

The Office of Acquisition and Logistics Management Newsletter – July/August 2016

Offices of Acquisition Telework Day Held

On May 26, 2016, the Offices of Acquisition (OA) held an OA-wide Continuity of Operations (COOP) telework day to test access to various systems and connectivity. To test system reliability and capacity to the maximum extent practicable, OA employees were encouraged to telework on the test day. A common list of systems to test and actions to perform was distributed in advance by the Office of Acquisition and Logistics Management (OALM). Employees were asked to test systems and infrastructure including NBS (New Business System), PRISM, Oracle, MarkView, IC-specific systems, POTS/AMBIS (Purchasing Online Tracking System/Administrative Management Budget Information System), DGS (Document Generation System), DCIS (Departmental Contract Information System), SAM (System for Award Management), CPARS (Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System), FedBizOpps (Federal Business Opportunities), nVision, Electronic Subcontracting Reporting System (eSRS), HHS Small Business Review System (SBRs), FAITAS (Federal Acquisition Institute Training Application System), ITAS (Integrated Time and Attendance System), Telework Agreement system, Outlook, Lync, SharePoint, PDAs (cell phones, BlackBerrys, tablets, etc.), VPN (Virtual Private Network), and check office phone voicemail. Specific actions were to be processed such as posting FedBizOpps notices, using DGS to prepare contracts/modifications/requests for proposals, using NBS/PRISM for contracts/modifications/closeouts, processing DCIS records, approving 2-way match invoices, generating nVision reports, processing purchase card actions and reconciliations remotely, and performing a data call test between the OALM and OA Directors. Finally, employees were asked to hold a virtual meeting, send emails, schedule a meeting using Outlook, communicate using a PDA, and access commonly used acquisition websites. To gain maximum benefit from this exercise, employees were encouraged to test systems and complete as many actions as possible.

A five (5) question survey was used to record any issues encountered during the test day. Two hundred thirty-seven (237) surveys were submitted. The survey covered the following areas:

- Did employees have all necessary material available to perform all of their job functions for an extended period of time (more than one business week) in the event of an emergency situation? If not, was it due to physical materials not being accessible (i.e., files at work), connectivity issues, or other issues?
- Did employees have any connectivity issues to VPN, email or any of the electronic system needed to perform the job?
- Could work voice mail be successfully accessed at least once during the day?
- Were there any tasks or functions that required additional information or refinement in the event of an actual emergency or extended period of COOP telework?

The survey results were compiled, along with best practices, and presented at the June 28th Acquisition Management Committee (AMC) meeting. Below is a synopsis of the presentation.

Ninety percent (90%) of the employees reported that they had the necessary materials to perform all of their job functions. Of those not having the necessary materials, a majority reported that physical materials were not accessible such as files or materials stored in the office.

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Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the employees did not have any connectivity issues to VPN, email or any of the electronic systems needed to perform the job. VPN/connectivity issues with lost connections, slow, or multiple log-on attempts constituted the largest connectivity issue. Other issues were non-responsive, slow or freezing of Outlook, slow or problems logging into NBS, and issues gaining access to shared drives.

Sixty-six percent (66%) of the employees were able to access work voice mail at least once during the day. Thirty-two percent (32%) did not attempt voice mail access.

Seventy-eight (78%) of the employees indicated that they did not require any additional information or refinement in order to perform their tasks or functions. For the remaining employees, the single biggest hindrance to extended telework was the need for physical files because electronic files/electronic signatures are not available. In addition, some employees stated that not having access to a large screen monitor or two (2) screens reduced productivity. Some employees do not have a home printer or could not connect with it. Finally, losing VPN connection or the system running slow was also an issue.

Some best practices for teleworkers are:

- Having a telework agreement and understanding your responsibilities as a teleworker is important.
- Have a hard copy of important phone numbers (e.g., supervisor, help desk) when you telework. If computer connectivity becomes an issue, you cannot submit an electronic help desk ticket.
- Take work computer home even if not scheduled to telework. This is important during the winter months when weather can be bad.
- Get in the habit of occasionally attempting to perform functions and access systems that you do not normally do while teleworking.
- If you have issues with losing connections/slow speed, ensure your home internet service provider and WIFI/network are adequate and operating effectively.

In addition, some best practices for managers are:

- Telework is a cornerstone of COOP.
- Implement telework to the greatest extent possible so systems are in place to support successful telework in an emergency.
- Practice telework so that you are comfortable managing a distributed workgroup.
- Provide equipment, technology, and technical support for successful telework.
- Encourage personnel that are eligible for telework, but choose not to, to still establish an Ad-hoc telework agreement and occasionally telework.
- Communicate who is expected to telework in an emergency.

Overall, the OA-wide COOP telework day was extremely successful! Thank you to all who participated in the telework day and provided feedback via the survey!

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Federal Prison Industries, Inc. Blanket Waiver Threshold Increase from \$3,000 to \$3,500

A [final rule](#), effective August 15, 2016, will amend the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) to increase the blanket waiver threshold for small dollar-value purchases from Federal Prison Industries, Inc. (FPI) by Federal agencies from \$3,000 to \$3,500. The final rule is in response to the adoption of a resolution by the FPI's Board of Directors to increase the blanket waiver to coincide with the increase in the micro-purchase threshold.

FPI (also known as UNICOR) is a mandatory source of supplies as addressed in [FAR 8.002](#). Items on the mandatory list, such as furniture, apparel, safety eyewear, awards and plaques, are required to be purchased from FPI unless a waiver is received or an exception listed in [FAR 8.605](#) applies. Purchase from FPI is not mandatory and a waiver is not required if acquiring items listed below the exception threshold, although customers may still purchase from FPI below the threshold if they so choose.

Updates to NIH Manual Chapter 6035: Broad Agency Announcements (“BAAs”)

On Tuesday, July 12th, a presentation was given at the Acquisition Management Committee (AMC) meeting on policy changes to the manual chapter on broad agency announcements (BAA). A BAA is a method of soliciting proposals for research and development awards under [FAR 35.016](#) and can be used for scientific study and experimentation directed toward advancing the state-of-the-art or increasing knowledge, rather than focusing on a specific system or solution.

The policy updates incorporate best practices utilized across the federal government, and provide more tools for programs to fulfill their research missions. For example, White Papers, which weren't previously mentioned, are defined and their use is encouraged as part of the BAA process to facilitate market research. Also, the policy permits using a BAA to accept proposals for up to three (3) years from the date of initial publication, during which proposal revisions can be accepted and the BAA can be modified to address changing program objectives.

Additional information will soon be available on the [Continuously Open Broad Agency Announcements](#) page on the OAMP website. Please submit questions about the manual chapter to [Joseph Marshall](#). Your questions may be used in forthcoming guidance.

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Understanding Indirect Cost Rates

If you are administering contracts or grants and don't fully understand the indirect costs being billed or proposed, the Division of Financial Advisory Services (DFAS) is here to help! Indirect costs rates can be complex, and many DFAS auditors have spent an entire career learning various indirect cost methodologies, allocations and the associated regulations. If you have any questions regarding the composition or application of indirect costs on your contract or grant, leverage the knowledge of the DFAS staff. Questions can be sent by phone to 301-496-2444 or by email to dfas-idc@nih.gov.

New Policy - Use of a Single Institutional Review Board for Multi-Site Research

The NIH has issued a Policy on the Use of a Single Institutional Review Board for Multi-Site Research. This Policy establishes the expectation that all sites participating in multi-site studies involving nonexempt human subjects research funded by the NIH will use a single Institutional Review Board (sIRB) to conduct the ethical review required by the Department of Health and Human Services regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects at 45 CFR Part 46. This policy is intended to enhance and streamline the process of IRB review and reduce inefficiencies so that research can proceed as expeditiously as possible without compromising ethical principles and protections for human research participants.

This policy applies to the domestic sites of NIH-funded multi-site studies where each site will conduct the same protocol involving non-exempt human subjects research, whether supported through grants, cooperative agreements, contracts, or the NIH Intramural Research Program. Foreign sites participating in NIH-funded, multi-site studies will not be expected to follow this policy. Offerors will be expected to include a plan for the use of an sIRB in their proposals. The NIH's acceptance of the submitted plan will be incorporated as a term and condition of the contract.

This policy is also in keeping with one of the proposed changes being considered to the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, known as the Common Rule.

For contracts, the policy applies to all solicitations issued on or after May 25, 2017. To ensure a smooth implementation of this policy, the Office of Extramural Research (OER) and the Office of Science Policy (OSP) are forming the sIRB Policy Implementation Committee to work out the policy implementation details.

[NIH Single IRB \(sIRB\) Policy](#) webpage

[Guide Notice](#)

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ASRB Customer Facing SharePoint Site Update

As a reminder, the [Acquisition Services and Review Branch \(ASRB\) SharePoint Site](#) is up and running to provide support to the Delegated Offices of Acquisition and Offices of Acquisitions who use simplified acquisition procedures. Check out the new PowerPoint entitled “[Acquisition Compliance Review Common Findings](#)” under the [Acquisition Compliance Reviews](#) link. This PowerPoint describes eighteen risk areas that have been found in acquisition compliance reviews, as well as citations and recommendations for improvements.

If you have any questions or concerns about the common findings, please contact the Simplified Acquisition Helpline at SimplifiedAcquisitionHelp@od.nih.gov.

FREE IT Procurement Training With NITAAC

Avoid the end-of-year rush and let [NITAAC](#) help! Compete and manage your IT requirements quickly and easily when you choose an NIH-NITAAC Government-Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC). Our training specialists will demonstrate how GWACs enable you to leverage buying power, and how NITAAC's online ordering systems can increase productivity. Earn Continuous Learning Points (CLPs) towards maintaining a number of federal certifications.

A [NITAAC training session](#) can show you how to award commodity IT requirements in as little as 3 days, and complex IT awards in as little as 30 days using our secure electric-Government Ordering System, e-GOS. By using e-GOS you will have access to NITAAC's three GWACs (CIO-SP3, CIO-SP3, and CIO-CS) and our new Strategic Solutions tool.

[e-GOS](#) allows you to compete all of your IT requirements faster and still saves money with competition driven prices. You are in the driver's seat with NITAAC's three procurement vehicles: CIO-SP3, CIO-SP3 Small Business and CIO-CS.

NITAAC offers several different trainings: training at your location, a webinar session or you can come to one of our on-site trainings on the NIH Campus. We invite you to register for a free training session of your choice. If you have questions about specific requirements, or would like us to come in and train your acquisition team, please call the NITAAC Customer Support Center at 1.888.773.6542 or email NITAACsupport@nih.gov. You can always count on:

- ❖ 1-hour response to any contractual, technical or procedural question
- ❖ Customized support from Contract and IT Specialists
- ❖ Fast Technical Assessments within 24 hours
- ❖ Every SOW/SOO/PWS evaluated for scope, clarity and other factors to assure quality responses and returned with recommendations
- ❖ Document library of tools and templates based on 20+ years of government wide IT contracting

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Webinar		
Dates:	Time:	Location:
Thursday, August 25, 2016	1:00PM – 3:00PM	On Your Computer
Thursday, September 15, 2016	1:00PM – 3:00PM	On Your Computer

At NIH		
Dates:	Time:	Location:
Thursday, August 4, 2016	1:00PM – 3:00PM	6001 Executive Blvd Rockville, MD, Room B1, B2
Thursday, September 1, 2016	1:00PM – 3:00PM	6001 Executive Blvd Rockville, MD, Room B1, B2

Training Information

Acquisition Training at NIH

Acquisition Training Classes that are offered by the NIH Training Center can be accessed at the following link: [Acquisition Management Training](#).

Federal Acquisition Certification Coursework

CON courses and other Federal Acquisition Certification required courses can be found at the [NIH Training Center](#), [Federal Acquisition Institute](#), and [Defense Acquisition University](#).

Section 508 Accessibility Training

Section 508 Accessibility Training courses can be accessed at: [CIT Section 508 Accessibility training website](#).

Green Purchasing Training

Green Purchasing Training and other Green Training courses can be found at: [OALM Green Purchasing Website](#).

As a reminder, per HHS policy, all contracting officers, contract specialists, purchase cardholders, card approving officials, CORs and acquisition staff in job series 1102, 1105, and 1106 are required to

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take the Green Purchasing training every two calendar years. The training includes online training modules for your convenience.

Questions regarding Green Purchasing Training should be sent to: GreenPurchasing@mail.nih.gov.

NIH Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) Lists Available Online

Lists of all NIH Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPAs) can be found at the [NIH Blanket Purchase Agreement webpage](#).

This location contains Two BPA Lists:

1. Complete vendor alphabetical list;
2. Vendor list sorted by commodity; and

If you have any questions or need further clarification, please contact the BPA helpline at 301-496-5212 or [email](#).

We Would Like to Thank All Those Who Contributed to This and Future Editions of the OALM Newsletter.

The OALM Newsletter will be published six (6) times in calendar year 2016. We encourage staff to submit articles that would be of interest to our readers. We will do our best to include such articles in future editions of the OALM Newsletter.

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If you have any questions or comments regarding the information, policy and/or procedures published in this issue, you may contact Michele McDermott at the e-mail address above. For future issues please contact the Simplified Acquisitions Helpline on 301-496-0400 or via e-mail at SimplifiedAcquisitionHelp@od.nih.gov and you will be referred to the appropriate editor.