



"Making it Happen... Through Operational Contracting"

61st CONS Newsletter – Spring 2003

Hello! Here's hoping your inspection experience is a positive one! Welcome to the Spring edition of our quarterly newsletter. Its purpose is to enhance the acquisition process by ensuring all supported organizations and their personnel are sufficiently informed of appropriate regulatory and procedural requirements and current acquisition policies.

The information provided is not intended to be used as a substitute for regulatory guidance. In all cases when there may be a conflict between this guide and regulatory direction, the regulatory direction will be followed.

CUSTOMER GUIDE REVISED

The 61 CONS Customer Guide has been revised. This guide outlines simplified policies and procedures for initiating, preparing, approving, and coordinating purchase requests for submission to the Operational Contracting Squadron (61 CONS). A copy of this guide is available on the 61 CONS web page located at: http://www.losangeles.af.mil/SMC/PK/PKH/OME/PKO/cust_info/cust_info.htm

MINIMUM ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

When purchasing items/services using appropriated funds, the purchaser is required to purchase the item or service that meets the minimal requirements of the organization. For example, if you have a basic need to rent a vehicle to transport 4 passengers, you should rent something closer to a compact versus a full-sized convertible with leather interior and 10-disc CD changer. I know this may be an extreme example, but hopefully you see my point.

This philosophy should be used regardless of the item or service contemplated. If you want to purchase personal planning systems (i.e., Franklin, Day Runner), purchase only the generic (green) refills or the cheapest binders instead of the myriad selection of premium products. As a keeper of taxpayer funds, you have an obligation to spend prudently. Purchase only those features absolutely

necessary for the contemplated use. Remember, gold-plating can be deemed waste and abuse.

PROCESSING MILITARY INTERDEPARTMENTAL PURCHASE REQUESTS (MIPRS)

MIPRs are a valuable tool to acquire needed services and supplies from channels outside those typically used by 61 CONS. In fact, a substantial number is used throughout the Air Base Group and SMC. Despite the advantages of using a MIPR, proper and timely acquisition planning must still be accomplished.

Recently, 61 ABG/CC issued a letter, dated 25 Feb 03, that details the policy for determining whether or not to use a MIPR. In it making such a determination, each 61 ABG two-letter or associate unit equivalent is charged with responsibility for responsible for exercising sound business judgment and complying with regulation and policy. This shall be accomplished with the advice and assistance of SMC/JA/FM/BC and 61 CONS. The following is a synopsis of the policy and its process:

- Every outgoing MIPR must include a certification addressing the applicability of Economy Act requirements. The program/project manager and the 61 CONS contracting officer who would have otherwise contracted for the requirement must sign this certification.
- Every outgoing MIPR must specify the amount of the fee being charged by the servicing agency or specifically state that no fee is being charged.
- Every outgoing MIPR must sufficiently describe the item or service required to enable the reviewer to make an informed judgment regarding the applicable authority for the acquisition and the appropriateness of having the acquisition accomplished outside Los Angeles AFB.

- A copy of every outgoing MIPR will be provided to the Small Business Office (SMC/BC). The requesting activity or the contracting officer should contact SMC/BC for guidance before issuing the MIPR if a small business impact is anticipated.
- When a D&F is required, the program/project manager will include documentation with the MIPR to support the conclusions made in the D&F. The contracting officer may include or require the program/project manager to add further documentation as necessary.
- For those D & Fs requiring approval of upper management, the requesting activity will prepare the AF Form 1768, Staff Summary Sheet (SSS) package. Coordinating offices will include the appropriate Staff Judge Advocate; SMC/BC, 61 ABG/CC and 61 CONS. The contracting officer's written comments for the approval authority will be included as a tab to the SSS package.
- Each 61 ABG 2-letter or associate unit equivalent is required to maintain a database containing pertinent information on all MIPRs issued within its organization. An updated log, current as of the end of the quarter (Mar, Jun, Sep, Dec), will be e-mailed to 61 CONS/LGCP by the 5th working day of the following month.

As always, coordination of these documents shall be accomplished PRIOR to using a MIPR to order supplies or services from an organization outside the Air Force. Should you have any questions or comments, contact Ms. Eileen Pratte at 363-1398.

VENDOR PRODUCT DEMONSTRATIONS

A vendor product demonstration can occur when firm or vendor solicits an AF organization to use or sponsor a demonstration of its products and/or services. If you are contacted for such a purpose, and are so inclined, your first action should be to contact the 61st Contracting Squadron.

We will provide you with a Hold Harmless (HH) Agreement to be signed by both the contractor

and the sponsoring activity. After signature this agreement will be returned to Contracting for the attachment of a cover letter and distribution to the parties. The sponsoring activity will make the necessary arrangements to take delivery of the equipment to be tested or secure a facility/location to house the show (Community Center, The Club, etc).

All that is left is for the equipment to be used according to the terms of the agreement or for the show to take place. End of story!!

For additional information, contact Mr. Will Strozier at 363-5115.

PURCHASING APPLIANCES FURNISHINGS FOR WORK BREAK AREAS

Air Force organizations may use appropriated funds to purchase work break area furnishings and small appliances under the following conditions.

- Responsible officials must determine that the appliance(s) in question is reasonably necessary for, and not just incidental to, the proper execution of an authorized program and that employees need to remain at their place of duty (work station) during the work shift.
- Break area furniture is authorized only for officially designated shop break (work) areas.
- The purchase of small appliances is for shop break (work) areas that directly support the operational mission.

(NOTE: In most cases, this will apply only to craft and maintenance type-shop areas not accessible to snack bars and cafeterias and not to staff/administrative offices, where personnel have desks and offices/cubicles and access to the foregoing facilities. Funding for appliances in these offices is the responsibility of the individuals working there. The purchase must meet these criteria:

- Acquisition costs are relatively small and no snack bars or other eating facilities are readily accessible.
- The appliance acquisition must enhance employee morale and increase employee productivity.
- The appliance is not being purchased for the purpose of providing entertainment.

As always, if you have any questions concerning this policy, contact us. E-mail is preferred.

ACQUIRING PRINTING AND COPYING SERVICES

Printing, copying services, or copier services provided by commercial sources is prohibited unless government support is unavailable. Cardholders shall contact DAPS or the local government printing/copying office and determine that printing support is unavailable and must receive authorization from the DAPS Manager in order to use a commercial printing source. Coordination with DAPS/local government printing office may be done by telephone and documented in the purchase log. The single purchase limit for purchase card use with DAPS is \$100,000. (Authority above \$2,500 must be obtained from 61 CONS).

Despite the closing of the local DAPS facility, LAAFB personnel are still required to use DAPS unless the decision to go elsewhere can be documented and supported in the file. DAPS' inability to meet your requirement (time or service constraints) is the only exception to using this service. DAPS will pay to have your requirement express mailed to the nearest facility for processing. So the fact that they are no longer co-located here at LAAFB, is not in itself reason not to utilize DAPS.. Advanced planning will go a long way toward preventing logistics problems before they become potential mission failures.

When DAPS is not available and authorization is received to use commercial printing sources, the threshold shall revert to \$2,500 per purchase. Splitting these requirements to stay under the \$2,500 limit is unauthorized.

BUSINESS CARDS

We often get inquiries about the purchase of business cards and normally the reply is not what the inquirer wanted to hear. There has been a slight change in the guidance, but you might want to put your celebrations on hold until you finish this paragraph.

The purchase of business cards is now authorized from The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc., a Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) participating non-profit agency. **IF** the business cards are *equal to or less in cost* than private stock cards created on a personal computer **AND** *written approval* is obtained from the Secretary of the Air Force delegable to subordinate management officials (General Officer or civilian members of the Senior Executive Service).

Business cards may also be printed, using existing software and agency-purchased card stock, when the above-referenced appropriate approving official determines an organization or position under his/her cognizance requires business cards in the performance of their official functions. Recruiting and liaison personnel, as described in AFI 65-601, para 4.36.1 are authorized to have business cards commercially printed (including the use of DAPS) by other than The Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc. without the approvals outlined above.

ADVANCE CONTRACT PLANNING (ACP)

As a contracting customer, one of your key responsibilities is the timely and proper planning of your requirements. "Acquisition planning", as defined by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), means the process by which the efforts of all people responsible for an acquisition are coordinated and integrated through a comprehensive plan for fulfilling your needs in a timely manner and at a reasonable cost.

To effectively manage the acquisitions programmed for any specific fiscal year, the 61st CONS operates and maintains an ACP Program. Every year, before the end of fiscal year, we establish and publish listing of submission suspenses designed to accommodate the timely

processing of all new and recurring contract requirements.

ACP procedures usually begin on or about 150 days prior to the end of fiscal year (around May 1st). Contracting will submit a letter to all user activities advising them of the established cutoff dates for receipt of purchase requests. In addition, the letter will require the customer to provide an AF Form 9, Request for Purchase, with complete specifications or purchase description, quantities, estimated cost, performance period, and required coordination (when necessary), for each individual requirement.

Conscientious ACP is perhaps the most important element in receiving accurate, efficient, and timely contracting support. Compliance with ACP requirements and procedures will go a long way toward guaranteeing you receive effective, efficient and timely contracting support during the upcoming fiscal year.

UNAUTHORIZED ACTIONS

Contracting Officers (COs) are agents of the Government, authorized by Congress to obligate funds through contractual arrangements with commercial companies.

Only COs can solicit, negotiate, award, change, and terminate contracts. Your job may place you in a position to have occasional or frequent contact with industry. Remember any contact with a business entity, which causes that entity to perform a service or provide a commodity, even in the form of an equipment demonstration can potentially lead to a financial obligation. If you commit the government to pay for anything, even inadvertently or unsuspectingly, your action is not authorized. **You may be held liable** for any charges claimed by the company and/or be subject to disciplinary action.

Consider the following example: A company official might ask you if you would like to sample a product during a phone discussion. If you were to accept the sample, you would be committing an unauthorized act if the company charged the Government for that sample. To ensure you aren't trapped into a no win situation

like this, refer these types of issues to the 61st CONS at 3-0284.

It is especially important for those of you who monitor a contractor's on-base performance to familiarize yourself with those contract so you don't ask for more or settle for less than is written in the contract. If you believe you may have committed an unauthorized act, **notify the 61st CONS immediately.** We will have to follow specific procedures in order to ratify (approve) unauthorized acts for the purpose of paying for the goods or services delivered. The longer you wait, the more it may be costing the Government. You and your Commander will have to prepare certain documents to request a ratification and have it approved by 61 CONS/CC (up to \$25,000), 61 ABG/CC (B/T \$25,00- and \$100,000) or HQ AFSPC/CV (above \$100,000). For additional information contact us at 3-0284.

GOVERNMENT-WIDE PURCHASE CARD (GPC)

The GPC is the preferred method of purchasing over-the-counter commercial items for commodities (including some HAZMAT) and non-personal services. Examples of items that can be procured with the GPC include: office supplies, computer hardware & software, self-help materials, conference room rental, equipment rental and one-time equipment repair, etc.

Micro-purchase authority (\$2,500 or less) for purchasing commercial items has been delegated to the cardholders.. You are expected to ensure a reasonable price is paid for the items and to distribute purchases equitably among qualified suppliers. Though the 61st CONS operates and administers the program, 61 ABC/CC has the overall responsibility for it. The Installation Purchase Card Program Manager is responsible for training, providing guidance to cardholders and their billing officials, monitoring to ensure proper card usage (e.g. no splitting requirements), administration & system maintenance, and canceling and/or suspending card usage as a result of violations. Authority to make purchases using the GPC is granted only after designated individuals have attended the required training and have been issued a letter of procurement delegation from us.

MISCELLANEOUS

Your comments and suggestions for improvements or topics for discussion are cordially invited. Forward them to 61 CONS/LGCP, Attn: Hazel Lowe, 2420 Vela Way, Ste 1467, El Segundo, CA 90245-4659 or contact us at (310) 363-2692

Copies of this newsletter as well as other subject information is available on the 61st CONS Home Page, which can be located at <http://www.losangeles.af.mil/SMC/PK/PKHOME/PKO/home.htm>