

## **GSA Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Committee (GAP FAC) Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee Meeting**

**February 14, 2023**

The General Service Administration (GSA) Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Committee (GAP FAC) Acquisition Workforce Subcommittee (AWFS) convened for the sixth public meeting at 3:00 PM on February 14, 2023, virtually via Zoom, with Nicole Darnall, Chair, and Anne Rung, Co-Chair, presiding.

In accordance with FACA, as amended, 5 U.S.C. App 2, the meeting was open to the public from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM EST

### **Committee Members Present:**

Nicole Darnall, Chairperson	<i>Arizona State University</i>
Anne Rung, Co-Chairperson	<i>Varis, LLC</i>
Gail Bassette	<i>Bowie State University</i>
Mark Hayden	<i>New Mexico General Services Department</i>
Darryl Daniels	<i>Jacobsen Daniels Assoc.</i>
Kristin Seaver	<i>General Dynamics Information Technology</i>
Clyde Thompson	<i>GovStrive, LLC</i>
Steven Schooner	<i>George Washington University</i>

**Absent:** David Malone

### **Guest Speakers & Presenters:**

John Hampson	<i>Chief, Vehicle Engineering Branch, Vehicle Purchasing Division Office of Travel, Transportation &amp; Logistics</i>
Michael Cahill & Michael Wesley	<i>Industrial Operations Analysts, Quality Assurance Branch, Office of Travel, Transportation &amp; Logistics</i>
Kathryn Nelson	<i>Contracting Officer, Contracts Operations, Region 10, Office of Professional Services &amp; Human Capital Categories</i>
Zachary Shepherd	<i>Contract Specialist, Office of Travel, Transportation &amp; Logistics</i>

### **GSA Staff Present:**

Boris Arratia	<i>Designated Deputy Federal Officer</i>
Stephanie Hardison	<i>Deputy Designated Federal Officer</i>

Adam Sheldrick  
Skylar Holloway  
Jill Pesti  
Daniel Swartz  
Jill Lamoreaux

*GAP FAC Support Team*  
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## **CALL TO ORDER**

Boris Arratia, Designated Federal Officer, opened the public meeting by welcoming the group before reminding the public that there would be time for comments and statements at the end of the meeting. Boris then performed a roll call to confirm attendance and a quorum. After meeting the quorum, he turned the meeting over to Chairman Nicole Darnall.

## **WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS**

Chairman Nicole Darnall welcomed the committee and thanked the presenters for being there today before reviewing the agenda with the committee.

## **AWFS GUEST SPEAKERS**

Boris Arratia introduced speakers John Hampson, Michael Cahil, Michael Wesley, Kathryn Nelson, & Zachary Shepherd before turning the conversation over to Nicole Darnall. Nicole reviewed a list of questions the subcommittee members curated for the speakers.

## **GUEST SPEAKER QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

**Q:** Nicole Darnall - Can you briefly describe your role in acquisitions and how you incorporate environmental and sustainability practices into your acquisition activities?

**A:** John Hampson – We are the purchasing division of the GSA fleet. We set up the minimums, options, and requirements from the engineering side and get the vehicles on contract so when the federal customer goes to buy a vehicle through the program Auto Choice, they are getting a vehicle that is exactly what they ask for. Seven different federal standard groups look at each vehicle and are the governing documents specifying what item needs. We’ve tried to keep up with the executive orders that require alternative fuels and other things like that. We procure commercially available vehicles. We follow Department of Energy (DOE) fuel economy ratings. The customers have had various executive orders requiring their alternative fuel purchasing requirements, which creates an array of products for us to have available.

**A:** Kathryn Nelson – I work for the multiple award schedule at the Office of Professional Services & Human Capital Categories (PSHC). We do have clauses out in response to the Executive Order. Many of them deal with products. Products must identify how they are environmentally efficient and show proof of that on their website and GSAAAdvantage.

**A:** Michael Wesley – We are members of the Industrial Operations Analysts (IOA) group. We inspect all vehicles and ensure the specifications created for that vehicle in the contract are there.

**A:** Michael Cahill – Does the same thing as Michael Wesley. We also help give the people who give awards for the contracts more information.

**A:** Zachary Shepherd – I’m part of the contracting team for vehicles and work hand in hand with John Hampson’s team regularly. We ensure that anything having to do with contracts and clauses is there. With the government moving into electric vehicles, we also ensure the administration meets that goal.

**Q:** Anne Rung – You mentioned there are seven types of groups of categories you purchase. Is there a standard for sustainability that’s incorporated into each of the seven groups?

**A:** John Hampson – There’s no requirement, but everything we know about the vehicle is reported and it’s up to the customer to make that purchasing decision given the available information.

**Q:** Anne Rung – Can you talk about the Executive Order (EO) around purchasing a percentage of vehicles that are electric or hybrid?

**A:** John Hampson – In 2027, all light duty vehicles are electric, so we are ramping up for that right now. That means anything under 8,500 pounds and under.

**Q:** Anne Rung – When that EO came out, did someone help you craft that requirement, or did you write that requirement since you are experienced in that realm?

**A:** John Hampson – We write the requirements for the contracts and work closely with the White House when they issue the EO. We have policy folks that bounce things off the engineering folks to assist with this. We provide feedback on the EO and try to find products already built in the market.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall – How do you inquire about environmental and sustainable practices?

**A:** John Hampson – We do a lot of focus groups, and attend various events around this. We have conversations with industry folks to see what is possible and to stay up to date on things.

**A:** Kathryn Nelson – We do Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) training sessions on different things in our solicitation, especially when contracting specialists aren’t familiar with how they are supposed to evaluate things.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall – How are you getting the knowledge to undertake the training if you are receiving the training?

**A:** Kathryn Nelson – We have a team that does the training for us. They specialize in providing the training quarterly, monthly, and sometimes weekly. They set up calendar invites and most of the time they are mandatory training.

**Q:** Anne Rung – When inserting clauses into your contracts or RFPs around sustainability, where do you get that language?

**A:** Kathryn Nelson – Our MAS Project Management Office writes that mass solicitation, but they get the language for the EOs that come out.

**Q:** Anne Rung – How do you know how to evaluate the sustainability portion?

**A:** Kathryn Nelson – I must go through training.

**Q:** Anne Rung – Who do you call to ask for training?

**A:** Kathryn Nelson – I'll reach out to our top procurement analyst and contracting officers to ask for training. Many times, we will have office memorandums or policies on how to evaluate things, but they do training sessions on it.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall – How is everyone else receiving knowledge around sustainability?

**A:** Michael Cahill – We have courses through Defense Acquisition University we can review as well as GSA Online University. We get some mandatory training that I'll go through, or we receive meeting invites throughout the month that are also training.

**Q:** Anne Rung – Are the courses and training helpful?

**A:** Michael Cahill – The training is helpful and gives a baseline to understand what they are talking about, but much of the knowledge I receive is on sight stuff.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall - Do you believe that you have the capabilities, resources, and skills to empower you to make the best sustainability and environmental decisions?

**A:** Zachary Shepherd – GSA does a good job of putting us through training when things change and as things develop including sustainability. Everyone plays into this and not just certain groups. We are supported well here compared to some other agencies. It helps to ensure the programs are doing what they need to be doing.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall – What are the barriers you see related to empowering you to make the best sustainability decisions?

**A:** Zachary Shepherd – Many decisions that affect sustainability on the programs creates difficulty since it takes a certain lead time for changes to take effect.

**Q:** Boris Arratia – Can you comment on the program side of things when it comes to sustainability and how you all interact with them to find the best solutions?

**A:** Zachary Shepherd – When Congress meets and creates goals, they are looking to see how they can meet targets. That information flows down to the program management office and they are also the people that report up.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall – What do you believe are the capabilities, resources and skills to empower you to make the best sustainability and environmental decisions? If not, what do you think the barriers are to obtaining it?

**A:** Michael Cahill – I do have the skills and knowledge needed through the training. We have huge support to where I would be able to hop on the phone and call someone who has expertise. The only barrier for me is not having access to what I need when I'm looking at the vehicle. If I can't get a hold of someone, I wouldn't be able to finish what I'm doing and would have to go back to evaluate it.

**Q:** Anne Rung – So if you did have a question about compliance, you need a way to easily find information on the subject matter?

**A:** Michael Cahill – If there was a website that I could go to where everything is there, that would be amazing. For now, I have to go to my supervisor or someone else for any questions. Someone is usually there to answer my questions.

**Q:** Anne Rung – Do you feel empowered to make the decision to reject a vehicle based on certain standards?

**A:** Michael Cahill – Yes

**A:** John Hampson – We rank commercially available vehicles so while we do want to offer the customer every opportunity to get the most efficient vehicle, that is not our design requirements. Our specs are built on what they are capable of, and it needs to comply with federal vehicle safety standards, which is helpful. When it comes to efficiency, our purchasers are out there paving the way and we follow their footsteps as requirements are increased.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall – Where do sustainable and environmental considerations rank among the many policy priorities you consider during an acquisition? Do you still consider it when it isn't required?

**A:** William Wesolowski (supervisor of Michael & Michael) – We have no contractual authority to change any requirements or aspects of the contract requirements. Our function is to ensure that what is being built is according to contract requirements. With that being said, we wouldn't be able to incorporate sustainability requirements since we are not allowed to do that.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall – As we think about the different stages of the acquisition process, what do you think we need to be focusing on first for this credentialing?

**A:** Zachary Shepherd – Industry has a big bearing with sustainability and what they are required to do. It doesn't make sense for the government to put together technical requirements for

vehicles without industry being a true partner on that. To get the greatest impact, we need to ensure the highest levels are doing as much as they can to ensure that the proliferation is across the agency, not just across a certain program.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall – Do you all have credentials now? Are training and credentials used for the work you are currently doing related to any aspect of purchasing and evaluations?

**A:** John Hampson – We have our core training, and we use a number of tools to keep them knowledgeable in their areas. For example, they attend events. Our bus engineer goes to BusCon, which is a huge bus event. Our federal standards relay back to if the vehicle performs the mission the customer expects it to. We also report back the greenhouse gas scores and the fuel economy that goes along with it so the customer can make the best decision that suits their needs.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall – What stages of the credentialing process will have the biggest impact?

**A:** Kathryn Nelson – As a contracting officer, it would be helpful to have credential training if you are awarding and evaluating them.

**Q:** Nicole Darnall - In what ways should GSA's existing accountability process be modified to empower individuals to embed environmental and sustainability considerations into federal acquisition? How should it be measuring accountability within your ranks anticipating that sustainability is becoming more of an emphasis? What might be the best places to be emphasizing performance reviews for sustainability?

**A:** William Wesolowski – When you look at accountability for meeting sustainability requirements, you have to look at where they're operating. On vehicle purchasing, John's team is trying to get as many electric vehicles as possible, however we have no control over the number of vehicles being produced by suppliers or the amount they are holding back and reserving. You can't hold the contracting officer liable for not procuring the vehicles when we did everything in our power to make them available. You have to take a look at that across the board. Contracting officers can only purchase things that are allowed at the time.

**Q:** Kristin Seaver – When we talk about credentialing, a lot of your roles are matching up requirements with marketplace availability. Does the credentialing knowledge allow you to understand these elements or does it empower and allow you to push back on some of the folks you are procuring from? Is there a way you can engage with the suppliers and drive the spirit of what the requirement is?

**A:** Kathryn Nelson – It's a combination of both.

**Q:** Kristin Seaver – When you hear about credentialing and other training, how is the bandwidth with being able to take that training and put it into practice?

**A:** Kathryn Nelson – I’m personally flexible with the way I learn, but some aren’t that way. If it’s a virtual setting, I find it easier to fit the training in, but others who travel more may not agree.

**A:** Michael Cahill – I like the online training best since it works best with my schedule and the smaller virtual training (1-3 hours) are better than the longer training.

**A:** John Hampson – What Michael Cahill said is very similar to the folks I work with since they are intermixing various vendor visits.

**Q:** Anne Rung – Regarding credentials, is there a perception that credentials advance one professionally?

**A:** Kathryn Nelson – Some people feel that way, but I don’t. I think of it as trying to get the most knowledge I can to succeed in my profession. Some people seek these credentials because they believe it will help them climb the work ladder quickly. Some people might get scared about getting the credentials because they don’t want to be seen as an expert and have people rely on them.

**A:** Zachary Shephard – When I was with a different agency, if you did get a credential, then people were taken advantage of. Being a subject matter expert is something that comes along with time. Everyone’s learning ability is different. If I wanted to be a subject matter expert, I could move into the program management or policy side to have a greater impact.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Nicole Darnall opened the discussion to the public, but there were no questions or comments.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE REFLECTIONS**

Nicole Darnall opened the subcommittee discussion to brainstorm the key discussion points that stuck out to members on priority one relating to making sustainability a core competency. How should the key points inform the recommendations? The group used this time to review and brainstorm. After the group compiled a list of important areas, they worked to narrow the list down. The group worked to narrow the list and discussed some of the key points members felt were a priority.

Next week at the administrative meeting could be good to present the higher-level items that can form the recommendations. Nicole discussed upcoming presenters the group could benefit from hearing from.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**


Nicole Darnall & Anne Rung thanked the subcommittee for participating in today's meeting.


## **ADJOURNMENT**

Boris Arratia adjourned the meeting at 5:00 P.M. EST

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM EST.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

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7/12/2023  
Nicole Darnall  
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