA representatives. <br><br>• Simplified online ordering and usage of Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPAs). | • Over 5,000 qualified Contract Holders that are eligible to receive an award under applicable laws and regulations <br><br>• State-of-the-Art Information Technology Solutions <br><br>• Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) compliance <br><br>• Small (Socioeconomic Credits) and Large Businesses <br><br>• Evergreen Contracts <br><br>• Purchase Card Acceptance <br><br>• Disaster Recovery Program <br><br>• Cooperative Purchasing Program for State and Local governments <br><br>• Price Reductions and Deeper Discounts <br><br>• Green Products and Services <br><br>• Blanket Purchase Agreements <br><br>• Contractor Team Arrangements |

# Alliant STATS (as of October 2011)

**Top Ten Agencies Using Alliant:**

1. Department of State
2. Department of Homeland Security
3. Air Force
4. Army
5. Department of Agriculture
6. Environmental Protective Agency
7. Navy
8. Department of Justice
9. Department of Veteran Affairs
10. U.S. Security Exchange Commission

|  | Total Orders Issued | Total Estimated Dollars |
|---|---|---|
| **GSA Assisted Services** | 100 | $ 4,570,747,659 |
| **Direct Order Direct Bill** | 100 | $ 3,509,006,096 |
| **Totals:** | 200 | $ 8,079,753,755 |

# Employee Highlight

## Jim Lilac - Business Development

Jim Lilac is an Operations Coordinator within GSA's Federal Acquisition Service (FAS), serving on a detail' from the Customer Accounts Research (CAR) division of Region 9 to The Enterprise Government wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) Center, San Diego, CA.  He currently serves on The Business Development Team generating and qualifying business leads and as a liaison to GSA's Regional AAS teams. Jim is also on the San Diego Chapter of ACT/IAC Board and currently the President of The San Diego Federal Executive Association.

Jim previously served as the Business Process Manager in the Office of One GSA, and as an Area team Executive within GSA's FTS.  Jim brings to the position more than 40 years of management and information technology experience (IT), including extensive work in the areas of ERP consulting, Business Process Re-engineering, and Project Management.

Prior to joining GSA in 2004, Jim served in the U.S. Navy and spent 25years in the Higher Education industry where he managed large scale multi-system ERP projects for colleges and universities across the Western U.S. and Canada. Jim also ran the San Diego Branch of Technical Directions, a nation-wide IT staffing company, as well as a stint with Oracle as a Director of Business Development for Higher Education.



Jim Lilac holding the bat that Ted Williams used to complete a 406 hitting record.  This bat is now displayed at the San Diego Hall of Champions

Jim joined GSA's Pacific Rim Region in 2004, and served as a Technology Project Advisor for Southern California GSA clients.   In support of Naval Health Research Center, Jim solicited, awarded and managed task orders that included all design, development, pre- and post-deployment test and evaluation, and project support for creating a medical knowledge management system in support of USMC 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) stationed in Iraq.

Jim resides in San Diego with his wife, of 41 years, Debbie. They have three sons and one grandson. When he is not following his Boston Red Sox, you will find him playing golf somewhere in San Diego County or wherever else there is a game.

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## Contract Websites:

- **Alliant—** www.gsa.gov/alliant
- **ANSWER—** www.gsa.gov/answer
- **Millennia—** www.gsa.gov/millennia

## Upcoming Events

**AFCEA West 2012**
January 24—26, 2012
San Diego, CA

**GSA Expo**
May 15-17, 2012
San Antonio, TX

**DoD Procurement Conference**
May 21—25, 2012

## We Want Your Feedback

The Enterprise Newsletter has been a tradition since the inception of the ANSWER Contract. We believe the Procurement Times newsletter adds value by providing Government and Industry insight into current Alliant trends, activities, and key noteworthy accomplishments. We want this newsletter to be of value to you so we are asking for your input    What do you like? What would you like to see more of or less of? Any other comments that you believe may add value to future newsletters?

*Please submit your comments to jennifer.jeans@gsa.gov*