



What is a GSA Contract?

The Definitive Guide

It's no secret that Getting a GSA Contract in 2019 can bring huge growth potential to your Business.

But, how can you know if it will benefit your company? And, if you believe it will, how do you approach such a large project?

Bottom line? If you want to grow your federal sales, getting a GSA Contract is a must.

And in this guide I'm going to show you everything you need to get a GSA Contract.

Let's dive right in.



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GSA Schedule Program - Eligibility & Readiness

Before you dive into the GSA Schedule process, it's important to know what makes this a good move for your company. This chapter will cover the very first step, and walk you through what it takes to be eligible to get into the GSA Schedule program. You can also complete our pre-screen webform:

If you are looking to get a GSA Contract, there are five primary areas to review before submitting your offer package to the GSA. It is very important that these areas are considered before the time and money is invested in pursuing a GSA Schedule Contract.

1 Two Years in Business

If you are a start-up, you will most likely need to wait until you can provide two years of Financial documents. One exception is that if you are going to pursue the IT Schedule 70, there is a program called "Startup Springboard" that will allow you to submit without 2 years of experience.

2 Meet the Scope Requirements

Your past performance must "fit" into the Scope description of at least one GSA Schedule subcategory (called Special Item Numbers - or SIN's). Therefore, you must review the **GSA Schedule List** (<https://bit.ly/33Nksum>) to assure your offerings have a place in the GSA Contract program.

3 Past Performance

Not only must you fit the scope of the descriptions, but you must back it with documentation (such as Invoices, Contracts, PO's, Proposals, etc.). The GSA wants to know that you have performed the services, or fulfilled the product orders, you are submitting for. You must be able to provide the GSA with customer information, invoices, contracts, etc. If your company is legally bound to withhold documents from any third party, then you will likely have some obstacles to overcome. Additionally, if you only have a small group of customers, then that can make this requirement difficult to fulfill.

4 Financially Strong

The GSA looks at your past two years of Financials (Balance Sheet and Profit/Loss Statement). They make sure that your company is financially strong. The GSA Acquisition Center will have a quick review of your company's financial strength. If any red-flags go up, then a detailed review will occur.

5 Clean History

Your company must have a clean history, because the GSA does some digging into your Companies past.

No history of federal fraud

Open lawsuits must have a reasonable explanation

Company personnel names must be excluded for the black list

Tax payments must be paid

Your DUNS Record must be somewhat up-to-date

You must have a good business record with Agency Customers.

“Change before you have to”

Jack Welch

Are you ready for a GSA Contract?

There are several things to consider before pursuing a

Marketing Plan

Do you know who in the federal government buys what you sell?

Where are the buyers located? In DC? Military Bases? Internationally?

Is your pricing competitive?

Are your offerings the best value?

How will you communicate your Value to the federal buyers?

What are the best Conferences, Events, etc. for you to attend?

Time and Resources

Do you have the time and personnel to search out federal opportunities and respond with proposals with thoughtful solutions? This is one of the most important indicators for success in the federal market.

Funding & Financial Strength

Most federal awards are smaller and in the \$25,000 to \$100,000 range. However, if you are awarded a multi-million dollar federal contract how would it impact your business? Do you have the financial tools to absorb a few hundred thousand dollars in labor before you even invoice the government? Some contracts are structured this way and it must be considered.

Experience

Your experience is a major factor when Agency Buyers consider your company and solution. It helps to be well-established, and it also helps if you have one or several advantages in the market. This could be anything from reseller discounts, to a larger network of materials, to a larger network of specialized labor. You do not always have to have federal experience to win bids, but it helps to have years of experience in your industry, and to have a reputation at least within your own community.



Benefits of getting a GSA Contract

How can a GSA Contract boost your federal sales?

Before you dive into the GSA Schedule process, it's important to know what makes this a good move for your company. It involves time and money investment to succeed in the Federal Market, and a GSA Contract is a powerful tool. You must have a well-trained and motivated staff (even if that is just you), and must know how to take advantage of the GSA systems to turn Agency Leads into GSA Sales.

With planning and discipline, you can thrive in the Federal Market with a GSA Contract. The average GSA Contractor makes around \$3 Million annually.

"The greatest reward for doing is the opportunity to do more."

Jonar Aalk



Getting a GSA Contract can launch your company to the next level. The US Government is the world's largest buyer.



Getting the GSA Contract is an advantage and allows you access to more opportunities. However this is only the first step, you still have to hustle and actively pursue business.

In the eyes of a government buyer, a GSA Contract legitimizes a Contractor as a trusted source. You are not required to get a GSA Contract to do business with the government, however it is the preferred contracting source for many buyers. Every GSA Contract holder has access to online GSA systems, such as GSA Advantage!, GSA E-Buy, GSA Reverse Auctions, and are easily found by buyers seeking out a particular product or service. So, access to these systems is a very large advantage.

Additionally, GSA Contract Holders have completed many parts of a Purchase Order already, which cuts-down the paperwork effort required for a buyer. Many businesses experience rapid growth through a GSA Contract, but it is not easy. You must still work very hard to connect with buyers, and keep competitive.



GSA Marketplaces - Get a GSA Contract and gain access to GSA Advantage, GSA eBuy, and more.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXvyMz_g3zM

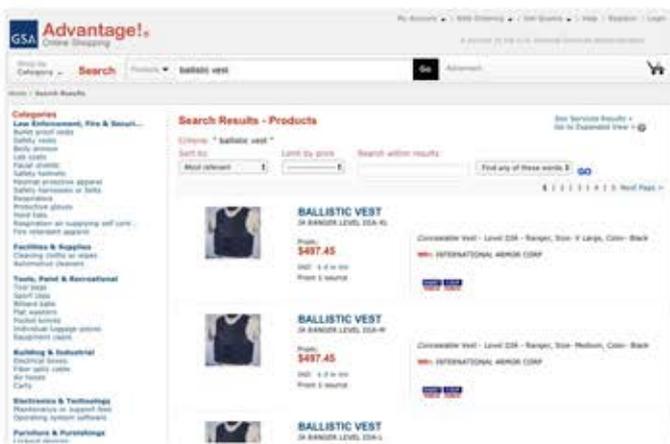
GSA's ecosystem for Federal Contracts

There are several systems that connect GSA Contractors to opportunities:

GSA eBuy - The exclusive website where federal buyers post opportunities. GSA Contractors can view the details and upload their Proposal right into the system. (Link to eBuy: <https://www.ebuy.gsa.gov/ebuy/>).



GSA Advantage! - Think of the Amazon.com of federal contracting. Buyers can search for products they need and pay with a credit card. They also use this system as a search engine for services (More information: GSA Advantage: <https://bit.ly/2xsJjaM>).



GSA eLibrary - Each GSA Contractor has their own landing page for buyers to research them (Link to GSA eLibrary : <https://bit.ly/2vUI05o>).



GSA Symposium - An annual conference only available to GSA Contractors, with breakout sessions and scheduled one-on-one meetings with agency buyers.

Cutting the Red Tape

Federal purchasing is one of the most regulated things in the world. Spending taxpayer dollars must be handled carefully. The GSA's Multiple Award Schedule program offers buyers a simplified way to purchase. This lowers their liability and time investment to award to a GSA Contractor.

Less Competition

You are only competing with other GSA Contractors for opportunities. Less competition means you have a better chance to win.

Long Term

GSA Contracts last 20 years. They are 5-year options with 3 renewals.

Legitimacy

Federal buyers know that a company with a GSA Number has been vetted by the GSA, and that their pricing is fair. This adds legitimacy to your business, even in the open market.

“The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

More GSA Contract Benefits

Any company selling to the federal government (or looking to break into the federal market should consider a getting a GSA contract. It enables a company to easily access government opportunities and speeds the federal buying process. Because of the government's push to improve procurement efficiency, government customers are increasingly using GSA contracts. The GSA Schedule program has become the preferred purchasing tool for government buyers to purchase products and services. In recent years, government customers have purchased over \$37.5 Billion in products and services using GSA contracts.

Having a GSA contract:

- Extends your reach to federal customers via GSA Advantage! and GSA eBuy.
- Simplifies business practices in the federal marketplace.
- Speeds the federal purchase cycle.
- Enables government customers to sole source your product, on orders up to \$3000.
- Eliminates the need for expansive, formal competitive bidding.

Getting a GSA Schedule Contract has several advantages:

Simplifies Federal Contracting

You've probably heard that federal contracting is endless "red tape." There really are seemingly endless procurement regulations. The GSA Schedule Program (Multiple Award Schedule Program) simplifies these issues because terms and conditions, as well as discounting are negotiated up front. This enables you to focus to the federal buyers searching out your products or services instead of dealing with endless paperwork.

Trust from Federal Buyers

You only get a GSA contract if you meet all of the government in depth "due diligence " process. Getting a GSA contract includes an intangible benefit where your business is super-trustworthy in the eyes of federal buyers.

Fewer Competitors

Once on the GSA list, you pool of competition drops dramatically. Only around 4% of registered federal contractors are in the GSA Schedule program.

The GSA Marketplaces

Your products are listed on GSA Advantage (the Amazon.com for federal buyers). You are given a Landing Page on GSA eLibrary. And you also gain access to exclusive opportunities on GSA eBuy.

Shorter Sales Cycle

Typical government contracts can take up to 265 days or more, while the average order under a GSA contract is issued in 15 days on average.

CHAPTER 3



Which GSA Schedule Contract is right for Your Company?

There are many GSA Contract sub-categories, and it is not always obvious which are the best fit.

The majority of GSA Contracts are within Information Technology (IT Products or Services), and Professional Services (Engineering, Business/Management, Financial, Training, Advertising/Marketing, Language/Translation, Environmental, and Logistics). However, there are many other categories within the GSA Schedule program.

*“People Don't Buy what You Do,
They Buy Why You Do it ”*

Simon Sinek

Finding The Right GSA Schedule

The question "what is a GSA Schedule?" can be viewed in light of the 31 different [GSA Schedules](https://bit.ly/39joYIB) (<https://bit.ly/39joYIB>), or main product/service categories. There are another 9 Schedules under the [VA/FSS program](https://www.va.gov/opal/nac/fss/schedules.asp) (<https://www.va.gov/opal/nac/fss/schedules.asp>). Each VA or GSA Schedule Contract has numerous subcategories called Special Item Numbers (SINs). When you are pursuing a GSA Contract it is important to read the scope descriptions for the SIN's and assure that you have performed work similar in scope. If you submit for GSA SIN's that you have not performed for, then you will be rejected. Sometimes this is challenging to identify the appropriate GSA Schedule and SIN.

There is often overlap among the list of GSA Schedules. A company can either have a clear category that fits them, or there can be multiple GSA Schedules. Therefore, it is important to (1) read the descriptions within the GSA List very well, (2) research your competition to locate which Schedule they were awarded, and (3) utilize the experience of a professional who knows the numerous scope conflicts within the Solicitation document. Otherwise, your GSA Contract pursuit could take months or years longer.

When selecting GSA Schedule sub-categories (SIN's), you may want to pursue the GSA Schedule the highest volume of sales are found. However, this may be problematic. Since IT Schedule 70 is such a large schedule (in number of vendors, and dollars spent), many Contractors don't have a second thought about selecting any other Schedule from the GSA List. But, a specialized Schedule may better fit your services, which would allow you to (1) present a more complete offering to the GSA, and (2) be found easier by federal buyers who know the GSA List very well.



GSA Schedule List

Information Technology

Professional Services

Facilities

Security and Protection

Human Capital

Industrial Products and Services

Furniture & Furnishings

Scientific Management and Solutions

Office Management

Transportation and Logistics Services

Travel

Miscellaneous

Links: [GSA eLibrary \(https://bit.ly/2WVCLfR \)](https://bit.ly/2WVCLfR) - full list of GSA Schedules with all SIN's



GSA Offer - Document Preparation & Submission

Getting a GSA Contract starts with selecting your GSA Schedule, and then downloading the Solicitation Package which guides you through the process. However, GSA Solicitation documents are hundreds of pages, and their instructions are confusing.

Below we will walk you through the process of preparing the GSA Offer (document package prepared in the very specific way that the GSA requires).

*Do One thing Every day that
Scares you*

Eleanor Roosevelt

GSA Document Preparation Process

The process to get GSA Certified requires many steps, but the best way to breakdown the process is to look at the components of an Offer:

GSA Template Docs

There are several different docs that may be required for your GSA Offer, it varies depending on which GSA Schedule you are pursuing. You will find these documents within the Solicitation Package, and the instructions will be within the Solicitation Document. Some of these documents include:

Summary Of Offer

Commercial Sales Practices

Proposal Price List Template

Sections 1, 2, and 3 / Checklist document

Agent Authorization Letter

Small Business Subcontracting (SubK) Plan

SCA Matrix / Davis Bacon Wage Determination Chart

Letter(s) of Supply

Readiness Assessment

There may be some specific documents depending on your Schedule and SIN's.

GSA Special Requirements

Three of the requirements to complete your GSA Offer package involve a third party, and these can sometimes be difficult to manage:

Pathway to Success - Online training that takes 1.5 to 2.5 hours to complete

Open Ratings Report - References are submitted, to rate your companies services

Digital Certificate - Credential that allows you to access several GSA online systems.

(Note that all three of these documents can expire, so they must be recently completed at the time of submission).

Corporate Docs

SAM Record

Catalog or Price List

Labor Category Descriptions (if applicable)

Financial Documents (Balance Sheet and Profit/Loss Statement) for past 2 years

Certificate of Liability Insurance

Org Chart (only for Schedule 70)

Supportive Invoices and/or Contracts (Performance Work Statements)

Professional Compensation Plan

Uncompensated Overtime Policies

Warranty and Return Goods Policies

GSA Marketing Plan

The Solicitation Packages for each GSA Schedule can be viewed and downloaded [HERE >>](#)

GSA Offer Process



Stages to Get a GSA Contract

Initially, a document package, called an "offer" is prepared and submitted electronically to the GSA for review. After the GSA has had time to review the Offer document package, they commonly respond with several clarification items, which must be addressed promptly. This Clarification Process continues for several iterations until the GSA offer documents are deemed acceptable by the GSA Contracting Officer reviewing them.

GSA Offer Submission

The GSA is as technological as any Federal Agency, and their submission system, E-Offer, is handled through the web. A Digital Certificate grants an employee or GSA specialist access to the E-Offer account for a company. The upload process involves a 7-step process: Corporate Information, Negotiators, Goods/Services, Standard Responses, Solicitation Clauses, Upload Documents, Submit eOffer. Pretty much anyone could handle the upload into the eOffer system. However, all information entered must completely match with the information in the document package, or the GSA offer may be rejected.



GSA Schedule Clarifications & Negotiations

Once the GSA has completed an initial "Pre-Screen" of your Offer documents, they will either reject or move into "Clarifications." GSA Clarifications are the process where the Contracting Officer (CO) coordinates with the Contractor or Consultant to fill small gaps in the offer. They will send a short or long list of questions and/or supporting items needed.

When the GSA CO is fully satisfied with the documents in the Offer, they will move the process into Negotiations, where everyone jumps on a phone call to discuss final terms of the GSA Contract before award.

Congratulations if you make it to GSA Clarifications with your Offer, most that make it this far are awarded (eventually!). Primarily, you are celebrating that your offer has not been rejected. It won't feel like a celebration, however, since in reality you will receive an email with a list of demands and likely a short deadline. Welcome to the GSA Clarifications stage of getting a GSA Contract.

What Are GSA Clarifications?

In order to even make it to Clarifications with your GSA Offer must make it through a Pre-Screening, so:

1. The GSA is generally satisfied with your document package (everything is there)
2. No documents are expired
3. Your Offer's contents are consistent and easy enough to understand
4. Your Pricing offered to the GSA is within a competitive range (prior to negotiations)
5. Your Offerings are generally within scope of the GSA Schedule and SIN's you are pursuing.

GSA Clarifications handle many of the issues that go deeper than these though. The offer package listed many mandatory documents that you have already submitted, but now you are at the mercy of the GSA Contracting Officer. Every offer will have a few "gaps" that need to be filled. These "gaps" are usually just areas that need to be better supported, or they are weak points in the due diligence check into your business that must be explained away. GSA Clarifications must be handled with craftiness and timeliness to build momentum towards the next stage, Negotiations.

General Tips for Successful GSA Clarifications:

- ✔ Roll with the punches - GSA Clarifications may be a painless, one-round process or it may drag on for months. You have no control here, so just persevere as best as you can.
- ✔ Respond same/next day if possible – Often times, the Contract Specialist will keep momentum going on your offer if you are responsive to their document needs.
- ✔ Every GSA Contracting Specialist is different – Throw out any past experience you may have with this process. Every GSA Contract review is as unique as a snowflake.

“ A negotiation is a Strategic Conflict.”

D. Mark Kilgour Keith W.Hipel

What are Negotiations?

You can truly celebrate if you make it to negotiations, because you can see the finish line. However, it is important to take this process very seriously or you could end up with a GSA Contract that doesn't much benefit your company. Negotiations is playing with live Ammo, if you agree to a GSA discount that is too high then it is very difficult to change over the next 5 years (or longer). Additionally, several terms and conditions are discussed and you must be sharp in negotiations to make sure you navigate the clauses well and do not misspeak.

GSA Contract Negotiations cover 3 areas:

Discussing Terms & Conditions

Making sure you understand the major Terms & Conditions, and compliance topics, of the GSA Contract you are about to enter into for 20 years (if all goes well). The major topics discussed are:

- 1) Price Reductions Clause or Transactional Data Reporting - How you will be reporting your GSA sales, and how the GSA Contract will (or will not) reach into your Commercial Practices.
- 2) Trade Agreement Act - How Countries of Origin of products effect your GSA Contract
- 3) Industrial Funding Fee - The small "fee" the GSA adds to your final pricing that Agency Buyers pay extra, and you pay over to the GSA when you report sales (quarterly).

Negotiating final GSA Discounts

The GSA Contracting Officer (CO) will have done some competitive research and will almost always suggest increasing the general discount to GSA. Sometimes this will be a requirement to move forward with negotiations. It is very rare that things fall apart at this stage, but it really helps to have an expert on the negotiations call to help navigate the process and help both sides come to an agreement on the discounting terms. The General Discount, Volume/Quantity Discounts, Prompt Payment Discount, Freight Conditions, etc. of the GSA Contract are all negotiated.

Preparation of a Final Proposal Revisions document (FPR)

A Final document is drafted to wrap up the final agreed upon terms of the GSA Contract from. This is the Final Proposal Revision (FPR) document. It is normally about 3 pages and must be completed and signed by the Contractor. Award will typically happen within 1-2 weeks after the GSA Contracting Officer Receives the FPR document.

In conclusion, GSA Clarifications are pretty straightforward, but Negotiations are where hiring an outside consultant is of great benefit. A seasoned GSA Contract Consultant goes through these a few times every month. They are experienced, and know how to navigate the negotiation process to assure the most beneficial outcome for your business.



GSA Contract Award & Management

The Award of your GSA Contract usually happens so quickly that it is a bit surreal. But there is much to be done still to get you registered in the GSA systems and unlock the Agency Leads.

Aside from this, you will have some Maintenance and Compliance concerns going into the future, and this is where preparation is very important.

GSA Schedule Award

After Negotiations have closed, and your Final Proposal Revision (FPR) Document is submitted, the GSA will begin final processing within their eOffer system. Within 1-2 weeks your GSA Contract will be awarded, and the following will happen:

1. Your Company will be issued a GSA Contract number
2. You will get an email with the Contract Summary
3. Your GSA eLibrary landing page will be created
4. you will likely get some spammy emails (only trust @gsa.gov email accounts)

The award process requires some final actions to complete the GSA registration process, and start getting leads and PO's in your inbox:

1. Register your contract for SIP in the Vendor Support Center
2. Prepare and upload your Catalog File for SIP upload
3. (If products), prepare and upload your product / price / photo / etc. files in SIP
4. Submit your SIP files and wait for GSA approval
5. Set-up GSA Sales tracking in your accounting software, this will help with monthly reporting
6. Train your Sales Staff on how to (an not to) use the GSA Contract for sales
7. Begin implementing your bullet-proof GSA marketing plan

*"An ounce of prevention
is worth a pound of cure."*

Benjamin Franklin

After you have your GSA Contract, you have finally made it to the starting line - GSA Management. I know that sounds bad, you thought the race was over. It helps to think of getting your GSA Contract as Basic Training, and now you are ready for battle. Winning with your GSA Contract takes (1) Preparation and (2) Discipline. GSA Management is not easy, but it is vital for success.

GSA Management - Marketing

Preparation comes into play when you develop a solid marketing plan in order to sale to the federal government. This will include getting your set-asides in order, getting your GSA Contract, attending networking events, etc. Also, this means searching and tracking bid opportunities, and pursuing them with proposals. It requires a good deal of preparation, in the form of building staff and processes.

After a few weeks of GSA Management, you will likely learn that the Federal Market is very similar to the commercial market in some ways, but also very different in others. Here are some insights that speak to those similarities and differences:

With both, the best value should win, but best price usually wins.

They are both in large part offices and employees using products and services, so the needs are often similar. The Fed has a complicated Bidding and Acquisition process, while businesses do what they want.

With Fed competition is limited but mandatory, while businesses can do what they want.

Federal Contracting Officers are held accountable to taxpayers (and can be sued personally), while businesses do what they want.

Federal awards can be protested and overturned, Businesses can do what they want.

So, a commercial buyer has much more freedom than a federal buyer. They do what they want, right. These things are important to keep in mind when working with a federal buyer, there are so many more hoops that they must jump through, and if you can make the hoops go away, you will win their hearts and their budgets. Did you think GSA Management would be anything other than politics?

GSA Management - Modifications & Compliance

Discipline comes into play in the form of (1) GSA Contract upkeep, and (2) GSA Contract Compliance. GSA Management is not fun and they are not going to win you anything, but they will keep you out of hot water.

Modifications:

Keeping your GSA offerings fresh is a very important step in proper GSA Contract Management. You don't want to offer a widget on GSAAAdvantage! for \$100, if you are paying the Manufacturer \$120 for that item. On the flip side, if the Manufacture price drops, you want that to reflect on your GSA Contract so you can sell more of them.

You can perform several types of modifications to your GSA Contract: Add, Price Change, Delete, Admin changes. Modifying your GSA Contract is relatively easy (especially if you are a GSA Focus Customer). There were around 30 documents involved in getting your GSA Contract, but a modification only uses 5-10 documents.

After your modifications are approved, you must post the updates to GSAAAdvantage! (again, very easy if you are a GSA Focus Customer) . Then, the changes are live for all federal buyers to see.

GSA Contract Compliance

There are a few major aspects of GSA Compliance, but it is advisable that you get acquainted with all of the requirements that relate to your GSA Contract. Here are a few of the major Compliance topics:

Minimum Sales Requirement – You must sell at least \$25,000 through your GSA Contract every year. The GSA gives you two years in the first round to build some sales momentum.

Price Reductions Clause – Your agreement with the GSA regarding the discount you offer them reaches into your commercial practices. So, you could have major compliance issues if you do not have a standardized price list commercially that you follow to the T.

TAA Compliance – Selling Chinese products through GSA is not allowed, because of something called the Trade Agreement Act (TAA). Many other countries are not permissible either. This gets pretty complicated at times, especially when "Country of Origin" is not 100% obvious if components are made in multiple countries (where some are compliant and some are not).

Wage Determinations – Service-based GSA Contract Holders are held to the local standards of the SCA or Davis Bacon wage determinations in some cases. This is hammered-out when getting a GSA Contract, and must be followed throughout the life of the contract.

Others – There are many other important and relevant Clauses in the Solicitation document that lead you to getting your GSA Contract. Additionally, the FAR is an ever-growing object. It helps to become a federal contracting nerd, so you can keep up with the changing landscape under you. It also helps to have a good Lawyer that specializes in Government Contracts.

Want to grow your revenue by 7-figures?
See if your business is eligible for GSA
government contracts, now!

<https://bit.ly/330bUUe>