

# Federal Acquisition Improvement Takes Aim at IT

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Related Categories: Digital Government, Innovation, Office of Management and Budget, Acquisition Reform, Strategic Sourcing, General Services Administration (GSA)

With over 3,300 contract units across the government, collaborating to share information and best practices can be challenging. Back in December 2014, the Office of Management and Budget's Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) described near-term to transform federal procurement.

OFPP administrator Anne Rung's [memo to federal agencies](#) outlined current priorities to transform government buying. These areas include category management, acquisition workforce and processes, and government-industry communication. Milestones for many of the efforts and actions associated with these areas will be approaching in the next few months.

## Category Management

OFPP aims to shift from managing government purchases and prices individually to establishing categories for common spending and costs. Unnecessary duplication of contracts across government for similar goods and services burdens vendors with proposal preparation costs and administrative expenses, which can have a significant impact on small businesses. This shift in government buying includes promotion of strategic sourcing, in particular looking to optimize the \$25 billion the government spends annually on commodity IT. To support this push, the General Services Administration is cataloging prices paid for IT goods and providing access to contract details for related products to highlight best practices.

## Talent Management and Innovation

The Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and OFPP are taking steps to encourage adoption of best practices within government purchasing of digital services and fostering innovation. These steps have included releasing a draft of the [TechFAR Handbook](#) and exploring case studies of resourceful contracting practices. OSTP and OFPP are collaborating on a plan to increase the government's digital acquisition capabilities. To further support these efforts, the U.S. Digital Services is expected to launch a pilot program for training agency personnel in digital acquisition. One of the areas targeted for these activities is agile development.

## Strengthen Government-Industry Relationships

OFPP is developing an approach to improve communication between government and industry. Guidance is in the works to allow open feedback from industry on acquisition process improvement and to identify trends and issues. The guidance will shape Acquisition 360, an effort to formalize the agency collection of feedback related to acquisition processes and identify areas for improvement. The focus on strengthening relationships includes establishing enterprise-wide vendor managers, a step that will begin with recruiting vendor managers to support relationships with key IT commercial contractors.

While these efforts will address all government buying, near-term efforts are zeroing in on agency IT. In particular, activities related to category management are expected to really dig into how agencies are buying technology products and services. It is worth noting, however, that the plans associated with this transformation initiative do not paint a picture of a sudden, new reality. Rather, they suggest ongoing activities to strategically reshape the landscape of government acquisition. As these current transformation efforts continue, pockets of advancement in different contracting organizations will contribute to gradual change across the government.

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