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Management Division

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August 19, 1994

Dr. Steven Kelman
Administrator
Office of Federal Procurement Policy
Office of Management and Budget

Mr. Thurman M. Davis
Regional Administrator
National Capital Region
General Services Administration

Mr. Joe Thompson
Commissioner
Information Resources Management Service
General Services Administration

We appreciate your cooperation and receptiveness during our recent meeting discussing the Federal Procurement Data Center's operation of the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS). We reviewed FPDS to determine whether users are satisfied with the system and if it is efficiently and effectively managed. Your commitment to improving this system is critical to FPDS providing timely, accurate, and complete governmentwide procurement data.

To ensure that all parties share an understanding of the discussion from our August 4, 1994, meeting, this letter summarizes our briefing and your comments. During the meeting, we discussed the following four issues identified during our review.

- First, it is important that the Center improve communication with its customers. We found that FPDS has not kept pace with evolving user needs because OMB and GSA have not provided a vehicle to hear and address users' concerns. Creation of an FPDS user committee would provide a valuable forum for identifying and addressing data needs. You agreed with this finding and stated that GSA and OMB will begin hosting semiannual meetings of a newly established FPDS customer forum that will identify and address users' needs. In addition, we stated that several FPDS users indicated they would benefit from more timely data. To address this user

need, GSA has recommended to OMB that the reporting requirement for agencies' data be shortened from quarterly to monthly. We understand this recommendation will be considered by the FPDS Policy Advisory Board.

-- Second, we found that the usefulness of FPDS data for conducting procurement policy analysis was limited. We believe broadening the content of FPDS would enhance the system's usefulness by allowing additional analysis of the procurement process. Such data would also be useful in formulating procurement policy. You agreed to consider expanding FPDS to include additional information technology procurement data similar to the data we collected with a questionnaire while developing our information technology procurement profile. This profile includes information on bid protests, procurement personnel, and vendor performance as they relate to individual contracts.

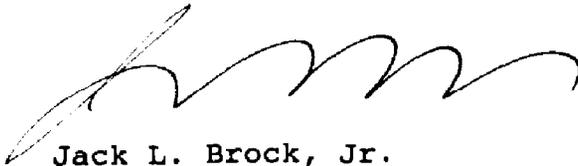
-- Third, we encourage the Center to finalize its implementation plans and begin transferring FPDS from the mainframe to a more efficient and responsive microcomputer-based system. We found that the current system is expensive to operate and inhibits access to the data. We believe the new system will result in decreased operating costs because the Center will save the annual expense of paying to use another agency's mainframe to run and maintain FPDS. The new system will also offer the potential for increased utility to FPDS customers because access to the data should be faster and easier. You agreed, and described how GSA has begun moving FPDS to a microcomputer-based system. Your plan indicates the move from the mainframe should be complete by April 1995.

-- Fourth, we found that the Center does not have standards detailing the appropriate levels of accuracy and completeness of FPDS data. We also found that some users perceive that FPDS data could be more accurate and complete. These users have identified instances where contractor names and dollar amounts were erroneous. We believe developing standards for FPDS data accuracy and completeness, then initiating a process to ensure that these standards are met, would improve data accuracy and completeness. You agreed and said the Center will establish and meet standards for the accuracy and completeness of FPDS data.

We believe it is important that these issues be addressed in a timely manner. We appreciate your offer to provide

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monthly updates on your progress in improving FPDS and look forward to receiving them. If you have any further questions about issues raised during the meeting, please contact me at (202) 512-6406.



Jack L. Brock, Jr.
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