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GSA applying its IT model to overhaul of services schedules

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The General Services Administration wants to make it easier for agencies to buy professional, management, technology and a host of other kinds of services from the schedule contracts. To that end, GSA will consolidate seven different professional services contracts into what could end up being one mega- schedule.

Tiffany Hixson, GSA's Federal Acquisition Service's professional services category executive, said the goal is to consolidate the schedules of as many as 500 vendors by November 2015.

"We are really hoping that will make it much easier for federal contracting officers to get those services, in particular where we have a requirement that covers a number of services areas. So instead of having to compete those services across a number of schedules, they will just be able to go to one," Hixson said in an exclusive interview with Federal News Radio. "We think that will make it a lot more user friendly from a contracting officer perspective. Additionally, we will be able to reduce our administrative overhead, and for our contractors, it will reduce the cost of administering the number of schedules that we've got in the professional services area."

GSA currently runs seven services schedules:

- MOBIS
- Environmental Services
- Financial Services or FABS
- Professional engineering
- Logistics worldwide or LogWorld
- Advertising and Integrated Marketing Solutions or AIMS
- Language services

"While we are talking about potentially merging all into one, we actually are doing a pretty thorough business case looking at whether that makes sense," Hixson said. "We also manage the consolidated schedule, which provides both IT and professional services, which is actually the eighth that is hanging out there. That is professional services proper, but one we manage and are concerned about in this initiative. Our goal is to get down to one, but we may end up with two or three professional services schedule. We don't want to make this more difficult for contracting officers. It's really about their ease of use. And

we don't want to make it too complicated for industry, where we have industry partners that hold multiple schedules."

She added GSA is looking at LogWorld closely, because the industry base is different than the other professional services vendors.

"We are thinking we may actually need to stand up a new multi-agency contract for logistics services," Hixson said. "Where we've got OASIS as a MAC, we would have the new professional services schedule. We might have LogWorld as a schedule and then a MAC for logistics services as complement to that, and then a consolidated schedule that would provide integrated IT and professional services."

A successful model

GSA awarded [23 firms](#) a spot on the OASIS small businesses and [74 vendors](#) a spot on the OASIS unrestricted multiple award contracts for complex professional services earlier this year. The One Acquisition Solution for Integrated Services (OASIS) could be worth more than \$10 billion over the 10-year life of the contract.

Hixson said GSA is following the same model for professional services as it did with IT, where it created the Alliant and Alliant small business governmentwide acquisition contract to balance the products and services under [Schedule 70](#) — the IT schedule.

She said Alliant and the IT schedule provide different industry bases, skillsets and buying flexibilities.

"On the OASIS side, why we awarded the contract is to provide contracting officers with a contact vehicle that allows them to buy complex professional services. It also provides for cost-reimbursement type contracting, for labor hour and time-and-materials, and you have a lot more flexibility in terms of having other direct costs associated with T&M or labor hour environment," Hixson said. "It's really targeted at that higher end, professional services, cost-reimbursement type of world."

On the [services schedules](#), GSA said it has more than 3,500 vendors, and contracting officers are limited to the types of contracts they can use to buy services.

At the same time, however, the schedule lets agency customers set up blanket purchase agreements (BPAs) if they have recurring and longer term needs in a particular area.

Hixson said these differences are part of the reason why GSA is following the Alliant-IT Schedule model for professional services.

"Now that we have really a full suite of contract types that contracting officers are able to use with OASIS and the schedules program, it really gives us an opportunity to have contracting officers have a more streamlined contracting environment," Hixson said. "When I was a contracting officer back in the day, I had a very specific focus and understanding on how to use schedules versus IDIQs and MACs. This just gives contracting officers that same flexibility in the professional services environment that we've had on the IT side of the house."

She said GSA already has met with vendors on the seven different schedules starting in June, and will work with vendor associations going forward to shape the program. Hixson said GSA will start formal engagement with industry in October.

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