OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

Office of Federal Procurement Policy

Acquisition Data Management

Agency: Office of Federal Procurement Policy, Office of Management and Budget

Action: Notice of Final Office of Management and Budget Circular No. A-137, "Strategic Management of Acquisition Data and Information"

_____

Summary: The Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is issuing a Circular entitled "Strategic Management of Acquisition Data and Information." This Circular will improve agency access to reliable data and information at the point of need throughout the acquisition lifecycle to ensure successful contracting outcomes without duplicating data, tools, or effort. The Circular establishes a centralized data management strategy to allow for the creation of more comprehensive knowledge and data banks, the development of standard data sharing processes, and improved access to tools and resources for acquisition-related decision-making in a Hi-Definition Intelligent Acquisition Data Environment.

For Further Information Contact: MBX.OMB.OFPPv2@OMB.eop.gov, Office of Federal Procurement Policy, 725 17th Street NW, Washington DC 20006, at 202-395-6805.

Supplementary Information:

A. Overview

Across the Federal enterprise, there are tens of billions of acquisition data points residing in over 170 contract writing systems (including legacy systems) and over 15 payment processing platforms. Historically, much of this data has been collected and managed at the agency level. Agencies have used their resources to build tools within their agency, harnessing internal data and databases, but this has often led to duplicative tools and efforts and a lack of coordination across agencies. This approach has limited central capacity for analytics, insights, and efficiency gains outside of the System for Award Management and the Federal Procurement Data System, which generally provide aggregate data but very little pricing and best practices information.

To address these challenges, OMB's new Circular establishes a centralized data management policy framework for the creation of a High-Definition Environment (HDE). Through the HDE, which is the technical architecture for the data, users will have access to the right data at the point of need through a single, central access point, better enabling them to buy as an organized entity. Creating the HDE is a critical component of the acquisition community's work to make purchases as an organized enterprise. The HDE will provide agencies with access to the breadth and depth of information needed to support the acquisition needs of the Federal Government— the largest and most sophisticated buyer in the world.

Achieving the HDE will require greater transparency and collaboration in agency data systems planning and investment decisions. This is particularly true with respect to activities that would affect the Government's ability to achieve data interoperability for information that is critical or

can otherwise significantly improve acquisition decision-making at both the Government-wide and agency-wide level.

To this end, the Circular: (1) establishes the principle that agencies should no longer view acquisition data as a singular agency asset, but rather an asset critical to supporting the missions of the Government at large, and should be prepared to collect and share the data accordingly; (2) defines agency roles and responsibilities; and (3) supports the design and development of solutions to drive data interoperability, allowing systems to connect and share acquisition data wherever they reside within the Federal Government without duplication.

B. Summary

The Circular:

Establishes a centralized data management policy framework, including a comprehensive data governance process. Outcome oriented data policy and governance serves as both a safeguard and an accelerator for data initiatives. OMB will facilitate the development of policies and practices to support the collection, sharing, and use of the data and a governance process to ensure appropriate representation and accountability for how datasets and data products are prioritized, managed, consumed, and secured in the HDE.

Directs the establishment of the HDE. Agency data will be shared and accessed by Federal users through a coordinated, Government-wide solution for accessing and using acquisition data and developing and deploying innovative tools that better support the acquisition lifecycle. The HDE leverages a scalable technical architecture to store, access, utilize, share, and archive acquisition data without duplicating data, tools, or effort. The HDE will use existing agency investments in systems and data infrastructure to the maximum extent practicable.

Requires agencies to prepare annual strategic plans. In accordance with guidance issued by OMB, agencies will report on steps to address general data management stewardship, government-wide priority initiatives and individualized acquisition data hurdles or responsibilities that may affect other agencies.

Builds appropriate centralization. The Circular will support centralized standards, knowledge banks, and data-sharing tools using established and strengthened governance. Existing standards and processes will be updated, modernized, and enforced through greater transparency and interoperability. Data sharing tools will allow agencies to maintain existing systems but create the ability to pull data from the source where it resides for improved analytics and insights. Shared solutions will increase efficiency across all agencies, rather than within a single agency, when internal tools are developed.

Promotes data-sharing technologies. The Circular prepares agencies for an interoperable future where all acquisition data can be accessed on-demand. Current data sharing efforts are being conducted through pilots on a voluntary basis to address challenges in interoperability. This Circular anticipates that agencies will begin exploring, planning for, and building application programming interfaces, Extract-Transfer-Load processes, and other access points while working within the HDE governance structure to develop appropriate standards. It provides a mechanism to enable agencies to ask for further direction and resources in these endeavors from OMB and

through the budget process. Increased collaboration among agencies will facilitate sharing knowledge and best practices.

Requires data-sharing. Contract cost efficiencies increase, and wasteful cost variances between agencies decrease, when buyers are able to improve their negotiating posture with access to standardized transactional data that can give them insight into prices paid and favorable contract terms and conditions. Accordingly, with limited exceptions, agencies will be required to share their acquisition data—such as prices paid and terms and conditions—on a phased basis as directed by OMB. This is to ensure an enterprise approach to the Federal acquisition function. Part of the challenge to increasing interoperability is the protection of data within each agency. Agencies must use appropriate protocols to prevent the unauthorized disclosure of data. Accordingly, templates for data-sharing agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) will be developed to help facilitate acquisition data sharing. Standardized processes for data-sharing that explicitly emphasize data protection and security will decrease barriers to interoperability and greatly increase the speed of transfer, all while maintaining critical data protections.

Facilitates other collaborative actions and workforce development with data management. Agencies will be expected to actively contribute to existing knowledge portals on innovative techniques and emerging technology and support expansion, implementation, and promotion of acquisition data management training and certification efforts for the acquisition workforce.

C. Public Comments

In response to its November 17, 2023 notice inviting public comment on the proposed Circular, 88 FR 80339, OFPP received public comments from seven respondents, including from several coalitions representing industry interests. Copies of the public comments received are available for review at https://www.regulations.gov/document/OFPP-2023-0001-0001. A summary of the comments and OFPP's responses and changes adopted in the final Circular are described below.

Data Protection

Respondents representing industry interests commented on the potential misuse of pre- and post-award pricing data about the scope of the user base. Specifically, concerns were raised about the potential accessibility of proprietary information by the public or by competitors, as well as the management of the data chain of command and the management of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

To address these concerns, OFPP added language to section 2 of the Circular to clarify agency responsibilities for securing data shared within the Government and to make clear that any requests for release of information, such as through FOIA, will be handled in accordance with statutes, regulations, and protocols that address the release of contractor information to non-governmental sources. The Circular makes no changes to policies or practices governing the release of contractor data to the public.

Furthermore, OFPP added additional language to define roles and responsibilities that address data security and data sharing. Specifically, OMB will work with the Hi-Def Managing Agency, which is identified as the General Services Administration (GSA), to support the creation of standard data sharing MOU templates that can be tailored on an agency-by-agency basis to document comprehensive data management and security protocols.

The Circular now clearly defines that the role of the Hi-Def Managing Agency (GSA) includes comprehensive data security. GSA is tasked with coordinating with agencies to define an acceptable set of data security standards for the transfer, storage, and use of Hi-Def data through data sharing agreements and properly securing all agency data, based on established data security standards, once transmitted into the HDE.

Finally, the Circular establishes that any Government-wide data products "powered by" data originating from the HDE are subject to an interagency governance process to ensure that the use of the data is aligned with law and policy.

Data Context

OFPP received comments highlighting the complexity of pricing data, expressing concerns that if prices paid data are used without the relevant context to adjust for contract terms and conditions, supply chain fluctuations, and other time-bound factors, the usefulness of the data is jeopardized for forward decision making and market research.

OFPP agrees. While the final Circular reflects the importance of context surrounding data, it is important to recognize that key elements of the contextualizing data, such as contract terms and conditions, are often stored separately in an unstructured, decentralized manner across the enterprise. The collection of this data is on the Hi-Def roadmap but full implementation will take time and coordination with the agencies.

Through the annual planning process, agency stakeholders will have the opportunity to assess agency data sharing readiness and identify critical acquisition data needs. Agency responses will enable prioritized and orderly data collection efforts to fulfill these needs through small, scalable pilot efforts complete with assessments of the required data context. Data quality issues within existing datasets (for example, low quality data in the Unit of Measure field) will be addressed through both the governance and training processes.

Training and Workforce Development

OFPP received a comment asserting that training of the acquisition workforce must be part of the implementation of the Circular and is critical to its success. A second, related comment noted that successfully implementing these initiatives will require significant "human-focused" cultural and process changes within the Government's acquisition and related workforces.

OFPP agrees. The final Circular establishes that OMB, in coordination with the Federal Acquisition Institute, agency working groups, and data experts, will launch a role-based Federal Acquisition Data Training Curriculum that addresses best practices and policies related to data sharing, data use, and the current landscape of Government-wide acquisition tools and resources. The Circular also notes that through the new curriculum and other applicable training paths, agencies are responsible for building data analysis and related skills as a core acquisition workforce capability.

Scope of the Circular

OFPP received comments requesting that the Circular express a position on the impacts to procurement administrative lead time, challenges associated with sub-tier contractor and vendor data, the role of GSA in negotiating prices for GSA Schedules, and the data differences that will arise between best value and lowest price, technically acceptable contracts.

The intention of the Circular is to establish the framework for data sharing to improve enterprise-wide contracting outcomes. Specific use cases may be defined and addressed through the Hi-Def planning process for government-wide, agency-wide, or targeted use, as needed.

Christine J. Harada,
Senior Advisor, Office of Federal Procurement Policy.