

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT
FOR PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT SUBMISSION
3090-XXXX, Ombudsman Inquiry/Request Instrument**

A. Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection.

The GSA Office of the Ombudsman (OPO) was established in 2014, to serve as an agency resource and a voice for industry to ensure concerns with GSA acquisition programs, policies and processes are clearly heard and addressed, thereby improving relationships between GSA and its suppliers.

The Office of the Procurement Ombudsman (OPO) is currently tracking and processing vendor inquiries and complaints using a composite of methods including email, Google Sheets, and MS Word Docs which makes it difficult to share, collaborate, centrally store data, effectively track information, as well as producing the necessary analytics (i.e. trend analysis) required for reporting to GSA senior leadership. As a result, the OPO finds it more difficult to help de-conflict issues between GSA vendors and the acquisition workforce, as well as producing the necessary analytics required to improve acquisition processes.

The Inquiry/Request web site will standardize and automate the collection of the data thereby reducing issues associated with manual receipt and processing of email and telephone calls.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used.

This is a new collection. The data will be collected from the external users (GSA suppliers) who interface with the GSA Acquisition community, particularly in relationship to programs, processes and policies. The information will be used to identify, house and report thematic issues in acquisition practices, inconsistencies in the application of policies, and recommendations for improvements in acquisition programs. The ombudsman acts as a neutral and confidential source for vendors, and an informational resource for GSA.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other forms of information technology.

Data collection will be via the GSA.gov portal using the OPO website as filled in by the inquirer.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication.

GSA's Federal Acquisition Service - Office of Customer Accounts and Research – helps GSA better understand customer requirements and become a strategic partner in helping agencies meet their responsibilities. The primary focus is on GSA customer agencies.

GSA's Information Technology Vendor Management Office (VMO) identifies and negotiates opportunities for increased agency efficiency with regard to IT spending, and serves as a point of contact for vendor relationship management and IT procurement assistance. The primary focus is on IT spending and tracking across GSA.

No other single organization within GSA is responsible for collecting, housing and reporting information on acquisition issues faced by vendors across supply lines and the GSA enterprise.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.

The burden applies equally to small businesses as it does to "other than small businesses". The Inquiry/Request may be submitted via the website gsa.gov/ombudsman. Use of the website is voluntary in that any entity that opts to do business with GSA may utilize the website to contact the GSA Office of the Ombudsman. Inquiries/requests may also be submitted via email to gsaombudsman@gsa.gov, or the U.S. Postal Service to GSA Office of the Ombudsman, 1800 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20405.

6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

Early intervention in issue resolution can prevent, or reduce, the instances of contract disputes, protests and litigation.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a specific manner.

No special circumstances exist.

8. Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency.

A 60-day notice published in the *Federal Register* at 82 FR 23003 on May 19, 2017. No comments were received. A 30 day notice was published in the *Federal Register* at 82 FR 41962 on September 5, 2017.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

Not applicable.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

The basic tenets under which the GSA Ombudsman operates are: neutrality, confidentiality, and independence. However, in some instances, disclosure of certain

information may be necessary in order to facilitate an adequate resolution of an issue. The inquirer may request confidentiality of information with the understanding that the request may hinder the resolution. Information collected will be disclosed only to the extent consistent with the ombudsman’s standards, and agency regulations and applicable statutes. In addition, there is no confidentiality if non-disclosure would violate statute or regulation.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature.

N/A

12 & 13. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information.

GSA currently has a population of approximately 20,000 vendors under contract, and an acquisition workforce of approximately 8,700. The Ombudsman invites inquiries from existing and potential vendors and the GSA acquisition workforce. Since inquiries are wide, varied and difficult to situationalize, the estimate of the reporting burden was calculated based on historical data with projected increases. The estimate is conservative since this instrument is not the only means by which individuals can contact the Ombudsman. The annual reporting burden is estimated as follows:

Potential maximum Respondents.....	118
Responses Per Respondent.....	<u>x 1</u>
Total Annual Responses.....	118
Hours Per Response	<u>x .25</u>
Total Burden Hours.....	29.5

14. Provide estimates of annualized costs to the Federal Government.

The cost for the system and the staff costs in reviewing and/or responding are estimated below.

Reviewing each response should take approximately .25 hour; the total maximum potential number of responses is estimated to be 118 each year; 118 responses x .25 hour =29.5 hours.

Estimated Total Cost to the Government is \$ 1,241.36 (based on the 29.5 burden hours to the Government, using the annual salary of a GS-12, step 5 salary of \$87,821, \$42.08 per hour x 29.5 hours = \$1,241.36.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 or 14.

This is a new information collection.

16. For collections of information for which results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication.

Results of this collection will not be tabulated or published. Information collected will be used for internal program decision making only.

17. If seeking approval not to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

N/A

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in “Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions.”

N/A

B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

Statistical methods are not used in this information collection.