Title: READ ME FIRST - Request for Information (RFI): Procurement Ecosystem Initiative

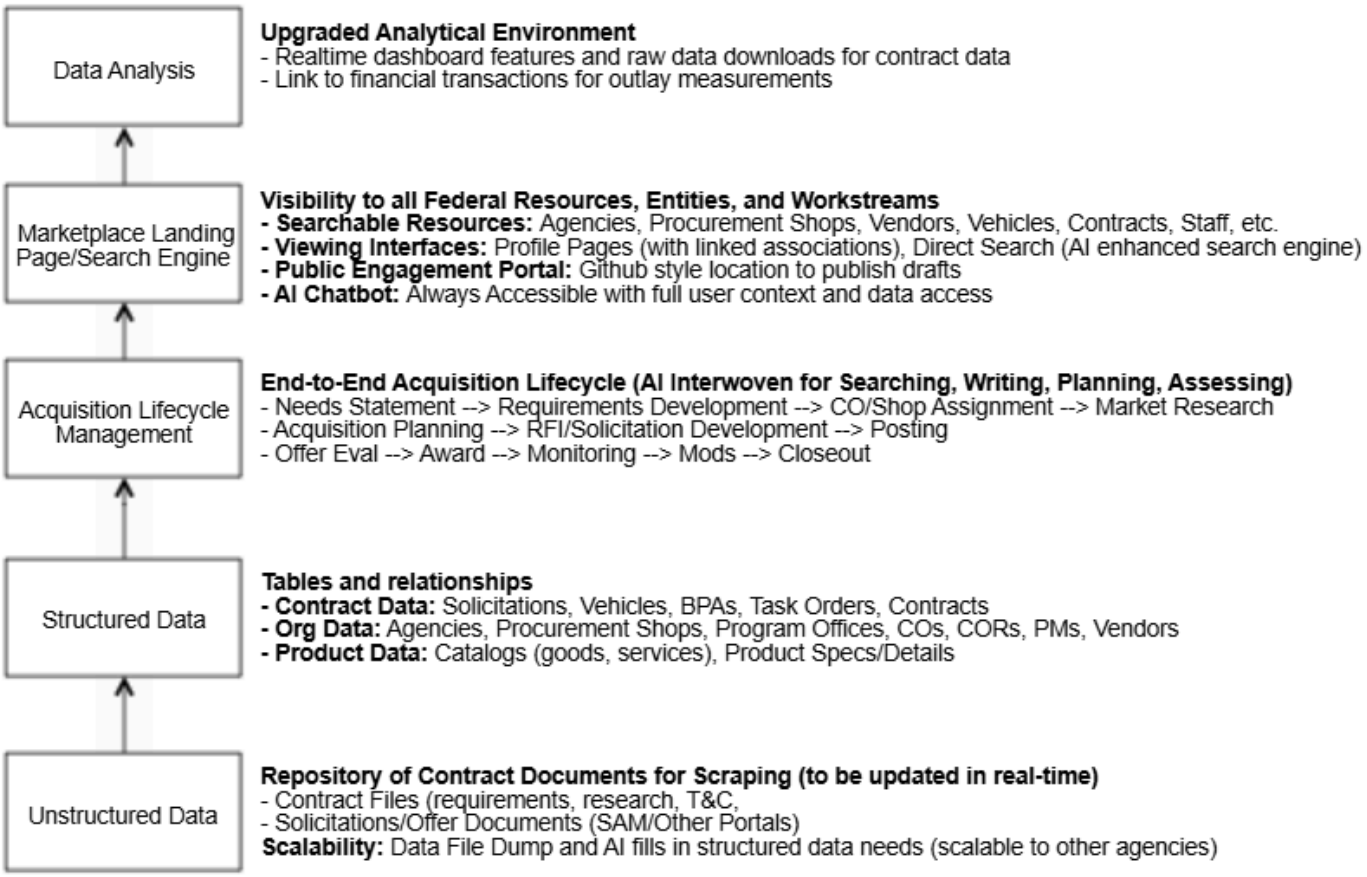
Introduction/Purpose:

The General Services Administration (GSA), on behalf of the entire federal government, is embarking on a transformative initiative to revolutionize federal procurement **for the acquisition workforce, customers, and suppliers**. Our core objective is to create a single, integrated, collaborative, and highly efficient procurement ecosystem, profoundly enhanced by Artificial Intelligence (AI), that will drive significant economy, transparency, and collaboration across the acquisition lifecycle. This solution will also enhance analytical capabilities and access to acquisition resources for internal and external stakeholders.

This RFI is an initial outreach to industry partners seeking perspective on the vision and the path to execution. We are particularly interested in understanding how industry can help us deliver this solution and leverage **our existing** data—both structured and unstructured—**with AI** to unlock unprecedented efficiencies in federal buying.

We have included a draft systems design to serve as the foundation for White Paper responses.

Draft Systems Design



Key terminology:

Acquisition Workforce	This includes contracting officers, contracting specialists, administrative contracting officers, industrial operations analysts, procurement analysts, supervisors, branch chiefs, etc.
Customers	Federal, state, local, etc. government agency offices internal and external to GSA, or other eligible entities that use GSA contract vehicles, solutions, etc.
Supplier	Industry partners that supply products/services/solutions with or without a contract. Could be a potential offeror, offeror, or contractor.

Target Audience:

We are seeking input from a broad range of suppliers and industry associations, including information technology (IT) services providers, data architecture and storage experts, AI and Machine Learning specialists, data analytics firms, **user experience (UX) designers**, small businesses/startups with innovative solutions or ideas.

Our Vision & Objectives:

We envision a future where federal procurement is:

- **Efficient:** Streamlining processes, reducing manual effort, and fostering greater collaboration to increase efficiency and improve acquisition outcomes.
- **Data-Driven:** Establishing data quality control, efficient processes for handling transactional data in real-time, analytical data, structured and unstructured data, and migration and maintenance of existing structured and unstructured data.
- **Integrated and Seamless:** A unified platform that can be continuously modernized, providing a single point of entry for **customers, suppliers, and the GSA acquisition workforce** where they have access to everything they need to collaborate and complete their individual work.
- **Intelligent and Insightful:** Leveraging current/emerging technology, such as AI, to guide users through acquisition processes, provide intelligent recommendations, automate routine tasks, and offer predictive analytics throughout the procurement lifecycle while leveraging existing contract and other documented data from active and past acquisitions.

Ultimately, we aim to use agile development services to build the most efficient solution that will foster a transparent, collaborative, and data-driven federal acquisition ecosystem. The potential benefits of this solution are vast, and we look forward to exploring them with your help.

What does GSA want suppliers to do?

1. Review draft RFQ package for agile development services. This includes key information about:
    a. Scope
    b. Objectives

    c. Sample functional requirements
    d. Problems we would like to solve for our users
    e. Information about our current systems
    f. Non-functional requirements, **and more!**
2. Respond to our RFI
    a. Submit up to a 10-Page White Paper
    b. Respond to the Published Questions

Current Problem Statements excerpt from SOO (others may be provided after award)

Acquisition Workforce

Lack of standardized processes, templates, and functionality to collect data for pre-award, award, and post award actions, leads to variability in how customers and suppliers submit information for review and action by the AWF, leading to a lot of back and forth. Additionally, there are many manual offline processes where the AWF must reenter information over and over into templates, leading to copy/paste errors.

The AWF lacks a unified workload tracking system, forcing managers to manually monitor progress across disparate systems. This absence of real-time data prevents proactive intervention for potential delays or bottlenecks. Furthermore, the reliance on multiple systems and inconsistent processes significantly impedes the training of new employees and complicates performance management.

The AWF's current systems are inadequate for complex acquisitions, often forcing these processes to occur offline before being manually integrated into existing applications. This limitation significantly delays acquisitions and hinders the development of advanced contracting methods due to the extensive lead time required for system adaptation.

The AWF works in a different application environment (GSuite and other internal tools such as ORS and FSS Online) from the customers and suppliers and there is no way to efficiently collaborate on documents, automatically see updated statuses, etc. This leads to back and forth exchanges through emails. It is difficult to track and reconcile changes and keep track of document versions.

The AWF has to search multiple places when conducting market research. They lack a central place to research existing solutions to their requirements that can fit their needs more quickly.

The AWF are forced to learn the buying guides of each existing solution, and often are required to go to specific places to release RFIs and RFPs to the suppliers on those vehicles. They lack a common place where all pre-award processes can stay in one environment.

The AWF often receives poorly worded or incomplete requirements from customers who are unfamiliar with their acquisition. They lack common guidance and automatic support to help refine requirements before they are handed off to AAS or OCAS. The result is back and forth between the customers and the AWF to understand what will meet their needs.

The AWF wants to efficiently process better quality offers, however the current acquisition systems hinder offer evaluation, price analysis, negotiation, and collaboration with suppliers because they do ensure that all the needed information is collected. Several of the current systems also perform batch processing which does not allow the AWF to see what suppliers see in real time, making the collaboration between AWF and suppliers difficult and time consuming.

The AWF also wants to efficiently process better procurement request packages from customers, but the lack of standardization and functionality hinder the AWF's ability to complete their tasks efficiently.

The AWF must manually gather data from multiple systems to complete their evaluations prior to awarding contracts and modifications. They must use additional manual workflows when policy changes (e.g., executive orders, FAR changes, other regulatory changes). These manual processes are time-consuming and can result in errors from copying/pasting and manual data entry. Such errors may lead to incorrect information on award documents, necessitating additional post-award work from the AWF.

The AWF must communicate clarifications to confused MAS suppliers who unknowingly submit incorrect or incomplete data in eOffer/eMod. Collaboration is further hindered by the AWF and suppliers not seeing the same real-time information in their separate systems. All of this creates inefficiencies in the process and significant delays to the acquisition and contract life cycle.

Current processes require the AWF to manually file contract-related communications, such as emails, with the official contract record. This manual process hinders efficient workload transfer for the AWF, customers, and suppliers. Consequently, critical documentation may not be consistently added to the contract file or may remain on individual user devices, leading to incomplete records and significant delays in bringing new team members up to speed.

The AWF currently lacks a centralized source for contracting metrics, which can make answering data calls challenging and lead to the AWF providing inconsistent information. The raw data is often too complex to interpret without a data expert, leading to inefficient offline manipulation and errors. As a result, the ability to make timely and effective decisions based on this data is significantly compromised.

The AWF lacks the ability to retain and share best practices among acquisition teams. The result is doing the acquisition the same way it was done before to minimize review times instead of having access to the latest and greatest information that may have been discovered by another acquisition team. The teams use programs like GitHub and word of mouth to share this information instead of it being in one common place within the system.

The AWF has to email documents between levels of leadership review and manually obtain signatures of approval. They then have to manually upload those approvals into the contract file.

The management of the electronic contract file is largely a manual process in the pre-award phase of a contract. The teams often have to take time to document discussions and determinations outside of the system initially, then file the final documents in the proper

folder. This results in documents being placed in different locations of the contract file from one acquisition to another.

Customers

Customers do not have a central place to research all available solutions. Tools to help with market research and acquisition planning are not centralized or integrated. Even when the appropriate solution (contract vehicle, Global Supply, etc) is found, customers have to go to varying systems in order to utilize them.

Ordering procedures vary by solution and it can be difficult to understand what to do for a particular situation. There is also a lack of consistency on how to issue RFP/RFQ, and to which suppliers to stay in compliance.

Current systems lack automated acquisition planning templates, leading to inconsistent formatting of structured data and potential errors.

AI and Automation are not built into systems to be able to use data more efficiently, this creates more offline actions that customers have to take when working an acquisition.

Suppliers

Suppliers, whether potential offerors, current offerors, or those with existing contracts, are eager to work with the government. However, they face significant hurdles, including a cumbersome and time-consuming contract award process, and lengthy delays in getting modification requests approved. These challenges largely stem from suppliers struggling to understand how to submit accurate and required information.

Navigating GSA's processes, information, resources, language, and tools is also often difficult for suppliers, leading many to hire costly third-party consultants. Furthermore, suppliers lack a consistent source for answers regarding suitable contracting vehicles, eligibility criteria, and required documentation.

The manual re-entry of information into tools, Excel spreadsheets, Word document templates, or webform fields is another significant issue. This practice frequently results in data entry errors that require considerable time to correct. Such errors can lead to the rejection of offers and modifications, or the award of incorrect information, creating additional work for both the AWF, customers, and the supplier.

There is a large degree of variability from one acquisition to the next, so suppliers incur significant costs to comb through solicitations to make sure their offers are not deemed unresponsive.

Suppliers struggle to obtain conformed contract copies and track version history, hindering their understanding of contractual obligations pre and post-modifications. This lack of clear records creates inefficiencies, compliance risks, and potential disputes.

Suppliers are required to log into multiple interconnected, and at times independent, systems to fulfill their contract deliverables. This constant switching between systems inflates the human resources necessary for contract administration and complicates workload tracking, leading to potential oversights.

Suppliers face significant hurdles due to the lack of a unified contract management platform. Contracts are scattered across multiple systems and agencies, leading to inefficiencies, errors, and missed opportunities. The current infrastructure prevents suppliers from making concurrent adjustments across multiple contracts. Administrative updates, terms changes or pricing adjustments must be processed on a contract by contract basis, a manual, time-consuming, and error-prone process.

Suppliers have to allocate resources for business development to promote what their company can offer the Government. They are left to search for acquisitions manually or hire consultants to run down leads for them. Suppliers must allocate resources to business development to promote their company's offerings to the Government. They currently resort to manual searches for acquisitions or hiring consultants to pursue leads.

Currently, suppliers face challenges in easily identifying upcoming Government needs, such as expiring contracts or upcoming acquisitions on contracting forecasts. This lack of visibility hinders competition, giving incumbent contractors or previous applicants an advantage in preparing responses for recompete solicitations.

Suppliers are required to adapt to diverse data formats and a rigid governmental structure. This forces suppliers to conform their data to government specifications, leading to manual processes, data degradation, and resource waste. This inhibits the Government's ability to make informed decisions based on comprehensive and accurate data.

Suppliers have access to inconsistent buying information across various government solutions. Responding to RFIs and RFQ/RFPs often necessitates navigating disparate platforms rather than a unified environment.

Next Steps:

Insights gathered from this RFI will be crucial in shaping our future acquisition strategies. We anticipate using this feedback to inform potential follow-on engagements, which may include industry days, additional requests for information, draft solicitations, or one-on-ones as we move closer to formalizing our procurement approach.

At GSA, we are committed to transparency and fairness in all our processes. This RFI is for informational purposes only and does not constitute a solicitation for proposals. The GSA will not award a contract based on this RFI, nor will it reimburse respondents for any costs associated with preparing their response. We want to assure you that all responses will be considered with the utmost respect for your intellectual property. Responses will not be shared outside the Government.