

## GSA Advantage E-Buy

MARKET RESEARCH, PAST PERFORMANCE, STAFFING, & SITE VISIT

### Make Your GSA Procurement Positive



The GSA Advantage E-Buy system is a great simplified acquisition tool; however there are several important considerations that you should keep in mind in order to make your procurement experience a positive one.

Since the economic downturn, and the associated crash of the residential and commercial construction markets, a glut of contractors have eyed the perceived greener pastures of Government construction. Unfortunately, those contractors who have experience in Government contracting, and have companies staffed and organized to comply with Government regulations and expectations know that those business models do not necessarily mesh well. **Companies green to Government procurement often are surprised and overwhelmed by the requirements.**

To illustrate this point, in 2007 there were around 12 contractors on Schedule with the SIN numbers (361-10 and 361-32) required to construct pre-engineered metal buildings. Of those, only about 6 had significant sales. Conversely, in 2011 that number had increased to 77 and is growing steadily. To the chagrin of those companies that have been on schedule for 10-12 years, many of these new companies have no experience in Government contracting and are poorly vetted.

A good number of new contractors drop from the schedule each year due to lack of sales or other contractual issues. Others realized too late the significant implications of Government rules and regulations, performed poorly as a result, lost money, and opted out. Unfortunately, these inexperienced contractors may have gotten projects without a full understanding of the requirements or the financial implications associated with those requirements. These projects often don't meet customer expectations, might be completed late or never be completed, might be completed with marginal quality, and leave both Contracting Officers and end users with a sour taste.



## Don't Hate the Process!

There are safeguards that you can take to insure that you actually get the Best Value that GSA promises, and that you contract with an experienced, efficient, safe, quality driven, and reliable contractor that can comply with Government procurement and construction regulations. Remember first and foremost that GSA provides you with the opportunity to make a Best Value determination in making an award. Low price is not the primary criteria. This simple ability alone gives you a huge advantage over a typical RFQ or RFP procurement as long as you know how to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Before you place your solicitation on GSA E-Buy, make sure you take these four simple precautions:



## Market Research

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GSA stresses Market Research, and responsible GSA Vendors agree. Simple Market Research can take three forms: **Internet research**, **GSA E-Library**, and **networking**.

- Investigation of Vendor websites can be informative, however everyone realizes in this techno-savvy age that websites can be misleading. Look for real project information and detail, not just photographs.
- GSA E-Library provides a wealth of historical information regarding how long a vendor has had their contract, and GSA Schedule Sales Query details how much business they do through GSA.
- Check with other contracting officers within your agency to find out who has performed well.



## Past Performance

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Make certain that your solicitation includes a requirement to provide **relevant past performance** information. Five projects are not too much to ask for, and make sure they are Government projects, of similar size and scope, and include contact information.



## Staffing

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Many small companies are not staffed with Project Managers, Project Administrators or even Site Superintendents. Your project COTR does not want to be saddled with “babysitting” a project or making multiple contacts to try and get information. An unsupervised worksite is an unsafe, poor-quality worksite.

**Require that projects are field staffed by a trained, site superintendent** who is a full-time employee of the contractor. Don’t allow a contractor to assign a sub-contractor or utilize a local dealer as a superintendent. Superintendents should be certified in First Aid, CPR, and OSHA 30HR, and should have metal building training along with Army Corps of Engineers CQM Certifications if possible. All safety plans should be in accordance with EM-385, and all superintendents trained to adhere with those practices.



## Site Visit

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**Don’t ever let a contractor bid a construction project without seeing firsthand**, and understanding the nuances of the site. Each site is different in terms of grade, utility locations, vegetation, drainage, soil conditions, etc., and each of these factors can significantly impact the cost associated with the project.

Ignorance of site conditions should not constitute a reason for change orders, and additional cost, yet it happens all of the time. Irresponsible companies elect not to expend the resources to visit the site, submit a low price based on insufficient information, and then immediately begin requesting change orders. **In making your Best Value determination, take into account the contractors that have done the due diligence, and have accounted for site specific issues in their pricing.**

All site visits should be mandatory.