

Information for Ordering Offices

1. General Purchasing Guidelines

In accordance with FAR 8.404, orders placed pursuant to a Multiple Award Schedule (MAS), using the procedures in FAR 8.404, is considered to be issued pursuant to full and open competition. Therefore, when placing orders under Federal Supply Schedules, ordering offices need not seek further competition, synopsise the requirement, make a separate determination of fair and reasonable pricing, or consider small business set-asides in accordance with subpart 19.5. GSA has already determined the prices of items under schedule contracts to be fair and reasonable. By placing an order against a schedule using the procedures outlined below, the ordering office has concluded that the order represents the best value and results in the lowest overall cost alternative (considering price, special features, administrative costs, etc.) to meet the Government's needs.

For orders exceeding the micropurchase threshold, FAR 8.404 requires agencies to consider the catalogs/ pricelists of at least three schedule contractors or consider reasonably available information by using the GSA Advantage!TM on-line shopping service (www.fss.gsa.gov). The catalogs/pricelists, GSA Advantage!TM and the Federal Supply Services Home Page (www.fss.gsa.gov) contain information on a broad array of products and services offered by small business concerns. This information should be used as a tool to assist ordering activities in meeting or exceeding established small business goals. It should also be used as a tool to assist in including small, small disadvantaged, and women-owned small businesses among those considered when selecting pricelists for a best value determination. Specific purchasing guidelines are outlined below.

a. Orders place at or below the micro-purchase threshold. Ordering offices can place orders at or below the micro-purchase threshold with any Federal Supply Schedule Contractor.

b. Orders exceeding the micro-purchase threshold but not exceeding the maximum order threshold. Orders should be placed with the Schedule Contractor that can provide the supply or service that represents the best value. Before placing an order, ordering offices should consider reasonably available information about the supply or service offered under MAS contracts by using the "GSA Advantage!" on-line shopping service, or by reviewing the catalogs/ pricelists of at least three Schedule Contractors and selecting the delivery and other options available under the schedule that meets the agency's needs. In selecting the supply or service representing the best value, the ordering office may consider- -

- (1) Special features of the supply or service that are required in effective program performance that are not provided by a comparable supply or service;
- (2) Probable life of the item selected as compared with that of a comparable item;

- (3) Warranty considerations;
- (4) Maintenance availability;
- (5) Past performance; and
- (6) Environmental and energy efficiency considerations.

c. Orders exceeding the maximum order threshold. Each schedule contract has an established maximum order threshold. This threshold represents the point where it is advantageous for the ordering office to seek a price reduction. In addition to following the procedures in paragraph b, above, and before placing an order that exceeds the maximum order threshold, ordering offices shall - -

- (1) Review additional Schedule Contractors' catalogs/pricelists or use the "GSA Advantage!" on-line shopping serve;
- (2) Based upon the initial evaluation, generally seek price reductions from the Schedule Contractor(s) appearing to provide the best value (considering price and other factors); and
- (3) After price reductions have been sought, place the orders with the Schedule Contractor that provides the best value and results in the lowest overall cost alternative. If further price reductions are not offered, an order may still be placed, if the ordering office determines that it is appropriate.

NOTE: For orders exceeding the maximum order threshold, the Contractor may:

- (1) Offer a new lower price for this requirement (the Price Reductions clause is not applicable to orders placed over the maximum order in FAR 52.216-19 Order Limitations);
- (2) Offer the lowest price available under the contract; or
- (3) Decline the order (orders must be returned in accordance with FAR 52.216-19).

d. Blanket purchase agreements (BPAs). The establishment of Federal Supply Schedule BPAs is permitted when following the ordering procedures in FAR 8.404. All schedule contracts contain BPA provisions. Ordering offices may use BPAs to establish accounts with Contractors to fill recurring requirements. BPAs should address the frequency of ordering and invoicing, discounts, and delivery locations and times.

e. Price reductions. In addition to the circumstances outlined in paragraphs c, above, there may be instances when ordering offices will find it advantageous to request a price reduction. For example, when the ordering office finds a schedule supply or service elsewhere at a lower price or when a BPA is being established to fill recurring requirements, requesting a price reduction could be advantageous. The potential volume of orders under these agreements, regardless of the size of the individual order, may offer the ordering office the opportunity to negotiate special discounts. Schedule Contractors are not required to pass on to all schedule users a price reduction extended only to an individual agency for a specific order.

f. Small business. For orders exceeding the micro-purchase threshold, ordering offices should give preference to the items of small business concerns when two or more items at the same delivered price will satisfy the requirement.

g. Documentation. Orders should be documented, at a minimum, by identifying the Contractor the item was purchased from, and the amount paid. If an agency requirement in excess of the micro-purchase threshold is defined so as to require a particular brand name, product, or feature of a product peculiar to one manufacturer, thereby precluding consideration of a product manufactured by another company, the ordering office shall include an explanation in the file as to why the particular brand name, product, or feature is essential to satisfy the agency's needs.

h. Any ordering office, with respect to any one or more delivery orders placed by it under this contract, may exercise the same rights of termination as the GSA Contracting Officer under provisions of FAR 52.212-4, paragraphs (l) Termination for the Government's convenience, and (m) Termination for Cause (see C.1).

i. Clarification and further assistance can be directed to the GSA Customer/Vendor Relations Office – Services Acquisition Center (FCX) at (703) 305-6658 fss.services@gsa.gov.

2. Liability for Injury or Damage

The Contractor shall not be liable for any injury to Government personnel or damage to Government property arising from the use of equipment maintained by the Contractor, unless such injury or damage is due to the fault or negligence of the Contractor.

3. Security Requirements

In the event security requirements are necessary, the ordering activities may incorporate, in their delivery order(s), a security clause in accordance with current laws, regulations, and individual agency policy; however, the burden of administering the security requirements shall be with the ordering agency. If any costs are incurred as a result of the inclusion of security requirements, such costs will not exceed ten percent (10%) or \$100,000 of the total dollar value of the order, whichever is less.

4. GSA Advantage!

The *GSA Advantage!* is an on-line, interactive electronic information and ordering system that provides on-line access to vendors' schedule prices with ordering information. *GSA Advantage!* Will allow the user to perform various searches across all contracts including, but not limited to:

- (1) Manufacturer;
- (2) Manufacturer's Part Number;
- (3) Product category(ies).

Agencies can browse *GSA Advantage!* By accessing the Internet World Wide Web utilizing a browser (ex.: NetScape). The Internet address is <http://www.gsa.gov/>.

5. Purchase of Incidental, Non-Schedule Items

For administrative convenience, open market (non-contract) items may be added to a Federal Supply Schedule Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) or an individual order, provided that the items are clearly labeled as such on the order, all applicable regulations have been followed, and price reasonableness has been determined by the ordering activity for the open market (non-contract) items.

6. Contractor Commitments, Warranties and Representations

For the purpose of this contract, commitments, warranties and representations are those agreed to in the entire schedule contract and the individual Task Orders. Only Information Technology Professional Services are offered.

7. Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPAs)

Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 13.201(a) defines Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPAs) as "...a simplified method of filling anticipated repetitive needs for supplies or services by establishing 'charge accounts' with qualified sources of supply." The use of Blanket Purchase Agreements under the Federal Supply Schedule Program is authorized in accordance with FAR 13.202 (c) (3), which reads, in part, as follows:

"BPAs may be established with Federal Supply Schedule Contractors, if not inconsistent with the terms of the applicable schedule contract."

Federal Supply Schedule contracts contain BPA provisions to enable schedule users to maximize their administrative and purchasing savings. This feature permits schedule users to set up "accounts" with Schedule Contractors to fill recurring requirements. These accounts establish a period for the BPA and generally address issues such as the frequency of ordering and invoicing,

authorized callers, discounts, delivery locations and times. Agencies may qualify for certain contractor discounts available under the contract, based on the potential volume of business that may be generated through such an agreement, regardless of the size of the individual orders. In addition, agencies may be able to secure a discount higher than that available in the contract based on the aggregate volume of business possible under a BPA. Finally, Contractors may be open to a progressive type of discounting where the discount would increase once the sales accumulated under the BPA reach certain prescribed levels. Use of a BPA may be particularly useful with the new Maximum Order Feature.

8. Contractor Team Arrangements

Federal Supply Schedule Contractors may use “Contractor Team Arrangements” (see FAR 9.6) to provide solutions when responding to a customer agency requirements. The policy and procedures outlined in this part will provide more flexibility and allow innovative acquisition methods when using the Federal Supply Schedules. .