

FEDSIM[®] InForum

September 2004

A Newsletter for FEDSIM Clients

Issue #2

“I want you to be confident that acquisitions we conduct for you follow statutes, acquisition regulations, promote competition, incorporate best practices, and are the best value.”



Get It Accomplished Right

FEDSIM Director's Forum

Lisa Akers

Greetings! In this month's issue we focus on policies and procedures. Needless to say there is much that is happening in the area of acquisition policies and procedures, and FEDSIM has been very busy as we interpret, implement and automate procedure changes.

I want you to be confident that acquisitions we conduct for you follow statutes, acquisition regulations, promote competition, incorporate best practices, and are the best value. We understand that, as much pride as we take in getting the acquisition right, you care most about getting the industry partner working to accomplish the results. Hopefully, you have heard about GSA's campaign to 'Get it Right'. Since our vision at FEDSIM is to 'Make your Large Complex Projects Successful', we are putting our own slant on the Get It Right campaign... our emphasis is to Get It Accomplished Right.

Acquisition Safeguards

As scrutiny of acquisitions across the federal government increases, GSA has implemented many safeguards to ensure contracts and task orders we place for clients are well planned, foster competition, and are within scope. Since May 2003, GSA (including FEDSIM) has implemented the following new policy/guidance:

- Professional Services Memo that allows FTS to write MOBIS, LogWorld, and Engineering task orders funded by the General Supply Fund (5/2/2003)
- FTS Acquisition Checklists requiring Contracting Officers issue Request For Quotations (RFQs), rather than Contracting Officer's Representatives (CORs) (10/6/2003)
- Legal review for task orders and new contracts over \$5M, BPAs, and any orders involving leases (11/1/2003)
- Acquisition Plan Order requires approved plans prior to solicitation release for supplies and services of IT and Professional Services acquisitions over \$100K (1/31/2004)
- Guidance for Reimbursable Agreements under the IT Fund and General Supply (GS) Fund which characterized what is considered Information Technology versus Professional Services (issued 6/7/2004)
- Memo regarding existing Reimbursable Agreement in place prior to 10/1/2004 (issued 8/27/2004).

Streamlining Acquisition Cycle

The amount of change in a period of 15 months has impacted our operational effectiveness as we interpret, implement and automate the changes in our operational procedures. To streamline our acquisition cycle, we have made the following changes: ➡

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DID YOU KNOW ?

Last year FEDSIM added over 1.4 billion dollars in client projects to its portfolio.

"I believe it is important that you know our organization has strong controls in place to assure we continue Getting it Right as well as Getting it Accomplished Right."

- Implemented training on the GSA-sponsored Acquisition Wizard tool used to route acquisition plans for concurrent approval
- Developed a FEDSIM Acquisition Plan Template so CORs address specific questions relative to IT and Professional Services projects
- Implemented changes to the Technical Order System (TOS) Next, our acquisition system, to include legal review for task orders over \$5M
- Gained approval for legal counsel dedicated to FEDSIM
- Implemented changes to TOS Next for Contracting Officers to issue RFQs
- Implemented mandatory use of e-buy (GSA's on-line RFQ tool) to post schedule RFQs so no time is lost if less than 3 qualified quotes are received on DoD acquisitions
- Conducted FEDSIM All Hands meeting on impact of the 6/7/2004 Memo regarding the IT Fund and GS Fund. We covered scenarios on managing our Reimbursable Agreements, requirements for specific bona fide needs statements in our Interagency Agreements, and the need to initiate acquisitions no later than 2-3 months after funding is received.

FEDSIM Management Appointment

I have selected Steve Kempf as the FEDSIM Operational Director (formerly referred to as the Deputy Director). Steve's main areas of responsibility will be operational performance, policy implementation and compliance, workload planning, management controls, and client service. Steve's immediate priorities will be 1) smoother policy implementation (i.e. improvements in acquisition planning process, increase education on existing Standard Operating Procedures), 2) monitor operational performance to improve workload planning and scheduling, and 3) gain a better handle on future client support needs by agency so that we can properly resource those requirements.

Tool Aids Project Management

FEDSIM has implemented a Project Review Tool to better manage risks on all of our client projects. The Project Review Tool captures cost, schedule, risks, funding history and projections, performance based acquisition if applicable, Earned Value if tracked, GSA performance measures, client service level and satisfaction as well as any actions required. It also prepares for the new GSA Preferred system. Read more about this tool in the article *Ready for Review*.

Strong Controls Assure It's Right

FEDSIM has tested our management controls in several ways over the past year. In September 2003, we conducted a project review of a random sampling of FEDSIM projects. We documented our management control system in March 2004. (Learn about FEDSIM management controls in the article *The Right Stuff*.) In July 2004, the FEDSIM Directors and I each signed detailed management assurance statements that reviewed financial, acquisition, administrative and human resources processes. In July 2004, FEDSIM and all GSA reviewed task orders awarded May 31, 2003 - June 1, 2004 to evaluate: competitive procedures (e.g. compliant with Section 803 as implemented by the Defense FAR Supplement (DFARS)); task orders written within contract scope, and; that the appropriate fund was used (IT versus GS Fund). In August 2004, the GSA Office of the Inspector General completed an annual audit of FEDSIM Financial Controls with no significant findings. (See *Hey, Look Me Over!* which discusses the audit and clean results.) Bob Suda, our Assistant Commissioner for IT Solutions also conducts quarterly reviews of random FEDSIM task orders. While these actions are behind the scenes, it is important you know our organization has strong controls in place to assure we continue "Getting it Right" as well as "Getting it Accomplished Right". 

“The IG Audit results confirm that the FEDSIM program has adequate internal financial controls that are in accordance with appropriate policies and procedures.”

“One way FEDSIM management participates in project management is through the use of our internal project review tool.”

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A Focus on Systems

Director's Forum

GSA Preferred

TOS Workflow

Case Study

By the Numbers

Hey, Look Me Over!

FEDSIM Receives Clean IG Internal Controls Audit

Steve Kempf, FEDSIM Operational Director



The GSA Inspector General recently completed a review of FEDSIM Internal Controls relating to financial transactions of the program. The report noted that the Inspector General did not identify any significant issues during their review. Specifically, the report audited financial practices to determine if internal controls are being followed to ensure there is adequate supporting documentation and appropriate supervisory review.

As part of the review the Inspector General also sampled 45 separate financial transactions to ensure that the transaction amounts were fully supported by appropriate funding, vendor invoices, and proper accounting. In addition, the review focused on internal controls relating to the review of industry partner invoices and the corresponding payments and billing of customers.

Positive Audit Results

The results of the audit were quite positive. Of all the transactions reviewed, there was only a single issue identified, and, upon full review, the Inspector General determined the issue to be immaterial. The results confirm that the FEDSIM program has adequate internal financial controls that are in accordance with appropriate policies and procedures. 🙌

Ready for Review

FEDSIM Project Review Tool

David Trail, IT Specialist



In this era of ever heightening scrutiny of acquisitions at all levels of government, FEDSIM is utilizing many tools to effectively manage and monitor our client's work. Besides the personal attention of the FEDSIM Project Manager who provides individual services for any project, one way FEDSIM management participates in project management is through the use of our internal project review tool.

Step 1: Project Attributes Capture

The Project Review Tool captures many attributes including the cost, schedule, risks and mitigations, funding history and financial projections, performance based metrics, Earned Value if tracked, GSA performance measures, close out status, relationship management status as well as any actions required.

Step 2: Project Review

At least quarterly all projects undergo a comprehensive review. Project Managers and their Client Support Directors discuss each individual project assigned to them. This review looks at all aspects of a project. Various standard measures and specific aspects of the project are evaluated. For example, risks associated with the project are examined, mitigation strategies are reviewed and the success of risk mitigation. Review results are recorded and used as an integral part of future reviews. 🖱️

Step 3: Project Action Plan

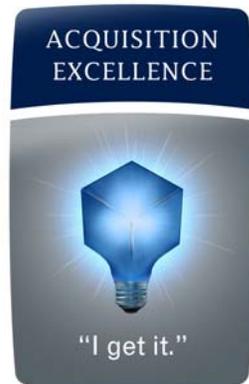
The results of each project review are summarized into a Project Action Plan and a status (green, yellow, red) is assigned. This plan shows the specific steps needed to correct any problems and a due date for follow up by FEDSIM Client Support Directors to ensure needed actions are being completed successfully. Second level reviews are done randomly as well as on those projects needing attention. The FEDSIM project staff also analyzes the information to see if we have FEDSIM-wide trends that need to be addressed.

One final note, each review specifically includes a grading of our client's satisfaction of our services and performance. We don't just look back after the job is done. FEDSIM pays keen attention to our client's opinions during the entire life of their project. 🙌

The Right Stuff

FEDSIM Management Controls

Bobby McKenzie, Client Support Director



When GSA kicked off the "Get It Right" Program in July 2004, FEDSIM was already well on its way to implementing a set of management controls that ensured GSA/FTS/FEDSIM Project Managers (PMs) adhere to government management and acquisition policies.

FEDSIM's efforts began over three years ago as it identified the need for consistent, repeatable acquisition and project management processes and policies that adhered to Government regulations. FEDSIM embarked on a program to ensure its project managers have a thorough knowledge and understanding of acquisition and management policies and adhere to these policies.

FEDSIM's program has multiple functional and organizational elements that, when combined, form a comprehensive management control process.

FUNCTIONAL CONTROLS

Functional components include controls covering every aspect of the FEDSIM Project Manager's job and each acquisition process step. These management controls were developed based on experience (ensuring past mistakes were not repeated) and good business practices.

FEDSIM expanded its training focusing extensively on acquisition and management courses. Approximately 75% of FEDSIM's PMs have completed or are enrolled in the George Washington University Project Management Certification program. In addition, FEDSIM ensures all PMs have taken Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) certification and refresher courses. Training and refresher courses in Multiple Award Schedules, Section 508 Procurements Appropriations Law, and Statements of Work/Statements of Objectives are continually offered.

Acquisition Plan Review

Highly trained PMs are only one aspect of the program. Each potential acquisition is reviewed in the early stages of the process. PM-developed Acquisition Plans serve as roadmaps for conducting the acquisitions. 🖱️

"FEDSIM's efforts began over three years ago as it identified the need for consistent, repeatable acquisition and project management processes and policies that adhered to Government regulations."

These Acquisition Plans receive both legal and/or Contracting Officer reviews and concurrence prior to pursuing a specific strategy. The reviews ensure the acquisition planning meets Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) requirements, work is within scope, and appropriate contract vehicles are utilized.

Implementation of Acquisition Checklists

GSA FTS developed a set of checklists for all acquisition vehicles used by FTS that ensure Government acquisition requirements are met. FEDSIM incorporated the checklists into its automated tracking and ordering system (TOS) as a mandated field for processing.

An on-going FEDSIM control is the Project Review process initiated in May 2004. (See *Ready for Review* article for more information). Details of each project are entered into a database to provide a comprehensive project view. The review database provides a living record of each project to facilitate management. The snapshot allows Client Support Directors (CSDs) and PMs to access action plans, financial data, schedules, expenditures and funding, risk, task orders, and relationship management.

The CSDs review key projects quarterly to remain abreast of progress, identify potential problems, and to mitigate risks.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROLS

A second aspect of the FEDSIM Management Control Program is the organization controls implemented. Organizational elements of management controls include both separation of duties and controls based on hierarchal organizational responsibilities.

Acquisition actions undergo a myriad of reviews and checks prior to award, depending on the acquisition dollar threshold. Reviews by multiple associates ensure all new and existing contracts, orders, and modifications are in accordance with Government acquisition regulations, policies, and guidelines.

Contracting Teamwork

FEDSIM contracting procedures require multiple contracting personnel work on or review acquisition packages. Prior to release for proposals, Statements of Work are reviewed by Contracting Specialists or warranted Contracting Officers to ensure regulatory compliance. The associate who prepared the contractual documents (modifications, contracts, or orders) is different than the associate that signs the contractual documents. Any time a Contracting Officer does execute his own work; a peer review is conducted and documented in writing prior to execution of the contractual document.

Two Legal Reviews

Acquisitions over \$5 million are subject to two legal reviews. The initial review ensures procurement packages are legally sufficient prior to solicitation of proposals or quotes and the second review ensures the award is legally sufficient.

For large scale acquisition projects, Acquisition Project Managers (APM) are utilized to guide the acquisition. APMs have extensive experience in large GWAC vehicles and facilitate the acquisition process.

Operations Manager Position Unifies Process

The single most unifying aspect of FEDSIM's program to "get it right" is the Operations Manager (OM) position in each division. FEDSIM created the Operations Manager position three years ago to further educate and guide PMs and enforce acquisition policies and procedures. ■

More Information

GSA Get It Right

www.gsa.gov

FEDSIM Management
Controls Details

www.gsa.gov/fedsim

"This multistage heuristically and legally-based set of management controls ensures that FEDSIM "gets it right" for both our civilian and DoD clients."

Past Issues

Back issues of InForum are available from the FEDSIM website.

www.gsa.gov/fedsim

The Right Stuff continued from page 5

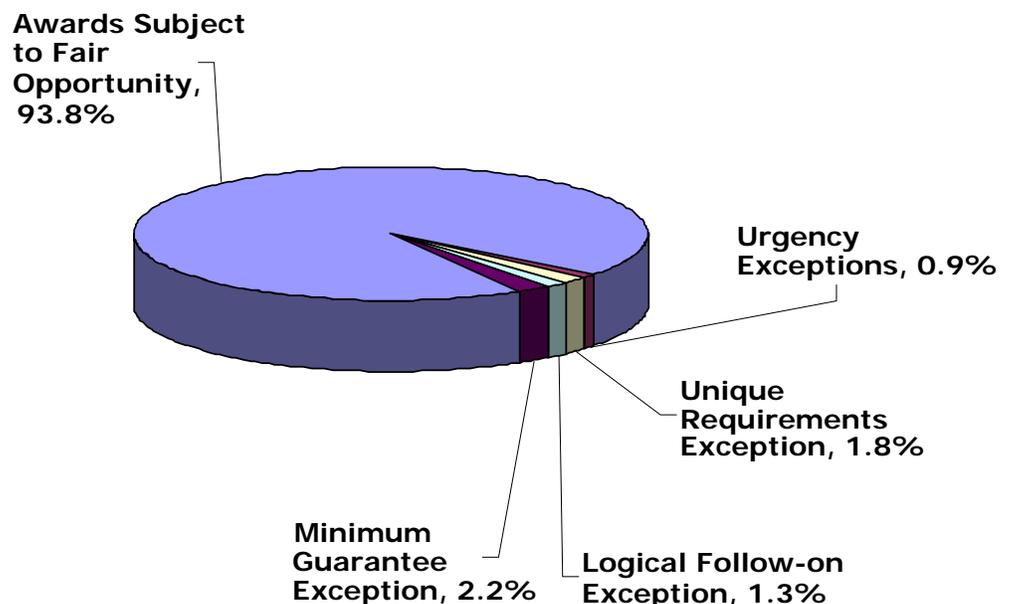
The OM works with the PMs to strengthen skills in managing the acquisition process for clients and serves as gate keeper to ensure management controls have been followed. The OM forwards the acquisition package to the contracting office only after determining that:

- Checklists are complete,
- Appropriate approvals have been secured,
- Acquisition planning is complete and appropriate for the size and type of acquisition, and finally,
- The Statement of Work accurately reflects the client's requirements and deliverables are appropriate.

This multistage heuristically and legally-based set of management controls ensures that FEDSIM "gets it right" for both our civilian and DoD clients. 🙌

By The Numbers

FEDSIM Task Orders Subject To Fair Opportunity (FY04 thru 8/22/04)



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