

GSA Plans to Roll 10 Websites Into One

By Sam Skolnik | April 19, 2017 8:14PM ET

- **GSA's new procurement data website, beta.sam.gov, will launch between July 1 and Sept. 30**
- **Site designed to reduce burden on contractors, create one-stop home for information found on 10 pages**

(BNA) -- The General Services Administration (GSA) is testing an ambitious plan to fold 10 websites that amass contractor registration and award data into one site: a thoroughly revamped System for Award Management (SAM), two GSA officials told a Washington procurement conference April 19.

The updated test site, to be called beta.sam.gov, will launch between July 1 and Sept. 30, Katherine Rollins and Christy Hermansen, GSA's project manager and design lead, respectively, said during a discussion at the Government Procurement Conference, sponsored by the Federal Business Council.

"Over the next two years, features from the 10 existing sites will populate the SAM beta site," Rollins and Hermansen said.

One of the goals, they said, is to reduce burdens on contractors and federal agency officials, two primary user groups of the sites, in part to make it easier for contractors to work with the government. Another is to create a single place to access the range of data GSA collects, including contractor registration information, award data for prime and subcontractors, and information about companies excluded from government work. "There's an awful lot of power in this data, but how can we better help people to exploit that?" Hermansen said.

Improving Existing Sites

More than 160 federal employees are testing beta.sam.gov's search and display functions, the GSA officials said.

Eventually, the functions of 10 existing sites – including SAM.gov; the Federal Procurement Data System, at fpds.gov; Federal Business Opportunities, also known as "FedBizOpps," at fbo.gov; the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act Subaward Reporting System, at ftrs.gov; and the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System, at fapiis.gov – will be folded into the SAM beta site. Once complete, that site will resume as the new SAM.gov and the other sites will "retire."

The new homepage for the beta site will include a plain-spoken, bolded message to reassure anxious first-time users that they're at the right place, Hermansen said: "SAM.gov is the official U.S. government website for people who make, receive and track federal awards."

Improvements will continue to be made to the existing sites as the new site is being tested, the GSA officials said. That includes installing comprehensive search filters.

Inflated and Off-Kilter

GSA is undoubtedly hoping for a smoother rollout for the beta site than occurred for the agency in 2012. SAM, which was designed to integrate three acquisition data systems that store information about contractors, went online in July of that year but was taken offline days later because of performance issues.

The problems caused some agencies, including the Defense Department, to shy away from using the site for a time.

Questions also have been raised about the viability of some of the data put into the SAM and FTRS sites, which is electronically transferred to USAspending.gov, a website run by the Treasury Department that tracks contractor executive compensation levels.

A Bloomberg BNA investigation published in December showed that numerous compensation figures were clearly inflated and off-kilter, though it remains unclear whether the GSA's two sites, or USAspending.gov, had inadvertently altered the numbers, or whether contractor error is to blame.

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