

Chapter One – Step One:

Introductory Activities (5-25 hours estimated time requirement)


Step one provides guidance on the introductory activities you should tackle before you go head-long into the process. These activities will help you verify that a GSA Schedule is the right contracting vehicle for you, and help you prepare to write that winning GSA Proposal.

- 1-1 Understand the GSA Multiple Award Schedule
- 1-2 Watch “Pathway to Success” and complete the quiz (<http://vsc.gsa.gov>)
- 1-3 Choose the Large Categories, Subcategories and SINs that fit your business
- 1-4 Review SAM.gov to make sure your records are complete
- 1-5 Complete the Readiness Assessment training and online assessment (<https://vsc.gsa.gov/RA/ReadinessAssessment.pdf>)

1-1. Understand the definition of a GSA Multiple Award Schedule (MAS)

The GSA MAS program is a contracting program sponsored by the General Services Administration that allows federal agencies to purchase commercial products and services quickly and effectively from a pool of approved suppliers. Companies who have prepared acceptable offers in response to GSA’s Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) solicitation are awarded long-term IDIQ contracts for their standard, off-the-shelf products and services. Essentially they have been given a ticket to access a pool of billions of dollars in federal business in the form of a contracting vehicle the government can use to make purchases. A contracting vehicle is a document/contract the government uses to buy goods and services. Contracting vehicles are typically managed by a central federal agency. Their use reduces costs in administration and purchase time as well as reduced costs for goods/services.

The GSA MAS program is governed by Federal Acquisition Regulations. One of the reasons that the program is so effective is that purchases under the MAS program are



Key note: If you are new to the federal marketplace, you will want to familiarize yourself with the rules and regulations that affect government contractors. A great place to start is www.acquisition.gov.

considered to meet full and open competition requirements (see FAR 6.102(d)(3)) so the contracting process is simplified significantly.

In the GSA Multiple Award Schedules (MAS) Program Desk Reference, GSA gives an excellent introduction about GSA Schedules:

“The GSA Schedules program provides eligible ordering activities with a simplified process for obtaining supplies and services.

Simply put, a Schedule is composed of companies that supply comparable commercial supplies and services through contracts awarded by GSA. With 17,000+ contracts in place, the program offers tremendous choice and flexibility.

Schedule contracts are indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity (IDIQ) contracts awarded to responsible companies that offer commercial supplies or services at fair and reasonable prices. These contracts can be used by eligible ordering activities worldwide (refer to www.gsa.gov/eligibilitytouse). After GSA awards the contracts, ordering activities order from Schedule contractors and deliveries are made directly to the customer.”²

A quick caveat -- not every product or service is covered under a GSA MAS. The GSA MAS is geared towards standard, off-the-shelf items. If all your products are custom products, this may not be the best contracting method for you. For example, if you are the owner of a metal works company specializing in designing widgets to fit specific government needs and you sell the widgets only and not the design services, this may not be the best contracting vehicle for you. If you are a company that provides asphalt paving and patching SERVICES, a GSA MAS may not be the right contracting vehicle for you because the government may procure those services using a different contracting vehicle and not a GSA MAS. However, a company providing asphalt paving and patching PRODUCTS may be a good candidate for a GSA MAS. Make sure you complete “Step One” before you start completing documents or purchase an Open Ratings Report or digital certificate. Step One will help you determine if the GSA MAS program is right for you before you expend significant funds.

Some people believe that a GSA Schedule is the only pathway to federal government contracts or that they will automatically have millions of dollars in revenue fall into their lap just by holding this contracting vehicle. While thousands of vendors have found success, it is because they have expended the effort required to succeed, not because they got their items listed on GSA Advantage and the dollars just rolled in.

² GSA Multiple Award Schedules (MAS) Program Desk Reference

The chart below lists what a GSA Schedule is and is not. You may want to review this chart to align your expectations before you proceed further with your GSA proposal.

A GSA MAS IS	A GSA MAS IS NOT
an IDIQ contract which allows federal agencies to contract directly with a chosen vendor.	a guarantee for government contracts.
obtained after submitting an acceptable and complete proposal/offer in response to a solicitation.	something you are guaranteed to get by submitting an “application.”
a contract which requires tracking/ administration over the years (could be up to 20 years). Items and pricing must be modified as your commercial price list is modified.	a contract you get and then file away and just watch the money roll in.
one of the premier commercial acquisition vehicle programs within the Federal Government.	the only contracting vehicle you can use to sell your products to the government. Shoot, it’s not even the only contracting vehicle administered by GSA.
a tool you can use to establish yourself in the federal marketplace.	going to sell itself. You will still need to market your products and your GSA Schedule to the government.
a fast, easy and effective contracting vehicle to facilitate business with Federal agencies and other eligible customers.	a good fit for every company.
based on a solicitation which contains no deadline for the proposal.	based on a solicitation which has a specific submission date requirement.

1-2. Watch “Pathway to Success” and complete the quiz

The “Pathway to Success” training is required by GSA and contains tons of important information. It is on the Vendor Support Center (VSC) site that is located at <https://vsc.gsa.gov>, click on “Education” and choose the Pathway to Success option or you could go to <https://vec.gsa.gov/MASTrainingHome>, but do go visit the VSC at some point. There is a lot of information there. You will have to create a registration. Make sure you use the same name all your registrations throughout the GSA proposal process! By the way, and this can be a point of confusion, the Pathway to Success certificate you download after completing the training is not the digital certificate referenced in SCP-FSS-001 (b). That certificate is discussed in Step 2.

1-3. Choose the Large Categories, Subcategories and SINs that fit your business

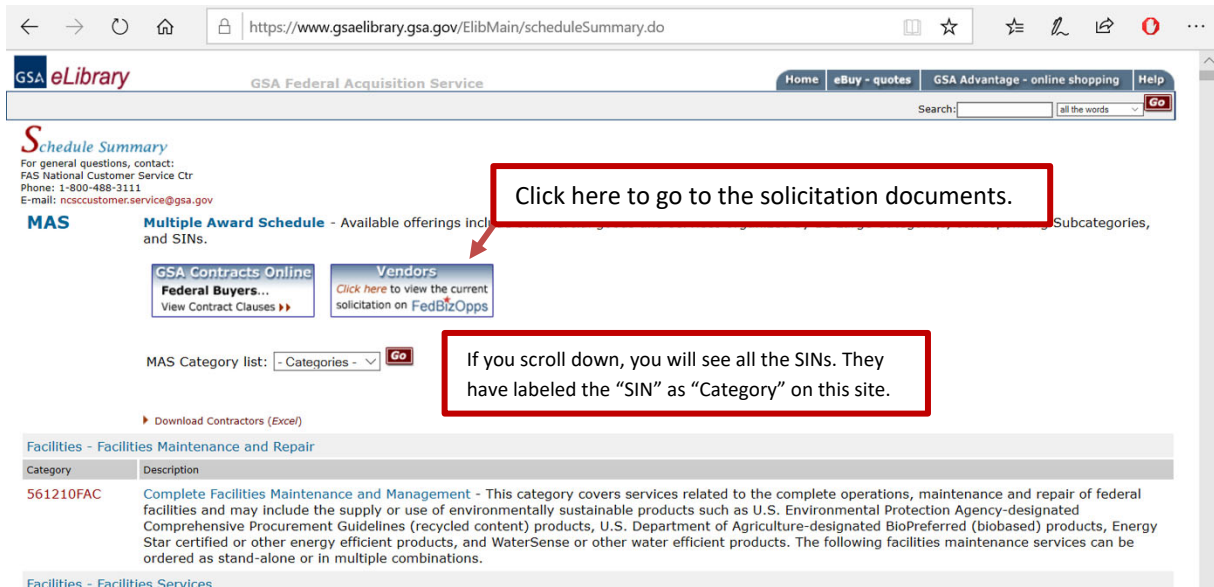
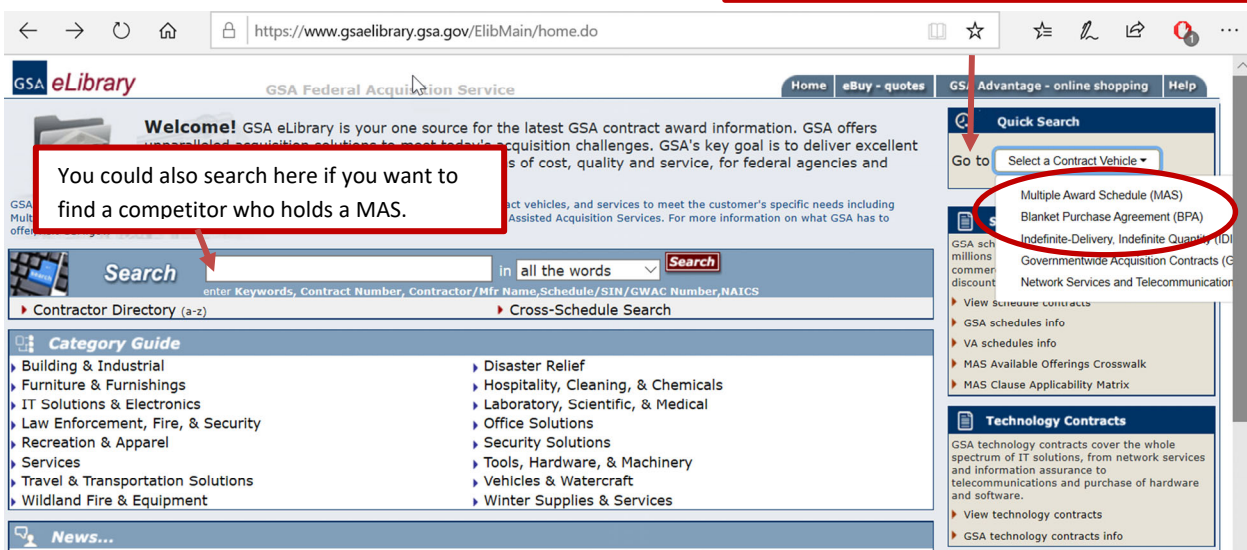
Prior to the Schedules Consolidation of October, 2019, the GSA MAS had about 30 different GSA Schedules. It was difficult for some clients to find the right best SIN for their offerings as products and services were scattered a bit and products or services could fit on more than one schedule which required multiple proposals and multiple schedules. However, it was easy to find out where companies fit by reviewing the different GSA websites. This can still be a way to get to know your competitors. Let’s review what has been one of the most active schedules (now large categories), the Information Technology Category, and the two most popular SINs we’ve been seeing: IT Services and the Highly Adaptive Cybersecurity Services (HACS). These used to be SINs 132-51 and 132-45, respectively. Now, as you look at the Information Technology Worksheet, you will see that they are 54151S and 54151HACS.

The first place we go now is to document 16_Available Offerings of the new Consolidated Schedule. This lays out all the Large Categories, Subcategories and SINs. The first spreadsheet lists all the Large Categories. To see the Subcategories and SINs for each Large Category, review the other worksheets. The Information Technology worksheet is tab 6. You will find the Information Technology Professional Services is on Line 10 and is SIN 54141S. The description or Statement of Work (SOW) for SIN 54141S is in Column F. Reviewing each column, you will see that the Large Category is Information

Technology, the Subcategory is IT Services. The IT Professional Services SIN is 54151S. The SIN Description (SOW) is “IT Professional Services and/or labor categories for database planning and design; systems analysis, integration, and design; programming, conversion and implementation support; network services, data/records management, and testing.”

The next stop we check is the GSA eLibrary. Be careful as you explore this site so you don’t get sucked into misinformation. As of March, 2020 (and probably for a good long time) it still has the old schedules information and you don’t want to get caught up in that as it will probably be confusing and slow things down.

Start here – Select Multiple Award Schedule



The SINs are shown under their Large Categories which are listed alphabetically and start with “Facilities.” We are looking for the Information Technology large category in this example. Here are some of the relevant SINs thereunder:

Information Technology - IT Services	
Category	Description
54151HACS	Highly Adaptive Cybersecurity Services (HACS) - Includes a wide range of fields such as, the seven-step Risk Management Framework services, information assurance, virus detection, network management, situational awareness and incident response, secure web hosting, and backup, security services and, Security Operations Center (SOC) services. HACS vendors are cataloged under the 5 subcategories of High Value Asset Assessments; Risk and Vulnerability Assessments, Cyber Hunt, Incident Response, and Penetration Testing. NOTE: Subject to Cooperative Purchasing
54151HEAL	Health Information Technology Services - Includes a wide range of Health IT services to include connected health, electronic health records, health information exchanges, health analytics, personal health information management, innovative Health IT solutions, health informatics, emerging Health IT research, and other Health IT services. NOTE: Subject to Cooperative Purchasing
54151S	Information Technology Professional Services - IT Professional Services and/or labor categories for database planning and design; systems analysis, integration, and design; programming, conversion and implementation support; network services, data/records management, and testing. NOTE: Subject to Cooperative Purchasing

You see that 54151S is IT Professional Services, which is the most popular SIN under the IT Large Category. 54151HACS is Cybersecurity Services, offers for which are booming at this time. You can click on the SIN and see who holds contracts under that SIN.

MAS Multiple Award Schedule

Information Technology - IT Services

Category	Description
54151S	Information Technology Professional Services IT Professional Services and/or labor categories for database planni

NOTE: Subject to Cooperative Purchasing

2752 contractors

Display:

Hold the 'Ctrl' key to select all that apply

Contractor		Contract #	Phone	City, State	Socio-Economic	Contractor T&Cs/Pricelist	View Catalog
1 SOURCE CONSULTING, INC.		47QTCA19D00AQ	2027958612	WASHINGTON ,DC	s/dv/d		
1 SYNC TECHNOLOGIES, LLC		47QTCA18D00AR	334-219-3921	MONTGOMERY ,AL	s/d/8a		
10NOVATE, INC.		47QTCA18D00H9	571-228-6543	ARLINGTON ,VA	s/w/wo/ew/d		
10PEARLS FEDERAL LLC		47QTCA18D00ET	703-935-1919	VIENNA ,VA	s/d		
1800ADMIN, LLC		GS-35F-333DA	512-508-9732	ASHBURN ,VA	s/d/8a		
1901 GROUP, LLC		GS-35F-0617W	7032839211	BLACKSBURG ,VA	s/h		

If you click on the document icon, you can typically see what a contractor offers and how much they charge for services. For products, it's easier to see what is offered and how much it costs at gsaadvantage.gov.

Let's go take a look at the GSA Advantage site (<http://www.gsaadvantage.gov>). We usually walk through this site with our clients and have them search for products (and sometimes services) similar to the ones they want to offer through GSA. When we find contractors offering similar items, we can verify that our clients have chosen the right SIN. You can also use this site to determine if your pricing

could be defined as fair and reasonable. Right now GSA Advantage! is still showing old Schedules and SINs even for contractors who are on the new MAS, but when the GSA systems catch up with all the changes, we will include some search examples to better explain the SINs and GSA Advantage! As you research, keep in mind that the government may not always purchase the item with the lowest cost. The “best value” may actually be a system with a higher price tag, but other factors may prove it to be a better value overall.

1-4. Review SAM.gov to make sure your records are complete

System for Award Management (SAM) at sam.gov is a tool that consolidates the various registrations that are required for contract award. If you want to do business with the federal government, you need to have an active record in SAM. Not only does your SAM record need to be current, you need to have the correct NAICS codes for the SINs under which you are proposing. Of course, now with the SINs being closely tied to the NAICS, that should be a given. Updates have been made to SAM to include many other GSA procurement information such as contracting opportunities (the old fbo.gov), and award information (the old fpds.gov – which is still in transition at the time of this writing).

1-5. Complete the Readiness Assessment

GSA introduced the readiness assessment into their toolkit a few years ago. This, coupled with the Pathway to Success training, can help you decide if you are ready for a GSA Schedule. The Readiness Assessment (which you want to save to your computer before you enter information) can be found at (<https://vsc.gsa.gov/RA/ReadinessAssessment.pdf>). If you don’t save it to your computer, you may risk losing any entered information. In order to complete the Readiness Assessment, you will need to gather information from the SSQ (<http://ssq.gsa.gov/>). We find that report no. 11 is the best one to use for the Readiness Assessment. We download the most recently completed government fiscal year report into Excel, sort the data by sales, total the annual sales for the SIN, and average it. Using that data, you can complete questions 4 through 8. To determine if the market is shrinking or growing, we run report 11 for the previously completed fiscal year, total it, and compare it to the current fiscal year’s total.



Review the substeps below and check the appropriate box. If you have not completed all the substeps; note the reasons why below and set a due date for completion.

Step One Review

Substep	Complete	Incomplete
1-1 Understand the definition of a GSA Multiple Award Schedule	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-2 Choose the Schedule and SINs that fit your business	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-3 Review SAM to make sure your records are complete	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-4 Watch "Pathway to Success" and complete the quiz	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1-5 Complete the Readiness Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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List any incomplete substeps, why they are incomplete, action for completion, and due date for completion. If you have two or more steps, we suggest you delay working on other steps until these substeps are completed.

| Incomplete Substep | Reason for incompleteness/Action for completion | Due Date |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------|
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