GSA Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory

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Committee (GAP FAC) Recommendations 2024 -03

SPRING 2024

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

August 14, 2024

The Honorable Robin Carnahan
Administrator
General Services Administration
1800 F St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20405

Dear Administrator Carnahan:

I am pleased to present this report detailing the recommendations adopted on May 22, 2024 by the General Services Administration Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Committee (GAP FAC). These recommendations build on our previous two sets of recommendations, adopted on May 4, 2023 and December 5, 2023. Our new recommendations again center around sustainability and are the final set of recommendations adopted under GAP FAC's initial charter term.

From the GAP FAC's first meetings in the fall of 2022, our members have been careful to connect the dots among the common themes that have emerged from the discovery conducted by the full committee and our three subcommittees over 53 public subcommittee meetings and seven public full committee meetings.

Our latest set of recommendations are designed to equip the acquisition workforce with the knowledge needed to incorporate sustainability considerations in their decisions, energize and integrate GSA's efforts to match the most innovative solutions to the government's purchasing needs, and harness data so that both the acquisition workforce and vendors make informed decisions and are able to track the impact of those decisions.

Our newest recommendations urge GSA to:

- Amplify GSA's change acceleration strategy within the acquisition workforce by:
    - integrating sustainability into recruitment strategies and performance assessment metrics; and
    - continuing to develop a sustainability credential, using a competency-based model.
- Adopt a lifecycle management approach for innovative new entrants into the federal marketplace, starting with identifying, engaging and onboarding. The lifecycle should also include creating pathways within the federal marketplace, encompassing clear metrics and use of data and analytics, to foster an environment where innovators thrive.
- Adopt a principled-based data framework for sustainability, based on the fundamentals of lifecycle-based environmental impact assessment.

A summary of GAP FAC's three sets of recommendations adopted over 2023-2024 is attached in Appendix D.

One common theme encountered by GAP FAC in developing each of our recommendations has been that there is outstanding work going on within GSA and across the government on which to build, being carried out by subject matter experts who are passionate about getting the best results possible when the government spends money on goods or services. The expertise and passion within GSA have produced early and significant progress addressing GAP FAC's recommendations to date. In some notable examples, GSA has:

- through its role in the FAR Council, led a significant re-write of FAR Part 23, which addresses sustainable products and services -- a badly needed update that provides clearer and more consistent rules for both vendors and the acquisition workforce;
- finalized a rule to incentivize suppliers to offer single-use, plastic-free packaging, including both product packaging and shipping packaging;
- proceeded with plans to create a new government-wide sustainability credential through the Federal Acquisition Institute;
- redesignated a government-wide training course which integrates sustainability management into acquisitions;
- added GSA's Chief Sustainability Officer to GSA's acquisition review boards, to ensure that sustainability is considered in strategies for major acquisitions;
- amended the Federal Management Regulation to promote sustainability, as well as equity and community engagement, in decisions on where federal facilities are located;
- continued the agency's long-standing leadership in promoting sustainability in federal facilities, including by focusing on low-embodied carbon materials;
- required GSA's contracting activities to designate leads on sustainability topics, helping to create a community of practice on sustainability within GSA;
- changed specifications for custodial products (covering over 600 products for approximately 1500 federal facilities), to require contractors to use products certified to ecolabels such as EPA's Safer Choice;
- issued a request for information in the Federal Register to learn about how GSA can reduce or eliminate PFAS in products procured by the federal government; and
- conducted training in sustainable business practices for customer agencies, as well as state, local and tribal governments.

On behalf of all the GAP FAC members, thank you for creating the opportunity through GAP FAC to bring together experts from across the country and across sectors to provide objective advice to GSA on an issue that gains in urgency each day. We also are extremely grateful for the support we received from Senior Procurement Executive Jeff Koses and former Associate Administrator Krystal Brumfield. And

we could not have produced three sets of recommendations over the past eighteen months without the superlative assistance of our wonderful federal advisory committee support team of Boris Arratia, Stephanie Hardison, David Cochennic and Skylar Holloway.

While GAP FAC's work under its first charter has been focused on sustainability and climate change, we are confident that our recommendations have created an overall framework for GSA to take on other critical acquisition challenges, including emerging technologies and Artificial Intelligence (AI) – the focus of GAP FAC's new charter. Much of GAP FAC's work thus far will help inform this next phase of the committee, including our recommendations related to: accelerating change management; increasing subject matter expertise within the acquisition workforce; identifying, onboarding and engaging new entrants to the federal marketplace; communicating the government's needs to industry partners; and empowering both the acquisition workforce and vendors with quality, standardized data.

We look forward to both continued success within GSA in addressing sustainability and climate challenges and GAP FAC's future engagement on emerging technologies and AI.

Sincerely,

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In an era where environmental sustainability is essential, the role of federal agencies in promoting sustainable practices has never been more critical. The General Services Administration (GSA) stands at the forefront of this movement, leveraging its significant influence to drive the adoption of sustainable goods, services, and practices. This executive summary outlines the recommendations proposed by the General Services Administration Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Committee (GAP FAC) to enhance GSA's ability to prioritize climate and sustainability outcomes, address critical data gaps, and empower the federal acquisition workforce to make informed, sustainable decisions. Through these recommendations, GAP FAC aims to solidify GSA's commitment to environmental stewardship in the space of sustainable procurement.

The GAP FAC adopted an additional three recommendations on May 22, 2024 to support GSA in its mission to create a modern, accessible, and streamlined acquisition ecosystem. Those recommendations, generated by the Committee's three subcommittees, are summarized as follows:

Acquisition Workforce:

The GAP FAC is dedicated to ensuring GSA's acquisition workforce is equipped with the skills and knowledge to prioritize environmental outcomes and promote sustainability throughout the acquisition lifecycle.

Key Priorities

- **Establish Environmental Competencies:** Integrate sustainability as a core competency within the federal acquisition process.
- **Empower the Workforce:** Enable acquisition professionals to prioritize sustainability effortlessly.

Recommendation 1: Amplify GSA's Sustainability Change Acceleration Strategy

This recommendation is to advance GSA's sustainability change acceleration strategy by integrating sustainability into recruitment, performance assessment, and credentialing processes. First, we recommend GSA emphasize sustainability in recruitment announcements to attract candidates passionate about environmental goals, link sustainability with its mission to deliver social value and embed sustainability curriculum into the Acquisition Talent Development (ATD) Program. Second, integrating sustainability considerations into performance assessments will help evaluate employee effectiveness and foster accountability, with the development of key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned with sustainability goals, recognition and rewards for sustainability actions and clear responsibility assignments. Third, developing a competency-based Sustainability Acquisition Credential will build a cohort of trained experts to support peer engagement and promote sustainability throughout the acquisition lifecycle. This credential should be aligned with daily work, measure program impact through various assessments, and be scalable to guide training for all acquisition professionals. By implementing this recommendation, GSA will position itself as a model for other federal agencies and accelerate the integration of sustainability into federal acquisition.

Industry Partnerships:

The mission of the Industry Partnerships subcommittee has been to provide GSA with recommendations on how best to identify, engage and equip a broader and more diverse supplier base to achieve the government's goals of sustainability, environmental justice, economic equity, and a resilient domestic supply chain.

Key Priorities

- **Impactful Engagement:** Targeted outreach and development opportunities; collaboration with industries and associations to engage underrepresented suppliers.
- **Metric, Motivation, and Methods:** Establish feedback mechanisms and recognition programs to motivate and inspire action beyond compliance, highlight success stories and share best practices.

Recommendation 2: Adopt Life Cycle Management for Innovative Entrants

This recommendation is for GSA to adopt a lifecycle management approach to integrating innovative new entrants into its products and services portfolio. GAP FAC proposes that GSA create a journeyman map for new entrants across four phases: identifying, engaging, onboarding and creating pathways to progress. Key priorities include impactful engagement and metrics, motivation and methods to validate meaningful progress. The approach includes engaging with these diverse suppliers through targeted outreach and support programs, ensuring they have the resources and knowledge to participate effectively in federal procurement opportunities. There are several recommended areas of opportunity for GSA to prioritize and enhance, including streamlining the onboarding process for new suppliers, providing continuous support and feedback mechanisms and establishing mentorship programs to foster more lasting relationships.

Policy & Practice:

As the federal government's leading procurement agency, GSA possesses significant purchasing power and a strong commitment to environmental stewardship. GSA influences market behavior and drives the adoption of sustainable goods and services. However, achieving its mission fully requires addressing key data gaps for better policies and practices.

Key Priorities:

- Data constraints in sustainable procurement of goods and services.
- Laying the groundwork for utilizing sustainability in the vendor selection process.
- Improved data to inform sustainability impact and decision-making.

Recommendation 3: Adopt a Principles-Based Sustainability Data Framework

This recommendation proposes that GSA enhance its sustainability efforts by developing a robust data infrastructure. Consistency and transparency will be key to the framework, along with lifecycle-based environmental impact assessments. The framework should be principles-based, dependent on qualitative and objective data and should ensure standardization of accounting and reporting methods. It also should integrate and maximize existing tools that help the acquisition workforce promote sustainable acquisition. GSA should also explore new tools, including artificial intelligence (AI), application programming interfaces (APIs), and other data management and market innovation tools. This type of framework will streamline decision making and increase efficiency and

accountability. Furthermore, we recommend prioritizing products that are compliant with federal sustainable procurement practices.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The GSA Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Committee would like to express our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to all the individuals who have contributed their time, effort, and expertise to the success of this Committee during our 2024 spring session. We are deeply grateful for your steadfast support.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

ACQUISITION WORKFORCE

One of the GAP FAC's missions is to empower and equip the federal acquisition workforce to prioritize environmental outcomes and promote sustainability throughout the acquisition lifecycle. To realize this mission, we have focused on two priority areas:

Priority 1. Identify the essential pathways needed to make environmental and sustainability considerations a core competency in federal acquisition.

Priority 2. Identify the critical levers needed to empower the acquisition workforce to prioritize environmental outcomes and promote sustainability with the least amount of effort.

These priorities guided the recommendations advanced in the GAP FAC's May 2023 Recommendation Report, in addition to its December 2023 Recommendation Report.

For the third set of recommendations, the Committee offers one acquisition workforce recommendation that addresses both Priority 1 and Priority 2.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Amplify GSA's Sustainability Change Acceleration Strategy

Recruitment, Performance Assessment, and Credentialing:

As discussed in our May 4, 2023 recommendations, embedding sustainability considerations across GSA's federal acquisition workforce will involve significant organizational change. While change is underway at GSA, three additional actions are proposed to accelerate the pace of this change by: integrating sustainability into the expectations for new acquisition professionals, integrating sustainability into performance assessment strategies, and launching a competency-based sustainability acquisition credential. These actions would position GSA as a model for other federal agencies to follow as they embed sustainability across federal acquisition.

A. Integrate Sustainability in Recruitment Strategies

The Committee strongly recommends that GSA use sustainability as a recruitment tool. By emphasizing sustainability in acquisition recruitment announcements and expectations, GSA can align its broader organizational objectives with its sustainability goals, attract new talent committed to addressing sustainability concerns, and foster a workforce that is poised to embed sustainability into federal acquisition.

1. Integrate Sustainability Into Recruitment Announcements: GSA's aging acquisition workforce creates a significant opportunity to attract new entrants, especially recent college graduates who often desire to work for organizations that are committed to addressing climate and sustainability challenges. To meet its recruitment needs and increase interest from candidates, GSA should integrate sustainability into recruitment announcements to explicitly incorporate sustainability as a key component. Terms such as "environment," "green," "energy," and

"sustainability" should be highlighted to signal their importance in the roles, attracting candidates who prioritize sustainability outcomes.

2. Link Sustainability with the Agency's Overall Mission: GSA should make a concerted effort to link sustainability with the agency's mission to deliver social value. Recruitment materials should articulate how sustainability is an important aspect of the candidate's professional success, reinforcing its importance within the organization and setting the expectation that employees contribute to the agency's sustainability objectives.

3. Embed Sustainability into GSA's Acquisition Talent Development (ATD) Program: GSA's newly established ATD Program is a dynamic two-year training and development journey equipping entry-level acquisition professionals with essential skills. With 113 trainees anticipated in the inaugural cohort, graduates of the ATD Program achieve GSA-specific credentialing and Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) professional certification, thus enhancing their professional qualifications and providing a pathway for more specialized skills. Prior to the ATD Program, development strategies for entry-level acquisition professionals were managed individually across multiple GSA offices. The ATD Program streamlines the recruitment, training and overall development of entry-level GSA professionals into a single program to develop the next generation of acquisition professionals.

We strongly recommend that GSA embeds sustainability curriculum into its ATD Program, thus creating a pathway for sustainability credentialing. Doing so can help spark sustainability interest and increase sustainability literacy among new acquisition professionals, while galvanizing sustainability interest for others. It will also help align sustainability with the agency's broader mission. By providing a critical foundational understanding of sustainability in federal acquisition, leveraging the ATD Program can provide a critical pathway for acquisition professionals as they consider pursuing additional sustainability credentials through a GSA sustainability credential (as described in item C., below). It also provides a mechanism to realize the GAP FAC's May 4, 2023 Recommendation Report, which focuses on making sustainability a core, foundational capability across the acquisition workforce, as well as creating acquisition sustainability experts through a new sustainability certification.

We also encourage GSA to explore similar opportunities to reach early career Contracting Officer's Representative, Program and Project Managers, and other members of the acquisition community who have a critical role on the acquisition team.

B. Integrate Sustainability into Performance Assessment Strategies:

GSA should further embed sustainability considerations across federal acquisition by integrating sustainability into acquisition professionals' performance assessments. These assessments are critical for evaluating and enhancing employee effectiveness, providing feedback, and fostering accountability. They can also help to inform decisions regarding promotions, professional recognitions, and strategic directions, ensuring that acquisition professionals possess the necessary skills to excel in their roles and contribute to GSA's sustainability success. Each of these factors are vital to the federal acquisition workforce embracing sustainability in their acquisition routines and practices, thus further aligning sustainability with GSA's overall mission.

Four Important Aspects of Performance Assessment To Emphasize Are:

1. Recognition and Rewards: GSA's performance assessment strategy should incorporate additional recognition and rewards that are linked to procurement professionals' sustainability actions. Recognition and rewards are crucial for changing acquisition professionals' behavior by positively reinforcing desired actions and aligning them with GSA's mission, thus shaping its culture. They also enhance the agency's retention and job satisfaction by fostering a positive work environment, encouraging emulation among peers, and driving change throughout the organization. GSA has begun this process with its current sustainability award program, which annually honors teams and individuals for outstanding sustainability achievement. However, it should increase opportunities for recognition, in addition to differentiating among the stages of the acquisition worker's professional journey. For instance, new recruits should have opportunities for recognition (e.g., "rookie of the year") as should senior personnel with the goal of incentivizing sustainability initiative and recognizing exemplary contributions towards meeting GSA's sustainability goals.

2. Acquisition Workforce Key Performance Indicators: GSA should develop acquisition workforce Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that align with the agency's Sustainability KPIs. This would provide a clear and measurable way to gauge progress towards individuals meeting GSA's sustainability objectives. KPIs are essential tools for driving continuous improvement and alignment with strategic goals. By tracking acquisition workforce KPIs, GSA can identify areas of strength and weakness and enable informed decision-making and resource allocation. GSA should create clear and well-defined sustainability-oriented KPIs that are emphasized across all organizational levels to guide and evaluate the acquisition professional's performance **(see Appendix A)**.

3. Alignment with Mission: In the GAP FAC's May 4, 2023 Recommendation Report, the Committee recommended that GSA develop an aggressive communication strategy around aligning acquisition workforce KPIs and the agency's overall mission to deliver social value. Doing so will help accelerate the pace of change and provide additional motivation for acquisition professionals to integrate sustainability principles into their day-to-day operations and decision-making processes.

4. Clear Responsibility Assignment: GSA should formally define and assign sustainability responsibilities to acquisition professionals. These responsibilities should be linked to KPIs (noted in item #2, above) to ensure appropriate accountability and performance assessment. Acquisition professionals who have a clear responsibility assignment benefit from clarity in their roles, ensuring that they understand their duties and objectives and this understanding is shared with their supervisors. Such clarity fosters efficiency, minimizes confusion, and enables better coordination within teams and across the organization. GSA should avoid embedding sustainability expectations into vague categorizations such as "other duties as assigned." By enhancing clarity in sustainability responsibilities, GSA also increases opportunities to recognize and reward acquisition professionals who are sustainability exemplars (noted in item #1, above).

C. Develop a Competency-based Sustainability Acquisition Credential

The Committee recommends building on the GAP FAC's May 4, 2023 Recommendation Report, by creating a team of sustainability experts who will be trained and certified through a new GSA-led Sustainability Acquisition Credential program. These highly trained experts would be deployed to support peer-to-peer engagement across acquisition teams and therefore promote sustainability across all stages of the acquisition lifecycle. This program should be modeled after the IT Acquisition Credential (ITAC) program.

The three essential aspects of how this program should be developed:

- Build a cohort-based credential program
- Assess the current state and gaps to create a competency framework
- Provide real-world, experiential learning, which the GAP FAC further described in its December 2023 Recommendation Report.

GSA immediately moved forward with this recommendation. As a result of the agency's efforts, the Federal Civilian Credential Governance Board voted to establish a working group (led by GSA) to explore a new credential for the workforce on the topic of sustainable acquisition.

Moving forward, we strongly suggest that GSA ensure that the core element of its new sustainability credential is based on a competency model. We further recommend that in developing this competency model that GSA further draws lessons learned from the ITAC Competency Model using an agile project management methodology. The ITAC Competency Model approach involved structuring the program into phases, emphasizing close collaboration with strategic leaders and frontline operational acquisition professionals serving as Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), and continuous improvement. In developing its competency-based sustainable acquisition credential, critical features for GSA to consider include:

1. Streamline the Sustainability Acquisition Competencies: Reduce the number of competencies to ensure focus and impactful outcomes, similar to the ITAC program's refinement process.

2. Emphasize Both Technical and Professional Competencies: Ensure that both technical competencies (e.g., business acumen, cross-functional teamwork) and professional competencies (e.g., oral, written, electronic communication) are relevant to all stages of the acquisition lifecycle. While professional competencies might be found in other training, they are not specific to sustainability.

Examples of core competencies and skills could include:

a. **Foundational Knowledge:** Understand basic sustainability concepts, laws, regulations, and standards relevant to the agency's mission.

b. **Technical Skills**: Gain specific technical knowledge required for applying sustainability practices within the agency's operations.

c. **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:** Develop the ability to analyze sustainability challenges and devise innovative solutions.

d. **Leadership and Communication:** Cultivate skills to lead sustainability initiatives and effectively communicate their value internally and externally.

3. Engage Acquisition Professionals: GSA should engage acquisition professionals to gather input about their current challenges and skills gaps associated with embedding sustainability into federal acquisition and throughout program design. Grassroots support is also vital to building trust in the program and enrolling new entrants once the program is available. Engagement with acquisition professionals should continue as the program evolves and as the sustainability knowledge evolves. The image below offers an example for how and at what stage of development the ITAC Program engaged acquisition workers during the creation of its IT competency model.

Engaging acquisition professionals in the development of a competency model allows for a longer shelf life for training assets, and mapping to subsequent learning resources. The ITAC model (see Figure 1, below) offers a proven approach. This model relied on a Delphi process, which delivered numerous benefits during program implementation, including greater workforce buy-in, stronger linkages between problems and solutions, and cost-effective development and maintenance.

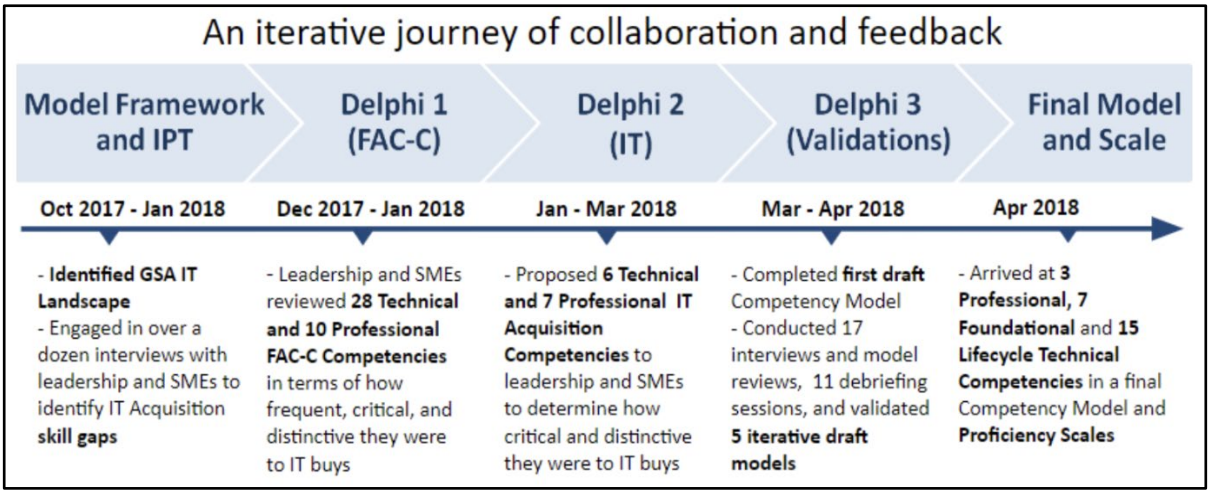

Figure 1: Refresh - IT Competency Model Development

4. Make the Credential Relevant to Daily Work: The ITAC Program was deliberate at making the credential relevant to the professional's day-to-day work. Similarly, GSA's sustainability credential should ensure that sustainability is integrated into every stage of the acquisition lifecycle, from pre-acquisition, to acquisition planning, to solicitation and evaluation, to contract award and administration, to post acquisition. Doing so will help ensure alignment with GSA's overall mission (see item A.2., above) while focusing strategically on opportunities to improve sustainability outcomes across the acquisition lifecycle. Content should be reviewed frequently to ensure that it reflects current sustainability understandings, which continue to evolve. See Appendix B for examples of what such a competency model could look like.

5. Measure Program Impact: Measuring program impact will be essential to the success of the Competency-based Sustainability Acquisition Credential. There are a range of ways in which program impact can be assessed. One approach is self-assessment. For instance, the ITAC Model is accompanied by a set of self-assessed proficiency scales to demonstrate what varying levels of

proficiency look like for each competency. These proficiency scales are administered to both the IT acquisition professional as well as their manager. Another means of impact assessment is to evaluate outcome measures and individual skills, which are informed by the competency model. We suggest that GSA include a range of assessment measures to assess program success. These efforts would allow for greater precision in recruitment, job announcements, performance assessment, and the development of credentials. Skills gap data should be used to assist the GSA in identifying recruiting priorities.

6. Scale the Competency Model: The competency model could be scaled to all acquisition professionals (beyond sustainability SMEs). Specifically, the model could be utilized to guide the curation and/or development of awareness and application training that would be provided to acquisition professionals at the journeyman and expert levels. Scaling would require a support structure that might include a project sponsor, a change champion, human capital development and instructional design support. See Appendix B for an example.

Conclusion

Across the three sets of acquisition workforce recommendations developed by the GAP FAC, all have focused on aspects of training recommended for sustainability acquisition professionals. Together, the recommendations follow a stacked, structured learning pathway that begins at the foundational level, which focuses on shared understanding for all, as illustrated in the image below. It then progresses to proficiency and advanced knowledge before culminating in mastery, and described in the GAP FAC's May 4, 2023 Recommendation Report. This comprehensive learning pathway should include experiential training in order to optimize learning that is relevant to the acquisition professional, as described in the GAP FAC's December 2023 Recommendation Report.

For Contracting Officers, modifications to the ATD are expected to deliver foundational and proficiency level learning. Updates to the GSA-specific certifications should include curricula based on sustainability values. For example, the Fleet Acquisition certification was recently revised to include coursework for the specialization of Electric Vehicle purchases. Similar modifications should be made to other existing certifications. The proposed Competency-based Sustainability Acquisition Credential is expected to deliver on advanced and mastery level learning. Figure 2, below, illustrates the learning mastery pathway for each of the federal contracting trainings. Please note that the Competency-based Certification Credential is also applicable to the broader acquisition workforce.

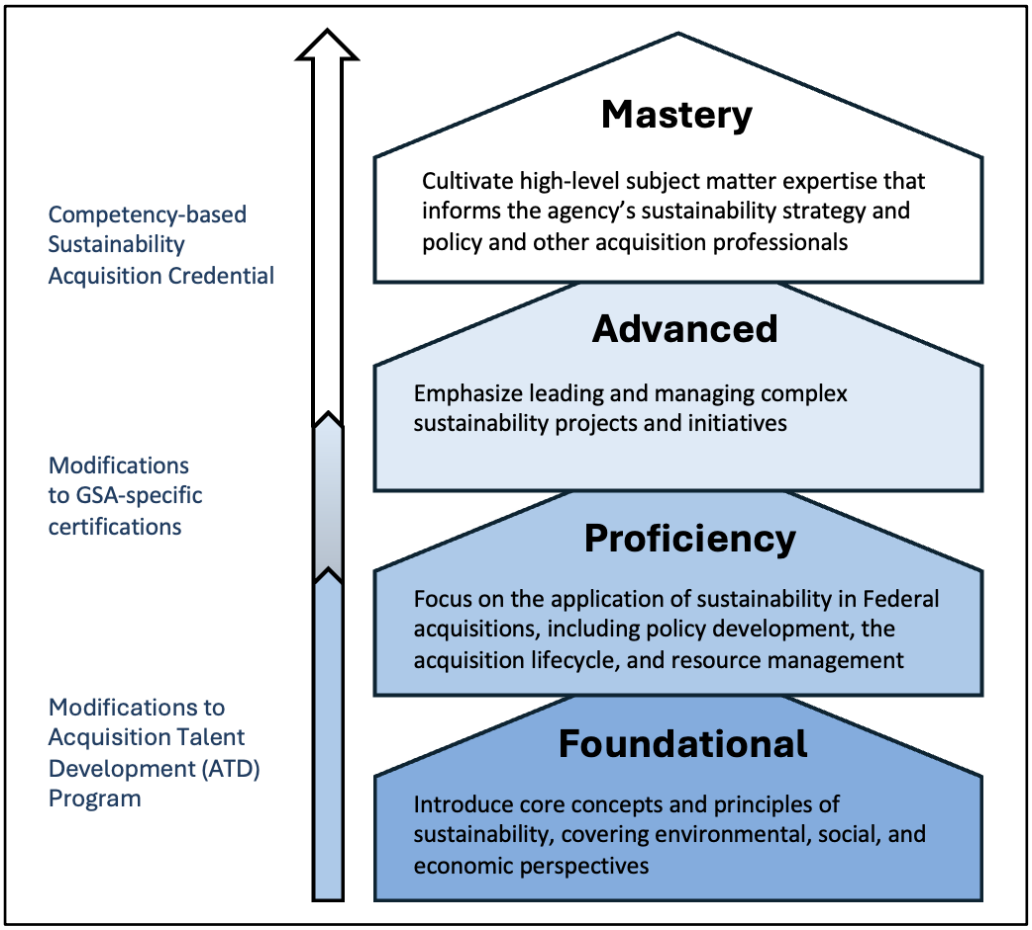

Figure 2: Comprehensive Learning Pathway for Embedding Sustainability into Federal Contracting

INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

Over the past two years, the GAP FAC has engaged in a discovery process, leading to a deeper understanding of strengths, challenges and opportunities for improving GSA's efforts to diversify, strengthen resilience, and bring much needed innovation to its supplier base. The current mandate of driving sustainability and mitigating climate risk outcomes through federal acquisitions require speed, action and impact. There may not be the opportunity to reflect and think, "I wish we did more when we had the chance".

Countless hours were dedicated to engaging with small, diverse, emerging and innovative entrants, as well as the product and outcome owners within GSA. These discussions reinforced the importance of engaging with those closest to the work. Notable insights were gained from conversations with founders of emerging technology companies, such as those producing energy through 3D customizable form factor batteries. These interactions provided valuable suggestions and perspectives that have informed our work and are important for GSA's consideration.

We engaged with various GSA staff members, including Federal Acquisition Services, Fleet Management, Multiple Award Schedules, Customer and Stakeholder Engagement (CASE) as well as representatives from the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU). Learning about the different engagements, programs, and efforts already underway within GSA to foster innovation was enlightening. However, these efforts are not universally well-known by potential vendors and can be disparate, with no single entity guiding the customer journey for emerging and innovative entrants. Multiple steps and blind handoffs impact progress and can be frustrating for both GSA and the new entrants.

The overwhelming insight from this discovery process is that while the pieces for success exist within GSA and the federal government, these efforts often become disconnected, resulting in complexities that dampen overall speed and success. For many entrants, the path to success is unclear, complex, and does not lead to the intended result of matching innovative products and solutions to program needs. The desired state is to connect these innovative entrants with those developing strategies, discussing problems, and ultimately those with purchasing power. There is a strong understanding of the desired outcomes and deep expertise within GSA, but better coordination and a cohesive approach to shepherding entrants through the process are needed.

We have compiled learnings, challenges and opportunities into a journeymap across four phases of Identify, Engage, Onboard, and Pathway to Progress. Each of these phases is experienced by both the entrant (supplier base) and from the purchaser seeking products and services (GSA). The entrant is on the journey looking to supply a solution and grow their business. GSA is the navigator trying to connect the entrant to the source of demand through the best vehicle available to drive mission success and administrative objectives. Understanding both perspectives was a critical element of our discovery process. We identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats across the lifecycle phases which then informed our recommendation (**see Appendix C**).

RECOMMENDATION 2: Adopt Life Cycle Management for Innovative Entrants

Reflecting on all of the work and the recommendations put forth to date along with the journey map of discovery, the GAP FAC has focused on three priority areas:

- **Go To Market (GTM):** How can GSA increase awareness and strengthen the demand signal it puts out into the potential supplier ecosystem?
- **Intra GSA:** How can GSA improve connectedness and cohesion within its own organization to drive stronger outcomes in expanding the supplier base and bringing needed innovation through acquisitions?
- **Inter Government:** How can GSA improve connectivity between GSA and across government that will drive the desired outcomes?

These recommendations can be overlaid on the entrant lifecycle (**see Appendix C**) to show how and where these recommendations provide impact.

Identify	Engage | Onboard	Pathways
Unify GTM Collateral for all of GSA to leverage. Create GSA Branding (targeted for sustainability and climate) **Revisit: Lighthouse**	INTRA GSA: Focus on how GSA can strengthen connectivity between OSDBU, CASE, Federal Acquisition Service (FAS), and Product teams to drive speed and accuracy. INTER GSA/GOV: Focus on efforts to strengthen connectivity and impact between GSA, SBA and other agencies to better leverage existing offerings to drive innovation (ie: SBIR and STTR). **Revisit: Challenge.gov**	Implement line of sight metrics that measure outcomes and impacts of efforts. Expand beyond numbers of participants to include growth statistics, washout rates, and impact on GSA objectives.

Data, AI, and Analytics

A. Identify

Enhance efforts to identify innovative solutions by increasing awareness and clearly signaling product owner needs within the supplier ecosystem. Create unified marketing and targeted branding to attract diverse and emerging businesses, ensuring GSA receives the most relevant information and resources.

1. **Go-To-Market:** How can GSA increase awareness and strengthen the demand signal it puts out into the potential supplier ecosystem?
    a. **Unifying GSA collateral:** GSA has an opportunity to unify Go-to-Market collateral and information for innovative entrants that will ensure the most relevant information and resources available are conveyed regardless of which entity is involved in the engagement. For example, Fleet Services described their efforts around tradeshows and academic institutions. “People are lined up to talk with them” but they are not always fully equipped to provide the most relevant information on next steps or who is best for

these people to speak with depending on their current status. Most of the emerging providers are undercapitalized and will be looking for access to grants and funding which are available across other agencies but not necessarily within GSA. Similarly we heard from OSDBU and others that they know the levers for helping emerging entrants along but they are not always knowledgeable on what specifically the GSA product owners need. Connecting these dots within GSA, particularly between OSDBU, the product owners and CASE, should produce the right level of information and actionable next steps.

b. **Create Targeted GSA Branding and Marketing:** GSA should revisit its branding and marketing strategies relative to addressing pressing initiatives such as climate impact. The key objective is to adopt a search-and-find approach focused on defined challenges and those working on solutions. Campaigns should target innovation and entrepreneurship enclaves, often found near America's colleges and universities to attract solutions not common among federal agencies. Conveying that GSA is seeking innovative solutions can create a pull effect. Multi-channel efforts should include universities, incubators, accelerators, and investors. Driving awareness and amplifying the demand signal is critical, and the previous recommendation of building the Lighthouse: A Network of Networks supports the Identification phase.

B. Engage and Onboard

Streamline the engagement and onboarding process to improve internal and external coordination and connectivity. Centralize efforts and facilitate access to decision-makers, creating the ability to effectively integrate new entrants and accelerate the adoption of innovative solutions. Innovation genius and game-changing solutions often reside in the small emerging businesses. The federal government wants to pull technology forward but there are many important steps in between. This is where GSA can make small changes to drive high impact.

2. **Intra GSA:** How can GSA improve connectedness and cohesion within its organization to drive stronger outcomes in expanding the supplier base and bringing needed innovation through acquisitions?

   Within GSA, there exists a mature micro-ecosystem of offices and programs working towards the agency's overall goals. Specifically OSDBU aligned under the Executive Staff and the Product and Services groups, CASE and Technology Transformation Services all aligned under the Federal Acquisition Services (FAS) play important roles. Navigating the correct path for an entrant can be overwhelming and ineffective. Some areas for GSA to consider include:

   - Can assessing readiness for government contracting be streamlined?
   - Can GSA move from a process focus of finding the right contract to more of a product focus of matching solutions to demands and streamline pathways based on entrant readiness?

- Could GSA centralize some of the efforts into a vendor management program focused specifically on sustainability and climate risk mitigation (or other key agency objectives) to ensure innovations are being quickly and effectively matched to demand signals?
- Can GSA create a waiting room where vetted entrants who are both found and those that self identify are basically prepped and prioritized for match making to product and services purchases?
- Can GSA facilitate these entrants gaining access to those making strategic decisions on needs and problems to strengthen awareness, readiness and potentially better inform the procurement strategy based on innovation?

3. **Inter Government:** How can GSA improve connectivity between GSA and across government that will drive the desired outcomes?

   Driving improvement across government is an overwhelming endeavor. For the engaging and onboarding phases, it is recommended that GSA focus on strengthening its partnership with the Small Business Administration (SBA) to ensure there is awareness and utilization of existing programs and offerings across both GSA and SBA. This collaboration can enhance engagement and the onboarding process for innovative new entrants and maintain visibility of these entrants throughout the lifecycle. SBA and GSA have mutual ownership and interest across the new entrant lifecycle, strengthening this partnership can improve the entrant experience and bring more speed to value for the government. SBA already sponsors the SBIR-STTR program to help with jump start funding for innovations. Is there an opportunity for GSA and SBA to provide stronger connections to this program and amplify the positive impact of bringing innovation closer to the mission?

C. Pathways to Progress

Establish clear metrics to measure the impact of initiatives on key goals like sustainability and innovation. Utilizing data and analytics to enhance visibility into outcomes and encourage continuous improvement will foster an environment where new solutions can thrive within the federal marketplace. For this element of the lifecycle, the focus should be on effectiveness and impact:

- How is this measured today and how should it be measured to ensure transparency and meaningful metrics?
- Is GSA bringing novel solutions and innovation to its products and services to bend the line on the sustainability and climate goals in a meaningful way?
- Is it at a pace that supports our time bound problem?
- For the entrants, are GSA’s efforts resulting in meaningful engagements and the opportunity for true growth as demonstrated by expansion into the federal marketplace, increases in revenue, profitability and market presence?

- Have once unknown market segments been identified and incorporated into the federal marketplace with meaningful impacts on building resiliency, accelerating innovation, and creating diversity?

With refined and more accurate metrics, GSA can validate that its efforts are driving the desired outcomes, measuring the impact of changes, and identifying areas for future improvements.

D. Data, AI and Analytics

While not specifically defined in our discovery and recommendations, the importance of data, AI and analytics became evident. Matching entrants' products, services with government demand signals and acquisition vehicles (contracts) can be accelerated through the use of strong data disciplines, AI applications and enhanced visibility and analytics. This data-enabling foundation presents an exciting opportunity for GSA to drive modernization and transformation across the entire portfolio of offerings.

Conclusion

The Committee’s recommendation provides a broad range of considerations for GSA, categorized across the four phases of the new entrant lifecycle; Identify, Engage, Onboard, and Provide Pathways to Progress. GSA has the opportunity to assess and prioritize where and how to drive improvements, and all efforts will be better served with the use of advanced data disciplines, AI and automation, and visibility and transparency of metrics.

There are challenges for entities trying to break into and succeed in the federal government marketplace, but there are also innovative entrants with solutions to pressing problems. Doing business with GSA can be confusing and frustrating, but within GSA, there are mature capabilities and procurement expertise. There is a desire to diversify the supplier base, to bring in more innovation, and to be a lever for sustainability and climate risk mitigation. Reflecting on the work conducted, discovery shared, and recommendations made, much of the opportunity for improvement lies in amplifying and connecting existing efforts rather than creating new ones.

POLICY & PRACTICE

GSA plays a critical role in sustainable procurement in the United States, with significant purchasing power and a commitment to environmental stewardship. As the federal government's premier procurement agency, GSA's policy and practices significantly influence market behavior, driving the adoption of sustainable goods and services. However, to fully realize its mission, GSA must address data gaps that limit its ability to:

- Make informed decisions related to the acquisition of sustainable goods and services.
- Make informed and defensible decisions related to the selection of vendors.
- Measure the impact of its sustainability initiatives and choices.
- Make data-driven and informed strategic decisions for the organization.

A. Data Constraints In Sustainable Procurement of Goods and Services

Connectivity and Integration of Data on Sustainable Product Availability: The GSA has robust data, tools and resources provided by the federal government to promote cost-effective and sustainable acquisition, such as energy and water efficient products with reduced life cycle costs. These include:

GSA's Green Procurement Compilation: Identify minimum federal sustainable acquisition requirements, sample source selection criteria, and sample contract language.
GSA's SFTool: Use modules within Learn and Plan sections (e.g. water efficiency, healthy indoor environments, responsible business conduct) to research best practices.
GSA Environmental Program Aisle on GSA Advantage: Designed to give you easy access to the wide variety of environmental products and services offered by GSA.
SFTool Framework for Managing Climate Risks to Federal Agency Supply Chains: This risk management framework provides guidance to federal agencies ready to assess observed and expected climate or weather-related risks to supply chains.
Federal Acquisition Service (FAS) Best-in-Class (BIC) Designated Solutions: The designation identifies government-wide contracts that satisfy key criteria defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).
SFTool Product Search: A component where a user can browse for certified products and see additional product data.

However, most of these tools lack interoperability making it difficult for contracting professionals to simply identify sustainable sourcing strategies and procure accordingly, resulting in tool underutilization. For example, the Sustainable Facilities Tool (SFTool) "SFTool Product Search" is limited because it cannot identify products meeting all relevant sustainable

procurement requirements and sometimes includes standards and ecolabels not recommended by EPA, which can confuse federal purchasers.

B. GSA Needs To Lay the Groundwork for Utilizing Sustainability in the Vendor Selection Process

GSA faces several constraints when selecting sustainable product and service vendors:

- **Lack of Uniform Sustainability KPIs:** GSA does not have a standard set of objective, verifiable performance criteria to assess a vendor's past sustainability performance (or "responsibility"), making a vendor scorecard unachievable. Without the ability to reward vendors that have demonstrated sustainable practices, GSA misses the opportunity to incentivize market behavior.[1]

- **Tracking Vendor Sustainability Performance:** Even if criteria were established, GSA lacks a consistent method to track, evaluate and measure the sustainability performance of its current vendors. This hinders the ability to maximize sustainability under existing contracts. Publishing vendor data could encourage competition and better performance.

- **Inconsistent Vendor Sustainability Reporting:** The absence of a standardized process for vendors to report their sustainability performance makes it difficult to assess and incentivize sustainable practices, creating a barrier to progress in reducing environmental impact.

- **Lack of Vendor Sustainability Tracking:** GSA does not have a comprehensive database of vendor sustainability certifications. Existing certifications tracked by GSA are product-specific, and lack a direct connection to suppliers or manufacturers, complicating the identification of vendors recognized for their sustainability efforts.

C. Improved Data to Inform Sustainability Impact and Decision-Making

- **Track Cost-Effectiveness:** The yearly scorecard used by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) tracks limited data on specific areas like public buildings and electric vehicles but it does not provide a comprehensive overview of all suppliers and purchasing to inform organizational decision making across all categories.

- **Tracking Sustainability Exemptions**: There are exemptions to sustainability requirements related to price, performance and availability, but there is no tracking of those exemption forms, how many are received, granted or denied, the reasons they are used, and no development of a strategy to minimize their frequency.

- **Lifecycle Data**: GSA lacks data on the cost-effectiveness of sustainable products and services across their lifecycle. This information is important for assessing the impact of sustainable procurement initiatives. The absence of a life cycle cost mandate or policy

[1] GSA does have the Federal Contractor Climate Risk Management Scorecard, though it is not utilized in vendor selection: https://d2d.gsa.gov/report/gsa-federal-contractor-climate-risk-management-scorecard

limits the ability to articulate the benefits of sustainable procurement.

- **Comprehensive Data on Sustainability Impacts:** GSA does not have a comprehensive dataset that tracks the sustainability impacts of its purchasing decisions. This makes it difficult to assess the agency's progress toward its sustainability goals and to identify areas for improvement. The agency could build on CEQ's work on the Environmental Justice Scorecard, which presents a baseline assessment of actions taken by 24 federal agencies in 2021 and 2022 to help achieve the Biden-Harris Administration's environmental justice goals.
- **Uniformity in Data Collection:** Uniform data collection methods are needed to aggregate and analyze sustainability data effectively. The lack of a mandate complicates the identification of trends and patterns.
- **Better Data Results:** Without sustainable spend data, there is a lack of foundational understanding of environmental impacts, making it difficult to inform strategic decisions. Best-In-Class (BIC) practices might serve as a starting point for improving transparency into transactional data and various contractual performance measures.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Adopt a Principles-Based Sustainability Data Framework

1. **Develop a Robust Data Infrastructure Reliant on Consistency and Reliability:**

   Figure 3 provides a snapshot of the different stakeholders and partners that GSA can work with across the entire "data chain" starting with the accounting of environmental impacts through the development of life cycle inventories, to the development of tools that can help procurement professionals make decisions. A recent first step is a FAR rule requiring any vendor that received over $7.5M of contracts in the past fiscal year to provide information in their offer on where the vendor posts data on its GHG emissions and/or reduction goals, if such disclosures are being made.

2. **Develop a Principles-Based Framework for Data:** GSA must develop a framework for its approach to data that is principles-based and dependent upon quantitative and objective data that is scientifically defensible. The framework could be based on fundamentals of life cycle-based environmental impact assessment, with an emphasis on the use of ISO Type III labels with third-party verification processes in place, and is responsive to existing EPA guidance on the use of standards and ecolabels beyond federally managed ecolabels. This framework will require a collaborative effort across different stakeholders and providers to ensure standardization of accounting and reporting methods including but not limited to:

   a. **Developing a Comprehensive Data Collection System:** GSA should develop a comprehensive data collection system to track the environmental, social, and economic impact of its sustainable procurement practices. This system should include data on product availability, supplier performance, and cost-effectiveness of sustainable procurement. GSA should incorporate or coordinate with existing publicly available and accessible data communities such as the Federal LCA Commons and others.

b. **Standardizing Data Collection Methods:** GSA should standardize its data collection methods to ensure consistency and comparability of data. This will make for easier aggregation and analysis of the data to identify trends and patterns. As mentioned later, AI may assist with extracting data and extrapolating trends.

c. **Standardizing Assessment and Reporting Processes:** Work with agencies and other stakeholders to standardize impact assessment methods, certification, and third-party verification protocols.

d. **Increasing Data Transparency:** GSA should increase the transparency of its sustainability data by making it publicly available, potentially through a Center of Excellence, consistent with the committee's December 2023 Recommendations. This will allow other agencies, both state and federal, to benefit from data availability, and for the public and other stakeholders to hold the agency accountable for its sustainability progress and to identify areas for improvement.

e. **Tracking Sustainable Spend:** Sustainable spend tracking has deep utility in demonstrating vendor effectiveness. This can also give perspective on accountability of federal purchasers and programmatic success.

3. **Develop a Procurement Requirements API (Application Programming Interface):** The infrastructure will provide for both product selection and vendor selection in accordance with all applicable federal sustainable procurement requirements. Product selection will be based on standardized product impact assessment methods as discussed above. Vendor selection will be based on the development of a procurement requirements API that innovative software companies can use to create tools and interfaces to support GSA procurement specialists. This API should integrate with PRISM, identify relevant sustainable procurement requirements for each product or service category, provide sustainability evaluation criteria, provide contractual sustainability data reporting requirements, and automate the inclusion of these clauses into RFPs.

4. **Maximize the Utility and Use of Existing Tools:** Assess existing federal government tools that promote sustainable acquisition and ensure seamless integration to simplify decision-making, including the integration of GSA Advantage Environmental Aisle, Green Procurement Compilation, SFTool, EPA Recommendations of Specifications, Standards, and Ecolabels, and other federal government acquisition tools that promote sustainable acquisition. Once integrated, GSA could train the acquisition workforce about these tools to ensure maximum utilization (this builds on the GAP FAC's December 2023 Recommendations). The use of tools should be incentivized to encourage federal purchasers to utilize them. Increased training will be amplified if KPIs help track the usability of these tools.

5. **Test the Market**: The advent of AI, readily available APIs and innovations in data collection, display, and tracking, and the rapid development of tools to track spending and vendor management, have demonstrated that the market offerings in this space are more mature than when the GAP FAC began its work. AI and advanced tools may now be implemented to help augment data otherwise difficult to collect, standardize, and analyze. As such, we recommend testing the market with a Request for Information (RFI) specifically targeting technology tools

related to sustainable data capture, analysis, and decision making. The RFI could target capabilities related to vendor performance, vendor selection, the selection of sustainable goods and services, appropriate KPIs for dashboards, reporting and executive decision making, and integration with existing federal systems like PRISM and SFTool.

6. **Consider Prioritization In Results**: If GSA cannot limit search results in GSA Advantage or other tools to only include products and/or services that meet current federal sustainable procurement requirements, then it should give priority to providing results to users about compliant products. Allowing and listing non-compliant products in GSA procurement sites can confuse federal purchasers.

Illustrative Precedent and Examples of Sustainable Data Use And Incorporation

EPEAT Environmental Benefits Calculator provides this data for all purchases of EPEAT-registered products. Additional calculators like this for other product and service categories could help with assessing progress.

The EPA developed a framework over a four-year period with heavy GSA, DOD, and other interagency engagement to help in assessing ecolabels for use in federal procurement, the Framework for the Assessment of Environmental Performance Standards and Ecolabels for Federal Purchasing.

Manufacture 2030 is one example of an approach that utilizes a central repository where all vendor sustainability survey results are housed. Manufacture 2030 then provides back a summary of results and highlights vendors who may need additional support to improve sustainability efforts. Auto and pharmaceutical sectors and others are currently using this mechanism. Ecovadis is another such tool.

One approach that has realized success is the tracking of sustainable spend through the DOE's Sandia Labs. Use of an API that ties to the SFTool helps vendors to easily capture sustainable spend without much need for manual data collection or vendor oversight. The approach offers great promise as a starting point for how sustainable data capture can be successfully accomplished.

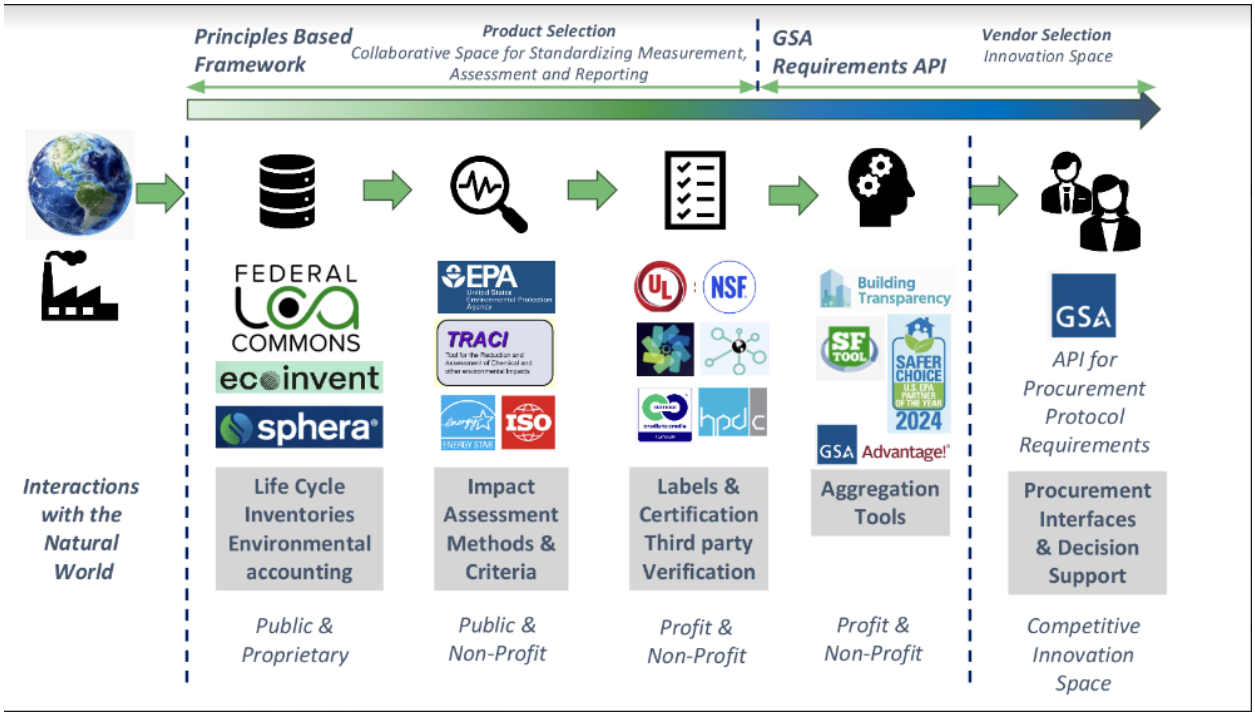

Figure 3: Process Flow

Conclusion

Addressing the data gaps in GSA's procurement processes is vital for aligning policy with practice and achieving the agency's sustainability objectives. Comprehensive and integrated data will enable GSA to make more informed decisions, effectively track and incentivize sustainable vendor performance, and accurately measure the impact of its sustainability initiatives. By enhancing its data collection and analysis methods, GSA can improve its strategic decision-making capabilities, for a more resilient, innovative, and environmentally responsible supply chain.

APPENDIX A

Examples of Sustainability-Oriented KPIs Applicable to Federal Acquisition

Supplier Sustainability Assessment:

- Percentage of suppliers evaluated for sustainability criteria.
- Percentage of consultations incorporating sustainability specifications.
- Compliance rate of suppliers with sustainability expectations/standards.

Sustainable Sourcing:

- Percentage of procurement spend allocated to sustainable products or services.
- Number of sustainable sourcing partnerships established.
- Increase in the use of certified sustainable materials in purchased goods.

Supply Chain Transparency:

- Percentage of suppliers providing transparent information on their environmental/social practices.
- Number of suppliers engaged in supply chain transparency initiatives (e.g., disclosing carbon emissions, labor practices).

Carbon Emissions Reduction:

- Percentage decrease in carbon emissions associated with procured goods and services.
- Carbon footprint per unit of procurement spend.
- Adoption rate of suppliers with low-carbon production processes or transportation methods.

Waste Reduction in Procurement:

- Percentage decrease in waste generated from packaging materials or non-recyclable products.
- Implementation of waste reduction strategies in procurement practices.
- Increase in the use of suppliers offering packaging-free or minimal packaging options.

Ethical Sourcing and Labor Practices:

- Percentage of suppliers compliant with labor standards and ethical sourcing guidelines.
- Number of suppliers audited for labor practices and social responsibility.
- Reduction in the use of suppliers associated with labor violations or unethical practices.

Cost Savings through Sustainable Procurement:

- Total cost savings achieved through sustainable procurement practices (e.g., energy-efficient products, reduced waste).
- Return on investment from sustainability initiatives in procurement.
- Percentage reduction in procurement costs associated with environmental impacts (e.g., disposal fees, energy consumption).

Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration:

- Number of collaborative initiatives with suppliers to improve sustainability performance.
- Level of stakeholder satisfaction with procurement processes related to sustainability.
- Engagement in industry partnerships/forums to promote sustainable procurement practices.

APPENDIX B

Example of Sustainability Competency Models

Many examples exist of sustainability-oriented competency models. Below are just a few:

Example 1[2]

ISM Sustainability Competency Model

Anti-corruption	Diversity, Equity And Inclusion+	Environmental	Global Responsibility	Ethics And Business Conduct	Financial Integrity
• Organizational Posture, Policy and Process • Supplier Selection and Management • Assessment, Metrics and Reporting	• (SD) Organizational Posture, Policy and Process • (SD) Supplier Selection and Management • (SD) Assessment, Metrics and Reporting • (TWD) Organizational Posture, Policy and Process	• Organizational Posture, Policy and Process • Org greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and reduce other natural resource impacts • Scope 3 & Supplier Impacts • Energy Procurement	• Organizational Posture, Policy and Process • Supplier Selection and Management • Assessment, Metrics and Reporting	• Organizational Posture, Policy and Process • Supplier Selection and Management • Assessment, Metrics and Reporting	• Organizational Posture, Policy and Process • Financial Controls • Supplier Selection and Management • Assessment, Metrics and Reporting

Health And Safety	Human Rights	Labor Rights	Transparency	Supply Chain Sustainability
• Organizational Posture, Policy and Process • Supplier Selection and Management • Assessment, Metrics and Reporting	• Organizational Posture, Policy and Process • Supplier Selection and Management • Assessment, Metrics and Reporting	• Organizational Posture, Policy and Process • Supplier Selection and Management • Assessment, Metrics and Reporting	• Organizational Posture, Policy and Process • Assessments, Metrics and Reporting	• Organizational Posture, Policy and Process • Supplier Selection and Management • Assessment, Metrics and Reporting

Example 2[3]

[2] Malone, D., 2023. "Sustainable Supply Chain Management: Best Practices and Strategies" short course offered by the Institute for Supply Management.

[3] Croome, S. (2022) "Sustainable Procurement: It's not just about being Green," presentation at Oxford College of Procurement and Supply.

Example 3

Integrating Sustainability Core Competencies into the Acquisition Lifecycle Pre-Acquisition Phase

- **Competencies:**
    - Needs Assessment: Ability to identify and articulate the need for goods or services in a way that considers sustainability impacts and opportunities.
    - Sustainable Market Research: Incorporate sustainability criteria into market research and supplier analysis, such as assessing suppliers' environmental performance and social responsibility practices.
    - Sustainable Requirements Definition: Teach professionals to include sustainability requirements in acquisition planning, such as specifying environmentally friendly products or services and considering life cycle impacts.
    - Strategic Sustainability Planning: Provide guidance on integrating sustainability goals and objectives into acquisition strategies, such as promoting sustainable sourcing practices and supporting diverse and local suppliers.
- **Sustainability Considerations:**
    - Understanding of lifecycle analysis and its application in evaluating products and services.
    - Knowledge of green procurement guidelines and standards.

Acquisition Planning Phase

- **Competencies:**
    - Proficiency in writing specifications and statements of work that include sustainability criteria.
    - Capability to engage with suppliers on sustainability issues and requirements.
    - Sustainable Solicitation Development: Educate professionals on developing solicitation documents that prioritize sustainability, such as including green procurement clauses and evaluating suppliers based on their sustainability practices.
    - Sustainable Risk Management: Train professionals to identify and mitigate sustainability risks associated with procurement activities, such as supply chain disruptions due to environmental or social issues.
    - Cost-Effective Sustainability Solutions: Provide skills in estimating the costs and benefits of sustainability initiatives, ensuring that sustainable options are economically viable and cost-effective over the long term.
- **Sustainability Considerations:**
    - Integration of environmental certifications and labels into product specifications.
    - Consideration of total cost of ownership, including environmental and social costs.

Solicitation and Evaluation Phase

- **Competencies:**

- Ability to develop solicitation documents that clearly communicate sustainability requirements to potential suppliers.
- Skill in evaluating bids with a focus on sustainability criteria alongside cost, quality, and service.
- Sustainable Supplier Evaluation: Equip professionals with tools and methods for evaluating suppliers' sustainability performance, such as conducting supplier audits or using sustainability certifications as evaluation criteria.
- Ethical and Sustainable Procurement Practices: Educate professionals on ethical and sustainable procurement practices, including fair labor practices, ethical sourcing, and promoting diversity and inclusion in supplier selection.

- **Sustainability Considerations:**
  - Use of sustainable procurement tools and methodologies for bid evaluation.
  - Understanding of how to assess suppliers' sustainability performance and commitments.

Contract Award and Administration Phase

- **Competencies:**
  - Proficiency in negotiating contracts that incorporate sustainability clauses and performance indicators.
  - Ability to manage contracts to ensure compliance with sustainability requirements.
  - Contract Administration: Train professionals to incorporate sustainability requirements into contract management processes, such as monitoring supplier compliance with sustainability commitments and tracking environmental and social performance indicators.
  - Performance Measurement: Provide skills in measuring and evaluating supplier performance against sustainability goals and objectives, such as tracking progress on environmental targets or social impact metrics.
  - Stakeholder Engagement: Teach professionals to engage stakeholders in sustainability initiatives, such as collaborating with suppliers, community organizations, and internal teams to achieve sustainability outcomes.

- **Sustainability Considerations:**
  - Implementation of supplier performance management in relation to sustainability objectives.
  - Engagement in collaborative initiatives with suppliers to improve sustainability outcomes.

Post-Acquisition Phase

- **Competencies:**
  - Continuous Improvement: Encourage professionals to conduct post-award reviews to identify opportunities for improving sustainability performance, such as implementing lessons learned from previous acquisitions and incorporating feedback from stakeholders.
  - Contract Closeout: Ensure that sustainability considerations are addressed during contract closeout, such as conducting final sustainability assessments and documenting sustainability achievements and outcomes.
  - Skill in monitoring and evaluating the sustainability impact of acquired goods and services.

    - Capability to conduct lessons learned sessions that include sustainability performance.

- **Sustainability Considerations:**

    - Measurement of actual versus expected sustainability outcomes.
    - Use of feedback mechanisms to continuously improve sustainability integration in future acquisitions.

Cross-Cutting Competencies

- **Strategic Thinking**: Understanding how sustainability fits into the broader organizational mission and goals.
- **Stakeholder Engagement**: Ability to work with internal stakeholders (e.g., end-users, finance, legal) and external stakeholders (e.g., suppliers, community groups) on sustainability issues.
- **Continuous Learning**: Commitment to staying informed about best practices, innovations, and evolving standards in sustainable procurement.

APPENDIX C

New Entrants Lifecycle Framework

This lifecycle framework is a tool for GSA to continue to assess effectiveness of programs across the journey of an innovative entrant and look for opportunities to make improvements that strengthen the effectiveness of offerings, tighten the connectedness and coordination between programs and agencies, streamline and simplify the process from the vantage point of the new entrant and yield better long term results in providing pathways to growth. Small improvement across this life cycle can yield significant results in diversifying the supplier base, increasing competition and bringing much needed innovation to accelerate finding solutions to great challenges such as sustainability and climate risk mitigation.

Lifecycle	Identify	Engage	Onboard	Pathway to Growth
GSA	How does GSA send demand signals that reach intended potential suppliers and segments? How can GSA deepen understanding of program needs and how best to identify where and who potential suppliers are? What is GSA's comprehensive go to market strategy?	How does GSA engage in match making across GSA and government to match innovative offerings with strategies, resources and demand?	Who owns the shepherding of the entrant from engagement to pathways for growth? Can GSA strengthen interconnectivity between product owners, CASE, MRAS, and Small Business Office?	How can GSA provide a pathway to progress on bringing innovation to GSA's most pressing procurement challenges? How does GSA measure that business units' needs are met and solutions are impacting overall objectives? Is GSA moving the needle fast enough in areas of focus? How can GSA measure progress?
Entrant	How does an entrant learn about engaging in federal procurements? How does an entrant know its solution, product or service might be in demand? What is the compelling reason why innovative entrants and emerging tech should engage with the government?	How does the entrant fully understand readiness and resources available to engage in federal procurements?	How does an entrant find the right path for their offering? Where is the demand for their offering? How do they get a seat at the table in informing the procurement strategy? What is the right vehicle?	Looking for a pathway to real business growth. Ability to expand offerings across the government. Growth in size and profitability. Use of metrics.

Vast programs, initiatives, roles and resources across GSA and government focus on various parts of this lifecycle but there are gaps in how these efforts are communicated, connected and in some cases centralized to unify GSA's brand and drive better outcomes for the buyers and for the innovative new suppliers.

Strengthens, Weakness, Opportunities, & Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Summary of findings and insights along the lifecycle and against a SWOT analysis focusing on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of not taking action.

SWOT	Identify	Engage	Onboard	Provide Pathway
Strength: **Good things happening**	GSA Business units engaging in selected tradeshows and with domain relevant academic institutions to identify innovation. There is strong awareness there is a need to identify new business for innovation and a diversified supplier base. It's not the WHY it is the HOW. Numerous existing programs and efforts across Government (OMB, SBA, Defense, Energy, EPA have examples of existing programs.)	Many different programs and efforts across GSA, SBA and agencies to engage in innovation. Challenge.gov: GSA SBIR-STTR: SBA	Multiple portals and avenues for entrants to access. Information and resources are available- but not easily navigable from the view point and experience of the entrant.	Connecting entrants with multiple avenues and connection points for their products and services. Genuine interest in wanting small/mid size and innovative entrants to succeed.
Weakness: **Areas of Improvement**	Not a universal go to market for these events and engagements that combines product expertise, resourcing matrix, and small business engine. (Collateral, Contact Sheets, FAQs for the business units to leverage, etc.) The business units know what they need and where they want to look. SBA & OSDBU know how to connect but don't always know what the business units need. GSA's brand to market place could be stronger - i.e. conduct reverse marketing.	Efforts can be disparate and lack cohesiveness to drive the desired outcome - not easy for the entrant - can have low success rate. Not every potential entrant is equipped or has enough knowledge about doing business with the government. Many efforts but disparate and disconnected (lack of coordination) diminishes the positive impact of all of these efforts.	Too many points of entry. Entrants can choose the wrong channel. Lack of interconnectedness and progress. Not a user-friendly experience. New entrants and small and medium businesses find themselves chasing contracting staff.	Programs do not yield intended benefit or outcome. Some vendors note: "Got on contract but no buyers for products or services" Metrics need to align with desired outcomes of a more diverse, resilient supplier base, and ecosystem where entrants can succeed, grow and thrive.
Opportunity: **Actions and Considerations**	Refer back to the Lighthouse Recommendation. For reverse marketing, send the demand signal and let folks come to the Government. Unify go to market resources for all business units to leverage: how to do business with GSA, who to contact, and how to self assess your readiness and needs. GSA provides guidance and direction for targeting and engaging with domain specific incubators, academic institutions, trade associations. All business lines should be doing this - follow standard guidelines and "how to".	Universal simple set of evaluation for yes/no, willing and able to provide goods or services. Use waiting room - triaging simple / universal entry assessments. Single point of entry or a few points of entry. Create a mechanism to be seen. Refer to Challenge.gov recommendation. Establish and engage in matching processes to align entrants' assessed needs to best fit	Opportunity to centralize, streamline and unify this effort. GSA builds on authority to bring new entrants to the table to better understand the challenges/problems. Leverage existing tools - Industry Days, Market research as a service, RFIs. Leverage technology to assist navigation, interoperability, matching resources to suppliers. Conduct smart navigations (prompt program office to ask	Better metrics focused on outcomes. Use yield metrics by phase of the life cycle. Track growth rates and market share of the Federal supply base. Improve transparency on metrics and data.

		resources (people, product owners, grants issuing authorities, technical assistance,and procurement expertise). Across GSA and across Government - find best fit agency with demand, SBA , federal government partner organizations (ie. regional reach). GSA facilitates and enables resource tool kits. Create a vendor relations management office (SHERPA concept).	the right questions). Centralize Center Of Excellence - Use a shared services model.	
Threat: **Downside of not implementing**	Miss finding the right companies with novel solutions for big/hard problems. Genius and game changers are resident in the small emerging businesses of today - the government wants to pull technology transfer. The key may lie in all the steps in between - how do we cut to the chase?	Entrant frustration. Reputation of working with the Government as being too difficult. High washout rate.	Lack of diversity in the supplier base. High level of effort for low yield - puts strain on resources. Perception that only a select few get to the table, persists.	Shrinking supplier base, stifles innovation in government, and does not align with Small business objectives.

APPENDIX D

Summary of GAP FAC Recommendations

For future tracking of progress toward implementation of GAP FAC's recommendations to the General Services Administration (GSA) related to sustainability and climate change, the following summarizes, at a high level, the recommendations of the GAP FAC adopted on May 4, 2023, December 5, 2023, and May 22. 2024. The recommendations are tagged to the subcommittees whose work led to the recommendations.

Acquisition Workforce (AW)

AW Rec. 1: Implement a change acceleration strategy

- Communicate shared expectations, common mission and vision
- Build a coalition of champions within GSA
- Track and communicate success

AW Rec. 2: Make sustainability a core, foundational capability across the federal acquisition workforce

- Embed sustainability into the Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting (FAC-C) modernization
- Curate learning to be relevant to acquisition roles across the workforce and the acquisition life cycle
- Leverage third-party training

AW Rec. 3 Create acquisition sustainability experts through a new sustainability certification

- Build a cohort-based certification program
- Assess the current state and gaps to create a competency framework
- Provide real-world, experiential learning

AW Rec. 4: Issue a Request for Information (RFI) to learn more about third-party training on sustainability and climate change

- Selection criteria to consider should include: reputation and independence; adaptability and quality; track record and affordability; accessibility and continuous learning; ability to scale and facilitate networking opportunities

AW Rec. 5: Emphasize experiential learning (e.g., hands-on practical experiences) to foster a deeper understanding of subject matter

- Important elements of experiential learning are: hands-on learning involving real-world challenges; practical application that fosters cooperation and relationship-building within the acquisition community; integration of principles into acquisition scenarios that make sustainability concepts practical, applicable and relevant to the participants' roles; and an approach that encourages creative problem-solving

AW Rec. 6: Develop and lead a cross-agency effort to establish a federal data standard and protocols for ecolabel certifications and utilization

- Areas GSA should explore include: reviewing ecolabel standards under product families; working with suppliers on correct categorization of ecolabels; providing the acquisition workforce additional ecolabel data; standardizing data needs and requests across federal agencies; and developing training and designing feedback on tools that provide the acquisition workforce and vendors green product information

AW Rec. 7: Convene a task force to assess the potential use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) by the acquisition workforce

- Assess potential benefits of the use of AI in acquisition processes, including improvements in market research, regulatory compliance, decision-making and risk management
- Align use of AI with government-wide and agency goals, privacy and security requirements and the best interests of the public

AW Rec. 8: Amplify GSA's Change Acceleration Strategy (follow-up recommendation to AW Rec. 1 and AW Rec. 3)

- Integrate sustainability into recruitment strategies:
    - Integrate sustainability into recruitment announcements
    - Link sustainability with GSA's overall mission
    - Embed sustainability into GSA's Acquisition Talent Development program
- Integrate sustainability into performance assessment strategies, emphasizing:
    - Recognition and rewards
    - Acquisition workforce key performance indicators
    - Alignment with mission
    - Clear responsibility assignment
- Continue to develop a competency-based sustainability acquisition credential
    - Streamline sustainability acquisition competencies
    - Emphasize both technical and professional competencies
    - Engage acquisition professionals to gather input
    - Make the credential relevant to daily work
    - Measure program impact
    - Scale the competency model to all acquisition professionals

<u>Industry Partnerships (IP)</u>

IP Rec. 1: Identify, engage and onboard innovative new entrants to the federal marketplace

- Leverage, develop and deploy procurement initiatives to fast-track new entrants into the federal marketplace
- Build on GSA's existing methods for interacting with industry and educate potential vendors as well as GSA's partnerships with other agencies, including SBA and EPA
- Conduct a survey of mechanisms that could be used to deploy targeted efforts to expand the supplier base

IP Rec. 2: Sponsor a maturity model for embedding sustainability and climate risk management into federal acquisitions

- Create an industry-facing maturity model which will help suppliers drive, and be compliant with, delivery of sustainable goods and services

- Equip the federal supplier base with accurate and actionable information, proven methods, standard terminology, and consistent educational tools
- Increase knowledge and capability of the supplier base to drive more sustainable goods and services while minimizing supply chain climate risk
- Establish consistent metrics and benchmarks for measuring progress

IP Rec. 3: Use prize competitions through Challenge.gov to attract innovators in the sustainability space (follow-up recommendation to IP Rec. 1)

- Proceed intentionally: define problem sets; ensure transparent, diverse and effective evaluation processes; develop effective marketing strategies; and select meaningful prizes

IP Rec. 4: Create a task force to stand up a maturity model for sustainability and climate change (follow-up recommendation to IP Rec. 2)

- Create a cross-agency task force or focus group to identify the best partners to participate in the sponsorship of a maturity model
- Use the Request for Information (RFI) process to solicit third party support to assist GSA in the coordination and development of activities
- Develop specific recommendations for how GSA can build and enhance partnership and networking with affinity groups, such as ACT-IAC, to participate in the sponsorship, creation, and communication of the model

IP Rec. 5: Create a "Lighthouse" network of networks for GSA to broadcast opportunities and foster collaboration between industry and government

- Create a networking exchange/community which will:
    - Promote collaboration between government and vendors related to climate and sustainability
    - Illuminate the spectrum of possibilities for vendors to address urgent procurement challenges
    - Achieve a wide reach across existing and potential suppliers, with an emphasis on making federal contracts more accessible to innovative, emerging, small and underrepresented businesses
- As a first step, establish a dedicated council to provide direction, support, foster collaboration, and share resources among its members to help build the Lighthouse

IP Rec. 6: Adopt a lifecycle management approach for innovative entrants

- Identify innovative solutions
    - Unify GSA go-to-market collateral
    - Create targeted GSA branding and marketing
- Engage and onboard through streamlined, centralized efforts within GSA and strengthen GSA's connectivity across government, particularly with SBA
- Create pathways to progress through meaningful engagements, opportunity for growth and clear metrics

<u>Policy and Practice (P&P)</u>

P&P Rec. 1: Reduce single-use plastics and packaging

- Promulgate a rule to reduce single-use plastics and packaging
- Conduct a series of pilot programs to mitigate single-use plastic and packaging waste, emphasizing reduction, reuse, recyclability
- Organize strategies around food service, consumer goods, delivery and packaging material

P&P Rec. 2: Minimize per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

- Minimize acquisition of products that may contain PFAS in future federal procurement by targeting and updating language in all applicable government contracts and procurement tools
- In determining which specific products to be prioritized for procurement, consider product categories that have already been identified by other state and federal programs
- Leverage existing ecolabels as a method for identifying products that do not contain PFAS and incorporate the ecolabels into GSA's procurement tools (e.g., the SFTool and the GSA Advantage Environmental Aisle)
- Focus on GSA's Multiple Awards System (MAS) program, Governmentwide Acquisition Contracts (GWACs) and Multi-Agency Contracts (MACs), as well as other best-in-class contract vehicles.
- As a longer-term action, initiate a FAR case to develop the terms and conditions that all contracts should follow in regards to PFAS and consider issuing a government-wide Class Deviation that prohibits intentionally added PFAS in the supply chain where alternatives are available
- Improve supplier reporting, tracking and transparency related to PFAS
- Use challenge prizes to encourage alternatives to PFAS (related to IP Rec. 3)
- Expand training for the acquisition workforce (aligning with AW Rec.'s and P&P Rec. 4)
- Avoid unintended consequences, such as regrettable substitutions or other important environmental and human health issues not being addressed in a particular product

P&P Rec. 3: Reduce environmental and human health risks associated with federal procurement

- Identify a subset of procurement categories (e.g., building materials, cleaning supplies, etc.) to pilot the inclusion of preferred procurement criteria for products that include chemical ingredient disclosure
- Work with relevant federal agencies (e.g. EPA) to develop a list of chemistries that are currently being evaluated as high priorities and the product categories that are being evaluated and considered by those federal agencies
- Work with relevant federal agencies to incorporate available alternative assessments that have been developed or are being developed by other agencies (e.g., EPA's Safer Choice Program, EPA's TSCA program, or EPA's Framework for the Assessment of Environmental Performance Standards and Ecolabels)
- Move toward implementation and institutional capacity building through pilot projects designed to accelerate procurement of products with reports or ecolabels documenting chemical ingredient composition

P&P Rec. 4: Establish a Sustainable Procurement Center of Excellence

- Foster a dynamic exchange of information among GSA, other agencies, states, tribal governments, and local municipalities

- Create a hub on sustainable acquisition, establishing best practices, providing support, identifying opportunities for collaboration, and seeking uniformity wherever possible to maximize the impact of sustainable procurement
- The Center of Excellence should incorporate:
    - The identification of best practices to implement sustainable procurement at the state level with potential applicability at the federal level
    - The creation of working groups to identify areas where uniformity or standardization could be beneficial to enhance sustainable outcomes
    - The creation of a pathway for state and local government procurement officials to formally request guidance or enhancements for new or to existing sustainable procurement tools
    - A resource center to provide support across GSA and to other agencies regarding the implementation of sustainable procurement, training, practice materials, tips and tools

P&P Rec. 5: Adopt a principles-based sustainability data framework

- Develop a robust data infrastructure based on consistency and reliability
- Develop a principle-based framework based on life cycle-based environmental impact assessments, with comprehensive, standardized and transparent data collection and reporting
- Develop a procurement requirements application programming interface (API) to support product and vendor selection in accordance with all applicable federal sustainable procurement requirements
- Integrate and maximize the utility of existing federal procurement tools to simplify decision-making (e.g., the GSA Advantage Environmental Aisle, the SFTool, ecolabels)
- Issue a Request for Information (RFI) targeting technology tools related to sustainable data capture, analysis and decision-making
- Prioritize compliant products