

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

**March 8, 2023**

The General Services Administration (GSA) Acquisition Policy Federal Advisory Industry Partnerships Subcommittee convened for the seventh public meeting at 3:00 PM on March 8, 2023, virtually via Zoom, with Kristin Seaver, Chairperson, and Farad Ali, Co-Chairperson, 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

**Subcommittee Members Present:**

Kristin Seaver, Chairperson	<i>General Dynamics Information Technology</i>
Denise Bailey	<i>Milligan Consulting, LLC</i>
Gail Bassette	<i>Bowie State University</i>
Nicole Darnall	<i>Arizona State University</i>
Nigel Stephens	<i>U.S. Black Chambers of Commerce</i>
Stacy Smedley	<i>Building Transparency</i>
Dr. David Waggar	<i>Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries</i>

**Absent:** Farad Ali, Mamie Mallory, Deryl Mckissack, Susan Lorenz-Fisher, Keith Tillage, & Dr. Kimberly Wise White

**Guest Speaker & Presenter:**

Soraya Correa	<i>Senior Advisor, American Council for Technology and Industry Advisory Council (ACT-IAC)</i>
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**GSA Staff Present:**

Boris Arratia	<i>Designated Federal Officer</i>
Stephanie Hardison	<i>Deputy Designated Federal Officer</i>
David Cochennic	<i>GAP FAC Support</i>
Adam Sheldrick	<i>GAP FAC Support</i>
Skylar Holloway	<i>GAP FAC Support</i>
Steve Heller	<i>Closed Captioner</i>
Cheryl Sloan	<i>ASL Interpreters</i>
Alissa Enders	<i>ASL Interpreters</i>

## **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. Any written comments can be submitted through regulations.gov. Roll call was performed before the meeting was turned over to Chairperson Kristin Seaver.

## **WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS**

Chairperson Kristin Seaver welcomed everyone and reminded the group they would prioritize the recommendations and narrow it down for the upcoming full committee. She reviewed the agenda before introducing guest speaker Soraya Correa.

## **GUEST SPEAKER DISCUSSION**

Soraya Correa: The American Council Technology Industry Advisory Council (ACT-IAC) is a public-private partnership focused on government technology. The organization's role is to garner and exchange information and promote the learning and understanding of technology. We are a nonprofit educational organization established to improve government through information technology.

ACT is the government side and is authorized by government employees to provide a forum for exchanging ideas between federal, state, and local government employees. It allows them to communicate and collaborate on technology issues, how technology is emerging, and how they might apply technology in their environments. IAC was created later to provide an objective, ethical, and vendor neutral form for government and industry to collaborate because more is needed for the government to collaborate. They need to hear from industry and understand the challenges and technologies and how they are applied.

ACT-IAC's mission is to improve government outcomes through collaboration and partnership, which is the key objective. Our activities are objective, transparent, ethical, and vendor/technology neutral. Our education programs contribute to a more effective workforce by providing opportunities for government and industry to learn together and from each other. We provide an environment of trust that is earned and preserved by not using our activities for sales or lobbying.

All activities are outcome-based to produce something that improves government. The programs include leadership and engagement by government (federal, state, and local) and industry, meaning there will be a government representative and industry

representative whenever they host an event/webinar. Technology is our unifying theme, but not the end game. It's about knowing about the technology and understanding how to use it. We serve all functional areas, including program management, acquisitions, security, finance, human capital, and IT. Lots of members come from the IT community. We are a volunteer-driven organization. The volunteers from the government and industry lead the organization, create our program, and drive outcomes.

Communities of interest around topic areas are created that resonate with members around areas where they need leadership or need to explore rules, etcetera. Today's areas of interest are acquisition, customer experience, cybersecurity, emerging technology, evolving the workforce, health, IT management and modernization, networks and communications, and climate change. The areas of interest are organized by members coming together and will lay out a strategic plan to look at topics they want to explore. They'll organize around those topics and produce webinars, conferences, and bring in speakers to help understand and train people on topics. This helps small businesses understand the government and creates networking opportunities, which they are challenged with.

We have a climate change working group that has a federal employee and an industry employee chair. They have a forum coming up on April 17<sup>th</sup> on climate change.

The Federal Insights Exchange is a new program to help people understand what the government is doing. Agencies participate by talking to members and sharing initiatives, challenges, and opportunities to help resolve challenges. It's beneficial for people who work in government because you don't always know what other agencies do, and it's important to understand what they do.

The Institute for Innovation is membership based and is the research arm of ACT-IAC that crafts innovative solutions and strategies through collaboration that spans all the functional areas.

There are four major events held every year. Imagination Executive Leadership Conference is where you get some of the greatest government, industry, and academia leaders to share ideas. Topics range, and there are panels, keynotes, and breakout sessions so members can focus on what they want to learn. Emerging Technology and Innovation Conference talks about new technologies coming in and how they are being used. Agencies and industries talk about how they will be applying the technologies. These two are the largest conferences held. The Health Innovation Summit and a Shared Services Summit are smaller conferences, but the top talents come nonetheless. Other events hosted at least once a month that are open to members.

ACT-IAC focuses on members by including them in the conversation about the topics and listening to what they need.

There are several professional development programs available. There is a Partners Program, Voyager Program, and an Associate Program. These three programs are designed to help people gain the leadership skills they need in their businesses. The goal of the program is to bring industry and government together in a learning environment. A Fellows Program that brings in alums from the Partners and Voyagers Program. Growth in Leadership for Women is a leadership program for women in government in IT. There is also an ACT-IAC academy that provides training when training is desired from membership, and we use commercial entities to provide that training.

The Small Business Alliance was stood up by ACT-IAC when they realized 60% of IAC members are small businesses with annual government revenues under \$30 million. It promotes the interests and contributions of small businesses through programs and events designed to increase engagement and enable a stronger connection with the ACT-IAC community. It's a great opportunity for small businesses to meet and learn from each other. The goals are to educate and support small business growth, provide programs that provide opportunities for them to forge partnerships, and recognize the exceptional work that small businesses do in the technology community. We host small business forums on various topics for the small business community at ACT-IAC. There's a Small Business Forum on specific topics and networking events to promote collaboration.

On the ACT-IAC home page, you can find written reports, white papers, and interviews conducted. There's a podcast called The Buzz where they interview industry and agencies on IT matters. There's also a radio show hosted by CEO David Wennergren. He talks about topics of the day, challenges we confront, how we can continually improve government and help the workforce better understand the missions they serve, and how they can use technology to serve those missions better.

### **GUEST SPEAKER Q & A**

**Q:** Kristin Seaver – What are the best practices in engaging effectively in helping businesses grow?

**A:** Soraya Correa – Hosting events is the way ACT-IAC brings people in. By talking about a topic of interest and providing opportunities to collaborate helps this drive. You get to talk to government officials, and it gives them an opportunity to sit down and

collaborate. It breaks down challenges and puts it in plain English for members to understand. When I was in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) I had two goals in mind. One was to improve how we engage with industry and the second was to take the fear out of our workforce when it comes to talking to industry. Instead of having conversations that revolve around opportunities or contracts, the conversations revolved around business processes. There were a variety of forums called Reverse Industry where industry would talk about their business processes in front of the government, and it became an opportunity to promote learning which made it popular. This strengthened the communication between industry and government. I strongly urge you to do outreach to get to industry.

**Q:** Nigel Stephens – There’s a program called Community Navigators. Can you provide input on what you think about that program? How would you recommend us to encourage that engagement through that network for them to go find the companies on the ground that are in these unique industries?

**A:** Soraya Correa – We must help them find us. The government needs to do a better job of letting it know it exists. We must promote greater transparency that we are here and that we are looking for them. I used to host an event at DHS called the Strategic Industry Conversation with the purpose of telling industry who we are, what we do, what we support and the things we buy. This would yield a much better outcome than us trying to go out and find these companies.

**Q:** Nigel Stephens - Can you explain more about the programs needed to help educate the government on how to help industry understand doing business with the government?

**A:** Soraya Correa – We need to take the fear out of talking to vendors. What people don't always understand are the industries they work with. And how those industries differ from one another. We must do a better job of making sure that when we talk about IT, we have the right IT people in the room and so forth with other topics. The contracting community is not going to know anything. What they have to know is that there is an expert out there that needs to be at the table with me having this conversation with industry. That’s the way we will educate people. We also ask the industry how we should talk to them. There are organizations that do that and provide training on how to do business with the government and how to look for opportunities.

**Q:** Kristin Seaver – Can you talk about connecting the organizations to help the supplier base be more capable with these requirements so they can thrive in the federal marketplace?

**A:** Soraya Correa – ACT-IAC is helpful because it focuses on understanding what we are trying to achieve. We care about the rules around what is needed to be understood and how we need to comply with it. We create things like white papers and playbooks and host conferences, webinars and discussion forums and bring in experts that can break it down for industry and government officials together. It gives the opportunity for industry to push back and showcase challenges they experience with a particular topic, or it enables the government to show what problems they might face. By having people come together and talk with the experts that are in the business, that is how we promote that learning and that communication.

**Q:** Boris Arratia – How can this subcommittee look at low hanging fruit? Can you talk about an experience where you all built recommendations that went somewhere?

**A:** Soraya Correa – GSA is the government’s buying arm, so they have a huge part in this and lead where our community goes with things. It has one of the best connections to industries with schedules. GSA is a good information exchange point. They host information and send it out and can connect industry with the government, so they know where to go and can learn more. At ACT-IAC we have several initiatives, IT use cases, but we also do the periodic table of acquisition and innovation, that is an example of use cases. Their innovations in contracting and procurement processes are posted so people have the artifacts, the story, and the lessons learned.

And they also have access to who does the work with a group they can go talk to learn more about that work. I think Use cases are a great way for teaching and learning, especially for one on one because not everybody is comfortable going into a group setting and asking questions. When you can go out and download information and look at templates and find out who to talk to, that promotes learning. Some of the best ideas come from that level of collaboration where people look at a Use case and can see how it was done and if they tried something else or why they didn’t. They engage in a conversation and come up with a new approach. This is what makes Use cases valuable. Having a library of Use cases, we would start with technology because it is tricky, and at ACT-IAC in the Institute of Innovation, we have been working on that with the cloud or IA or etc., and it takes time to accumulate Use cases.

**Q:** Kristin Seaver – Has ACT-IAC thought about how you work with other groups regarding climate?

**A:** Soraya Correa – Within ACT-IAC, all the communities of interest interact with each other. We also work with other industry associations and it’s not uncommon to create partnerships with other organizations. Academic institutions also play a role.

Sometimes I will bring organizations together because I know something is being worked on with one side that the other side might have an interest in. The connections are out there, and they do happen. I am not sure that in government we are good at making those connections. That we are not duplicating each other's initiatives. Different agencies are resourced very differently. Sometimes people have the best intentions to participate but they can't.

**Q:** Kristin Seaver - One of the recommendations we are potentially looking at is creating a sustainability climate risk in acquisition type playbook or maturity model similar to the cybersecurity model. It would have the knowledge and the skill sets and the capabilities for industry. It sounds similar to your cyber playbook, so I would like to get your thoughts on that.

**A:** Soraya Correa – The maturity model is a great tool because everyone understands it and how it works. With climate change I don't think it will be stable. It will be constantly evolving and changing, which makes it harder to stabilize on a maturity model.

**Q:** Nigel Stephens - Is there some way of doing something similar where the research and curriculum that is being created at university campuses can create a benefit to the federal government, and be funded through the federal government research process or the infrastructure that already exists?

**A:** Soraya Correa - I think it can be done, but we need to make sure that we don't silo the learning. Climate change impacts everything we are going to do and we have to think about that.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Maria Swaby commented on the presentation. It was a good perspective to look at having industry find us instead of the other way around. It's a mistaken assumption that people know how to find us. Academic institutions are a challenge for GSA. There are many agencies that do grants, and GSA is one of the only agencies that does not do grants and funding in financial assistance. We acquire goods and services, and when you talk about working with academic institutions and HBCUs, that becomes a challenge because there is money that needs to go to fund certain things to get the benefit from the academic associations. I don't know if there is any way around that, but I see that as a challenge and a handicap that GSA has in its mission.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE BUSINESS**

Kristin Seaver led the group in discussion to assess the recommendations created by the subcommittee. The assessment factors were based on the scope of impact, stakeholders, level of effort, and whether it was a go or no go.

After moving through the discussion, Kristin told the group they would resume this in the upcoming administration meeting before prioritizing where the group wants to go.

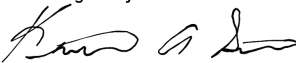
## **CLOSING REMARKS**

Kristin Seaver thanked the subcommittee members for their participation and remarks.

## **ADJOURNMENT**


Boris Arratia adjourned the meeting 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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Kristin Seaver  
Chairperson  
GAP FAC Industry Partnerships Subcommittee

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6/16/2023

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Co-Chairperson  
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