



February 7, 2020

Ms. Julie Dunne  
Commissioner – Federal Acquisition Service  
General Services Administration  
Washington, DC

Dear Commissioner Dunne:

As the voice of over 400 American companies providing professional services to agencies across the entire government, PSC is acutely attuned to changes that affect our members' ability to serve their federal customers.<sup>1</sup> To do so in an expeditious and cost-effective manner, our members dedicate considerable time, effort and expense to tracking and analyzing potential contract opportunities for which they wish to compete.

The availability of timely and accurate information is therefore critical to our members as they attempt to drive down personnel and technology costs and thus reduce their overhead rates. While many agencies maintain business forecasts, and we at PSC have recently completed our [first annual scorecard](#) of them, the ability of GSA to house this contract information across the federal marketplace is unsurpassed. It was therefore with consternation and concern that PSC watched the dissolution of GSA's FedBizOps portal and the difficult transition to Beta.Sam.gov as its replacement. Regrettably, initial "bumps in the road" have continued beyond the functionality that GSA announced would not be carried over from the old system, and our members asked that we bring their views to your attention.

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<sup>1</sup> PSC is the voice of the government technology and professional services industry. PSC's more than 400 member companies represent small, medium and large businesses that provide federal agencies with services of all kinds, including information technology, engineering, logistics, facilities management, operations and maintenance, consulting, international development, scientific, social, environmental services, and more. Together, the trade association's members employ hundreds of thousands of Americans in all 50 states. Follow PSC on Twitter @PSCSpeaks. To learn more, visit [www.pscouncil.org](http://www.pscouncil.org).

As their attached feedback will demonstrate, the new system has been judged by many of our member companies to be a far cry from its predecessor. And while the respondents included many mid-tier and large companies, feedback from many of our small businesses was particular critical. The volume, consistency and detail of the responses we received demonstrate how vital this portal is to your partners. We have summarized their feedback into four key areas related to concern with: (1) Access Challenges; (2) Search Parameters; (3) Receive Capabilities; and (4) Display Difficulties, attached. That is followed with their more fulsome explanations for greater context.

We look forward to hearing from you and your team on what improvements can be achieved based on our members' input. PSC would be pleased to use our members as volunteers to create a small "beta test team" if such a course of action would be useful – especially in light of the recent announcement that Beta.Sam.gov will soon house FPDS data as the next phase in its evolution.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me at your earliest convenience so that a path forward can be speedily found. I can be reached at [Chvotkin@PSCouncil.org](mailto:Chvotkin@PSCouncil.org) or at (703)875-8148.

Sincerely,



Alan Chvotkin  
EVP & Counsel

Enclosures: As stated

**Professional Services Council**  
**Comments/Concerns**  
**Beta.Sam.gov**  
**February 6, 2020**

**Key User Quotes**

- “You have forced small businesses to acquire commercial software that costs tens of thousands of dollars for comparable search capabilities, which is going to raise overhead costs to the US Government. Please reinstate FBO.gov immediately.”
- “If this had the same notoriety as Healthcare.gov, people would have been fired.”
- “What scares me most is thinking about what will happen to FPDS when it is decommissioned to the new beta.sam.gov. I use FPDS every day, and I wish GSA would just leave it as-is. I frankly don’t know why these systems need to be combined into one platform. Is there an award for the worst government system launch ever? Truly, the very best thing GSA could do at this point is to put FBO.gov back up.”

**Access Challenges**

- Why is dual-factor authentication required?
- Why do users have to re-request/enter authentication when they “go back a page”?
- Why doesn’t initial authentication saved for teach user’s computer? Banks and credit card companies do this.
- Site frequently “times-out” - why is this necessary? This is not classified or sensitive information.

**Search Parameters**

- Needs Boolean Searches (And/Or/Not)
- Like almost every other searchable site – use pre-set time frames (Yesterday, Last 7 Days, Last 30 Days, etc)
- Not Mobile Friendly
- No NAICS code search option

- No Place of Performance/Award searches
- Search is by word entered – not by Department/Agency/Sub-Agency
- Lacks the vital ability to set up and save automatic searches
- No ability to transition saved searches from FBO to Beta.Sam
- Advanced search controls on the left column are too cumbersome to use and requires scrolling down the opportunities list
- Better to have a dedicated advanced search window rather than the long column on the left of the search results

### **Receive Capabilities**

- Reinstate option for daily email alerts based on saved searches (with opportunities listed by actual text, not ID #)
- Users don't want to be bombarded with "updates" that only announce when a competitor adds their name to interested party list
- Others noted they received "updates" but with no hint of what information had changed

### **Display Difficulties**

- Numerous font sizes, button locations, lack of drop-down options.
- No True Copy print function to obtain hardcopy of a search.
- Not Mobile Friendly.
- Users don't want competitors to know which opportunities they are following.
- Standardize the opportunity display by using text – not a Record ID Number or Record Type, which then has to be looked up

PSC  
Beta.Sam.Gov  
All Responses

**Company 1 (Mid-Tier Consulting firm)**

Our Company has been accessing and using the new beta.sam.gov site since the rollout in Nov 2019. At a high level, our experience has been largely negative and we are unable to point to any improved feature or functionality over the previous FBO portal. In fact, we have experienced a significant degradation in our ability to search for opportunities, save searches, and receive notifications on opportunities and awards, to name just a few important features. In addition, the new site is very cumbersome and is substantially less user-friendly/intuitive than the FBO portal.

While we are providing some specific items of feedback below, it is not intended to be a comprehensive usability/accessibility assessment. If feedback received from other industry partners is in alignment, it would indicate a need to incorporate more formalized user feedback from industry when making any further enhancements of features/functionality. Items in bold are considered significant issues.

**Overall Appearance**

- Many of the smaller fonts are challenging to read, even with moderate sized screens
- The site is not mobile friendly, creating significant challenges when accessing via mobile devices
- No intuitive way to access advanced search from the home page, seemingly only via global search entry
- When the user logs into the site and is taken to the workspace, it's not apparent what they are able to do there. There's a large empty space with some functionality off to the right side. This space could be used for helpful tips on how to use the system or how to perform searches

## “Following” Feature

- The title of the opportunity is not listed, only a meaningless Record ID. This requires the user to guess by looking at other metadata as to which item is being followed.

## Advanced Search

- Date entry on filters require tabbing through month, day and year whereas a drop- down calendar would help.
- Preset dates (e.g., Yesterday, Last 7 Days, Last Month, etc.) would also be extremely beneficial.
- The advanced search controls on the left column are too cumbersome to use and requires scrolling down the opportunities list.
- It would be preferred to have a dedicated advanced search window rather than the long column on the left of the search results.
- The order/sequence of the date filters should be in a more logical order from how most searches are conducted. Published/Updated/Response date/Inactive Date
- Drop down text in Federal Organizations (text in italics) extremely hard to read
- Keyword search does not allow for Boolean searches (AND/OR/NOT).
- When using search, the user can only perform a high level search. They then are forced to use filters if they want to narrow the results. A consideration is to allow the user to perform an advanced search upfront. Users may want to perform very targeted searches when they have a clear idea of what they are looking for.
- When a date is entered, it’s really hard to see the filter button the user needs to press to initiate the filtering of results. Consider making this button more prominent.
- Within the search results, the use of fully justified text in the search result description is hard to read.
- On the search results page, visual dividers such as borders and horizontal rules are too light (low contrast). All of the content visually bleeds together. Consider making those elements slightly darker to better divide up the information on the page

## Notifications/Alerts

- While notifications are offered for opportunities when “followed”, the ability to receive daily alerts based upon saved searches are no longer possible. This was a must-have feature in fbo.gov

## Opportunity Appearance

- As with above comments, the text is compacted closely together in many sections and difficult to read without zooming in.
- Full screen real estate is not used on the right. This forces the main content to be compressed in the middle column and significant wasted real estate on the right (as well as the left).

## **Company 2 (Small Business – International Development firm)**

1. Missing: landing page, bottom right corner: web link to USG business forecasts
2. Missing: landing page bottom right corner, other resource web links missing: Small Business Administration Subnet, Dynamic Small Business Search database, Minority Business Development Agency etc.
3. Feedback Button: e-mail inputs are not acknowledged, tracked or responded to with corrective action provided.
4. Missing: First Page (summary solicitations). The NAICS code and eligibility were included on FBO.gov.
5. First Page: (summary solicitation). The descriptions are truncated by limited number of characters and then remaining space is white. The format could be collapsed to include more solicitations.
6. Search Engine: is by word search and not by display of departments and agencies and sub-tiers to select
7. Missing: sub-tiers are missing. The Department of Defense is limited to two tier search and civilian agencies are limited to one. Yet sub-tier fields are loaded and displayed after a search.

8. Missing: ability to set up and automatically search and deliver a saved search, such as - all new solicitations posted by desired agency

9. Mismatch search engine & data displayed:

- For example: output does not include zip code and some outputs indicate a country
- Place of Performance, search by pop zip code
- Award Location, search by awardee zip code
- Contracting Office search by zip code

10. Mismatch search engine & data displayed:

- For example: output does not include state
- Place of Performance, search by state and province
- Place of Awardee, search by state and province
- Contracting Office, search by state and province

### **Company 3 (Small Business Consulting)**

- Printing – A user cannot print what s/he sees on the screen. This is particularly important in Contract Opportunities, where essential information such as Proposal Due Date and POC's may be listed. FBO.gov had a Print function that produced a true copy of the webpage information. Beta.SAM does not have a Print function in its Contract Opportunities module, and if I try to use my browser's Print command, it results in a blank page with the website address on the header/footer. I am forced to either take a screen snip or copy-and-paste the unformatted text from the webpage to a blank Word document.
- Controlled access files – My DOD customer released a number of controlled attachments in FBO.gov related to its procurement strategy. After confirming my company credentials, I was granted access to the 53 controlled attachments associated with that opportunity; once my access was granted, newly added controlled attachments were also available to me as long as I was logged in. However, Beta.SAM does not have that broad functionality. Access to every single locked/controlled attachment must be individually requested. (Thank goodness I saved the earlier controlled attachments from FBO.gov, but this will never work for future processes.) A recent opportunity chose to use a separate secure website to allow authorized

users to access controlled documents; this work-around should not be necessary.

- Following – Using social media jargon, I am “following” several opportunities. However, beta.SAM does not provide title or solicitation number in its list on my workspace. I have to guess at the identity of my followed opportunities, or keep clicking Record ID hyperlinks until I track down the correct opportunity.

PROFILE  
**Following**

Showing 1-6 of 6 results      Sort By: Record ID      Actions

<input type="checkbox"/>	Record ID	Description	Type	Last Modified	Email Frequency	Action
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">e61d4d333f3a4f2f81e0488bc...</a>	Original Presolicitation	OPP	Jan 09, 2020	Immediate	Following
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">8e2c3312cc33472b9fef5dfee...</a>	Original Sources Sought	OPP	Jan 17, 2020	Immediate	Following
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">240eb409faa341c01afe8ee9b...</a>	Original Sources Sought	OPP	Jan 16, 2020	Immediate	Following
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">1f96577caa054c23a1c28a33d...</a>	Original Presolicitation	OPP		Immediate	Following

- Notifications – Beta.SAM sends out immediate notifications when a vendor adds its name to the interested party list on an opportunity that I am following. Every few days, I get bombarded with multiple email notices about a change to a followed opportunity, only to find out that the only change was a company putting its name on the vendor list.
- GSA’s User Documentation – The training documents are overly simplistic and, of course, do not address any of the issues that real users may have. Furthermore, GSA does not make a distinction between government users and vendor users, so it is difficult and time-consuming to search for answers only to find out that the documentation only applies to government users who can edit and submit content into the system.
- User Roles – I am concerned that beta.SAM does not have adequate control over vendor hierarchies and their appropriate accesses. As beta.SAM went live, I was listed with a Role based on my role in SAM.gov, but I don’t know if it is correct because there is no documentation available. I have no visibility or control over any other users in my company; and I don’t know if they have been assigned roles.
- Search criteria in Entity Information – The search engine in the Entity Information module is very cumbersome. The Keyword search assumes an “OR” logic instead of “AND”, so if you enter a company’s 3-word name,

you may end up with an exceedingly large number of hits. Their Entity Name field had not proven accurate and has provided inaccurate null responses. I have resorted to searching FPDS.gov for a company's name in order to get its DUNS number, just to go back to beta.SAM to search on the DUNS number, in order to get the company's Reps and Certs for my files. Frustrating!

#### **Company #4 (Mid-Tier Defense firm)**

- No ability to drill down by agency to show all synopses from a particular agency (i.e. No way to search for Naval Air Warfare Center other than typing in those words as key words).
- If you follow a synopsis you will get multiple emails saying that synopsis was updated even if only one update was made.
- When running a saved search the search results pick up on whatever page you were on when you last reviewed the saved search and not at the first page.
- Compared to the FBO search and watch list functionality, betaSam is a complete bust.
- Frequent timeouts on the site everywhere from accessing the main page, to performing searches and awaiting results, or opening an opportunity page. There are days where I cannot access anything in the site at all while awaiting a proposal expected to drop any minute.
- Search capabilities are not as robust as FBO.
- When an opportunity is updated it is not always obvious what has changes. Files may be reloaded with revisions but with the same file name and no comments field to understand what may have changed.
- The recent changes to Beta.SAM are horrible. Every contractor that I know lost their ability to search for future opportunities that was embedded in FBO.

#### **Company #5 (Small Business Consulting firm)**

- You have forced small businesses to acquire commercial software that costs tens of thousands of dollars for comparable search capabilities, which is going to raise overhead costs to the US Government. Please reinstate FBO immediately.

## **Company #6 (Large International Development firm)**

1. It would be helpful if the system could keep a user logged in. When you receive an authenticator code, there is an option to click “remember browser,” but that doesn’t help and somehow ends up being unchecked the next time you enter a code.
2. There have been a few notices and even solicitations posted to beta.sam that users (whether logged in or not) are not able to download without requesting access. It would be helpful if beta.sam can always grant access to these public notices and solicitations. Two recent notices that we had to request access for are these:
  - a. [https://beta.sam.gov/opp/dad26a55aa1a4665a0c53c06da6b2153/view?keywords=somalia&sort=-relevance&index=opp&is\\_active=true&page=1&organization\\_id=100148640&date\\_filter\\_index=0&inactive\\_filter\\_values=false](https://beta.sam.gov/opp/dad26a55aa1a4665a0c53c06da6b2153/view?keywords=somalia&sort=-relevance&index=opp&is_active=true&page=1&organization_id=100148640&date_filter_index=0&inactive_filter_values=false)
  - b. [https://beta.sam.gov/opp/de283ba6d40e4a3dba8c4aa4cdac7d09/view?keywords=somalia&sort=-relevance&index=opp&is\\_active=true&page=1&organization\\_id=100148640&date\\_filter\\_index=0&inactive\\_filter\\_values=false](https://beta.sam.gov/opp/de283ba6d40e4a3dba8c4aa4cdac7d09/view?keywords=somalia&sort=-relevance&index=opp&is_active=true&page=1&organization_id=100148640&date_filter_index=0&inactive_filter_values=false)
3. It would be helpful if the “Federal Organizations” search bar was located higher on the search page when you are searching, above the dates fields that appear when you do a keyword search or a general search for “all award data” or “all contract data.” That seems to be an overarching search parameter that one would want in place first, and it’s far down the page and not particularly intuitive.
4. It’s great that the system now allows tracking opportunities and receiving email notifications when there are updates. There have been times where we have received emails saying there have been changes to the opportunity, but in reality, there were no changes in the system.
5. It would be helpful if those posting the opportunities in beta.SAM were required to title them using the name of the opportunity, that way it is easier to identify opportunities of interest. Sometimes the title will be an overly long description and standardizing how folks title opportunities should make searching and linking different kinds of notices back to opportunities easier. Here’s an example of a wonky title:  
[https://beta.sam.gov/opp/6c2bbcd2a18c4e30829858f32dac42fb/view?index=opp&page=4&organization\\_id=100148640](https://beta.sam.gov/opp/6c2bbcd2a18c4e30829858f32dac42fb/view?index=opp&page=4&organization_id=100148640). The original title of the RFP was “Commodities for Health: Ensuring Guaranteed Access and Reliability (CHEGAR)” but in this Amendment, the title has become “Amendment to RFP 72065620R00001 for Commodities for Health: Ensuring Guaranteed

Access and Reliability (CHEGAR) activity, which aims to improve the availability of medical commodities at the site level where need for prevention, testing and treatment.” If you toggle between the Opportunity part of beta.SAM and the CFDA part of beta.SAM, you can quickly see that the naming conventions are much easier to understand on the Assistance side of the house – by far.

6. How does the “place of performance location” search field work with international opportunities? It requires a zip code which seems cumbersome for international projects. Would it be possible to use this search field by entering the name of the country? It’s the very last filter box in the primary search page – attached. If you type in a country name, no results pop up (it accepts the country name, but really wants you to put in a zip code).

### **Company #7 (Mid-Tier International Development firm)**

- The website is not fully functional on mobile devices.
- The way the opportunities are presented, it is not clear when amendments have been published. You have to click on a different link to see any changes.
- Visually it is not user-friendly and seems a bit "clunky"
- I don't understand the point of the myriad date boxes on the left-hand side. I understand that this a beta version but fedbizopps was cleaner in the sense that you could select the agency and everything was pulled up easily. You could see the document package on the righthand side of every entry and easily pull up documents either on your phone or on your laptop. And the documents were sorted by release date.
- I also do not understand the "inactive" status. Should it not either say unawarded or perhaps cancelled?
- I find it cumbersome to provide a security code each time I log-in.

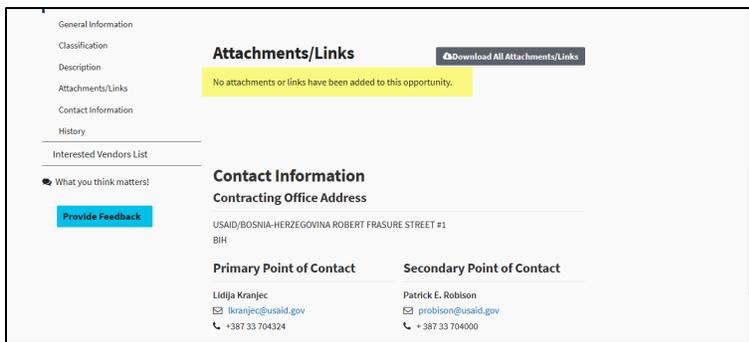
### **Company #8 (Mid-Tier; International Development Firm)**

#### ***1. Some items have no attachments, but they have a response date***

There are currently two examples of this (both posted 16 January 2020), but we have seen others previously—since the migration of contract opportunity data from FBO.gov to beta.SAM. Notices carry a “response date” but do not have any attachments with guidance for preparation of such a response.

This causes us concern that we may be missing market intelligence (which could be gleaned from an attached RFI or similar attachment) and the opportunity to respond to the procurement notice.

Screenshots of the most recent example appears below (Financial Reform in BiH indicates a response date of March 16, 2020, but contains no attachments).



## ***2. Items don't appear in my 'following' list, even though their notices say that user is following them.***

I clicked to follow three different opportunities for which notices were posted on January 16, 2020 (so all three should have been “modified” on January 16 for SAM’s “following” list purposes). Two are in BiH and one is a global opportunity.

When I view their individual notices, all three say that they were published on January 16 and all say “unfollow,” indicating that I am following them. (see screenshots below)

**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**Sustainable Economic Growth Activity in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH)**

Unfollow

**Contract Opportunity**

- General Information
- Classification
- Description
- Attachments/Links
- Contact Information
- History
- Interested Vendors List

What you think matters!

Provide Feedback

**ACTIVE** Contract Opportunity

Notice ID: 72016820R00002

Related Notice

Department/Ind. Agency: AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
Sub-tier: AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
Office: USAID/BOSNIA/HERZ

**General Information**

Contract Opportunity Type: Presolicitation (Original)  
All Dates/Times are: (UTC+01:00) ROME, ITALY  
Original Published Date: Jan 16, 2020 02:26 pm CET  
Original Response Date: Mar 30, 2020 09:00 am CEST  
Inactive Policy: 15 days after response date  
Original Inactive Date: Apr 14, 2020  
Initiative: None

**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**USAID's Financial Reform Activity in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Greater fiscal accountability and transparency in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Unfollow

**Contract Opportunity**

- General Information
- Classification
- Description
- Attachments/Links
- Contact Information
- History
- Interested Vendors List

What you think matters!

Provide Feedback

**ACTIVE** Contract Opportunity

Notice ID: 72018820R00001

Related Notice

Department/Ind. Agency: AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
Sub-tier: AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
Office: USAID/BOSNIA/HERZ

**General Information**

Contract Opportunity Type: Presolicitation (Original)  
All Dates/Times are: (UTC+01:00) ROME, ITALY  
Original Published Date: Jan 16, 2020 02:26 pm CET  
Original Response Date: Mar 16, 2020 09:00 am CET  
Inactive Policy: 15 days after response date  
Original Inactive Date: Mar 31, 2020  
Initiative:

**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**Feed the Future Market Systems & Partnerships (MSP)**

Unfollow

**Contract Opportunity**

- General Information
- Classification
- Description
- Attachments/Links
- Contact Information
- History
- Interested Vendors List

What you think matters!

Provide Feedback

**ACTIVE** Contract Opportunity

Notice ID: 7200AA20R00003

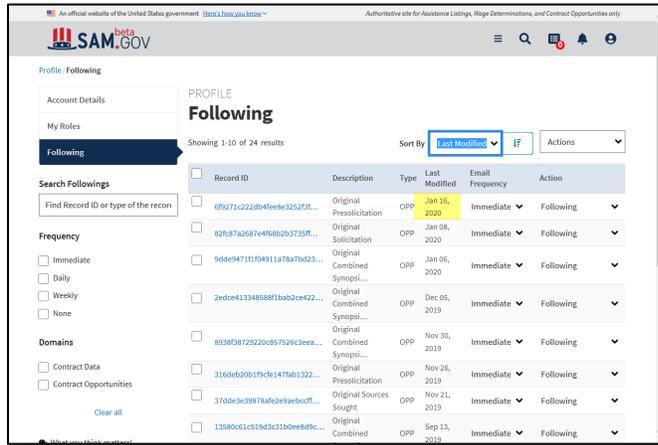
Related Notice

Department/Ind. Agency: AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
Sub-tier: AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
Office: USAID BFS

**General Information**

Contract Opportunity Type: Solicitation (Original)  
All Dates/Times are: (UTC-05:00) EASTERN STANDARD TIME, NEW YORK, USA  
Original Published Date: Jan 16, 2020 09:30 am EST  
Original Date Offers Due: Feb 18, 2020 10:00 am EST  
Inactive Policy: 15 days after date offers due  
Original Inactive Date: Mar 04, 2020  
Initiative: None

However, when I view my list of followed items and sort it by “Last Modified,” only one appears for January 16, 2020 (see screenshot below).

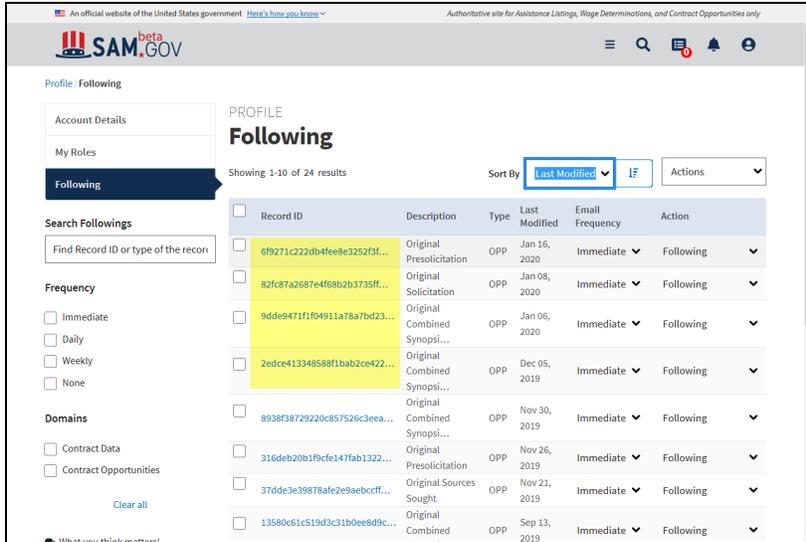


### ***3. Items in “following” list don’t have their name shown, and the search function only looks at Record ID or Record Type***

This is one of the two most significant differences in usability between the old FBO system and betaSAM: The list of followed items does not include the NAME of the item – for example, the first item below is titled “Bosnia and Herzegovina Sustainable Economic Growth;” however, there is no way for me to know that based on the information shown.

I am part of a Business Development Team that supports dozens of technical practitioners, so I follow a considerable number of opportunities, and having to click on each one to find out what it relates to is onerous and time-consuming.

If the name were shown (as it was in the “watch list” on FBO), I could scroll through the list to find what I was looking for. If the search function on the following page looked at the opportunity title, I could find what I needed – however, it only looks at the record ID (which is not a solicitation number) and the Record Type.



#### ***4. The system saves searches, but it does not run them automatically and push relevant results by e-mail***

This is the second most significant difference between the old and new systems, in my view.

Whereas FBO allowed users to set up search agents that ran automatically and pushed relevant results by e-mail, betaSAM forces you to log into the system and run the searches manually. This means you must have Internet connectivity to review the results. Previously, they were in your e-mail inbox, and you could look – at least at the titles – regardless of connectivity, prioritize items to dig into, and do so at a convenient time.

#### **Company #9 (Large IT company)**

- It needs an email function that automatically forwards opportunities that are part of user search areas.
- The link to “submit your thoughts” doesn’t work, sooooo...
- Make sure the opportunity documents are unlocked and downloadable.

### **Company #10 (Mid-Tier IT Company)**

1. User Interface is so difficult to manage. When there are updates it is not clear to me what exactly what has been updated.
2. The history tracking that I depended on to show me the time line of events is buried and not as easy to read or navigate under this system.
3. I receive email notification that there has been something that has been added/update/changed and when I go out to the site I don't see anything which causes me great concern. I don't know if I am missing something or if it's an email that was randomly generated.

And the most important. I have no idea how to identify what I am following except to open each occurrence. I do not understand what Record ID is so I have to open each opportunity to see what it is an if there are any updates. See below. In my opinion this needs to be fixed ASAP.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Record ID	Description	Type	Last Modified	Email Frequency	Action
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">c73f77288a9c4f158cd54e711...</a>	Original Special Notice	OPP	Dec 17, 2019	Immediate ▼	Following ▼
<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">9f4b11d2c577b7ae6c5fc4cea...</a>	Original Combined	OPP	Jan 03, 2020	Immediate ▼	Following ▼

My overall comment is I have lots of anxiety that the gov't relies so heavily on this system and each day I am worried I am missing something very important and may impact my business. What used to take me just a few minutes to navigate to see what I need has turned into a cumbersome time-consuming effort.

### **Company #11 (Small IT firm)**

1) Email notifications of one's predetermined search. The current set up forces one to go into Beta.Sam every day. However, many individuals who look for notifications are not near a computer every day and heavily relied on the FBO email to know what opportunities were out so they could then take a closer look. While a large company may have a dedicated resource to go into Beta.Sam every

day, many small businesses do not. GSA has been aware of this issue since Beta.SAM roled out and I am quite surprised that they have not yet fixed this.

2) One's listing of saved opportunities have a number rather than a description. One who tracks multiple opportunities is forced to click on every line to find the one they are interested in.

3) I am not sure how big a problem this is, but I have found a few opportunities where the email and/or phone of the CO is not listed. It is good to have a name, but their contact information should be included as well.

4) I have seen a few opportunities where the documents were not included.

FBO was a decent system. One could go in for the first time and figure out what needed to be done by navigating the site. GSA, as a promoter of customer experience, should have known to include similar features in Beta.Sam. However, when creating it someone decided that rather than making it self-explanatory they should force everyone to go to the help section, which has problems of its own.

GSA really screwed up and they need to make sure that they learn the lesson on future system deployments. It is almost criminal that they really hosed this up and the fact that they have not yet made the needed improvements.

If this had the same notoriety as Healthcare.gov, there are GSA employees who would be looking for work.

### **Company #12 (Large Aviation firm)**

My frustration is with the "Following" option for opportunities. The summary screen under my profile does not show useful information to identify the opportunity I have selected to follow, such as the opportunity name or solicitation number, instead it lists "Record ID" which appears to be a randomly generated tracking number in the beta.sam.gov system and therefore I need to click on each link to determine which line in the summary table maps to which opportunity I want to check in on. I submitted a "Provide Feedback" suggestion a while ago, but no changes have been made yet.

Additionally, if you click on the Record ID link, the system does not automatically take you to the latest posting, you are required to click on a secondary link in order to see the most recent post.

### **Company #13 (Small IT Consulting)**

- #1 issue – No automatic push notifications. So, as a small business with scarce time resources, I am forced to go to the site every day?!? This is insane!! It goes against every fundamental tenet of e-commerce, which is to serve up information to users versus asking them to come to the trough.
- Because I don't get daily emails on the agency in which my company is most interested, I have begun weekly visits to the beta.sam.gov site. I ran a search on new postings for my agency, saw a "sources sought" of interest posted, and tried to register myself for updates. The site went through the login.gov process (username and password), then asked for an authentication code sent to my phone. Even after the 2-factor authentication, it then said I had to sign up for a THIRD method of authentication. (Why I even need 2-factor authentication is beyond me.) Now, I do have a credential I use for our GSA Schedule and for company security clearance matters, but of course that didn't work. I could have selected to text a second cellphone, but I only have one cellphone. (I guess those Feds are used to having two, so doesn't everyone?) There were other options including GSA giving me 10 codes to store in safe place (???), but I abandoned the effort in frustration. In the end, I didn't get to sign up for automatic notifications, and I wasted a decent chunk of time.
- One of the opportunities I've been tracking came out last week, but I didn't know about it until informed by the "sneaker net" (ha!). I couldn't download all the files. I called the Federal Service Desk who told me to try a different browser, and that worked for all but one file. When I asked about that one file, the FSD said it is not GSA's responsibility and suggested I contact the contracting officer directly. I can't recall EVER having this problem with FBO.gov.
- Because I still can't get notifications, I asked the FSD about that and was told I need to contact login.gov instead. I have sent multiple messages to [support@login.gov](mailto:support@login.gov) but the replies back have not been helpful nor solved my problem. I kept asking to speak with someone there, but the help desk said they only provide support via email. As of today, I still haven't resolved the issue. In frustration, I found the name of the login.gov PM, Amber Van

Amburg, via LinkedIn. After some back and forth via LinkedIn messaging with Amber, I'm told I should expect a phone call. Waiting..... Waiting.....

- I sent a note to a personal friend who is highly placed at GSA and complained about beta.sam.gov. I got a note back from Judith Zawatsky the Asst Commissioner for the Office of Systems Management who cc'd Vicky Niblett the PM, and said, with regard to automatic "push emails", GSA is actively working on that functionality and hopes to make it available in the near future. She also said "I hope that you would agree to serve as a tester for us or participate in a focus group. We do indeed really care and pay attention to the needs of our partners." The FSD did call me, but nothing has changed.

What scares me most is thinking about what will happen to FPDS when it is decommissioned to the new beta.sam.gov. I use FPDS every day, and I wish GSA would just leave it as-is. I frankly don't know why these systems need to be combined into one platform. Is there an award for the worst government system launch ever? Truly, the very best thing GSA could do at this point is to put FBO.gov back up.

#### **Company #14 (Mid-Tier Consulting firm)**

- FBO had a search agent functionality that generated daily or weekly emails based on pre-set keywords, NAICS, or other parameters. Beta.sam.gov does not have this feature, making it more difficult to access relevant opportunities.
- The search parameters within beta.sam.gov are also less effective than they were in FBO. Even when you specify keywords, NAICS codes, and other search terms, the search results that are generated are often irrelevant or wrong.

#### **Company #15 (Large Multi-Agency firm)**

- Feature request: Email notification of contracting opportunity saved search results.
- Feature request: Boolean logic for entering keyword search strings.
- Feature request: Ability to search for opportunities by contracting office (system currently only allows search by Department & Agency – i.e. I can

search for Opps at NIH but cannot drill down further to NIH components like NCI).

- Currently, if you add a particular solicitation to your watch list, the system notifies all other firms that are also watching the RFP. We request that other firms NOT be notified of the activities of our firm!
- For a contract opportunity listing, the attachments in the attachment box should be date sorted. Usually there are original files posted followed by amendments on subsequent dates. Right now, it is hard to tell the sequence of releases as the files in the attachment box are in no apparent order.

### **Company #15 (Mid-Tier Consulting firm)**

- Not only were the searches not transferred over, there is now no longer a daily email option for the search results. This is very cumbersome on contractors, especially small businesses, as it means having to run each search every day just to see if any new opportunities have shown up.
- When you select “Follow” the listing of followed opportunities is shown, it offers no relevant information to know which opportunity is which. See attached screen shot to demonstrate. It would be better if at least the title and customer showed up, otherwise, you have to go into each one just to see what it is.
- When following an opportunity, you get a notification of any and all changes. However, the email does not provide the details for the change (except for Interested Vendors) and requires you to click the link to it. Once on the page, you can only see the changes if logged in, which often requires going through the full authentication process, even if you were just on another page.
- We understand the need for the two-factor authentication when logging in. E-Buy is a similar challenge. If you go through the authentication process, and then happen to close the page, then go back to the website, it requires you to go through the process again, even if you check “remember this browser”. This is very tedious for many of us since we are in the website multiple times throughout the day.
- The site has a “History” link, but the history does not reflect the changes that may have taken place.

### **Company #16 (Mid-Tier Consulting)**

- When signing in from my computer I am required to get a code texted to me each time. Why can't the application remember my computer after the first time like other applications do. So if I time out and just want to go back to the beta.gov site I have to get a code multiple times a day.
- Searches are impossible. The search options are convoluted and unclear.
- Not sure where 'saved' searches are to be found
- Searches in FBO could be run at various intervals with the results going to one's email. I don't think this is possible any longer
- Instead of displaying meaningless numbers – titles with real words would make it easier to find relevant data
- Guidance on keyword searched would be beneficial

### **Company #17 (Mid-Tier Consulting firm)**

#### **Deficiencies**

- Push notification capability; users are not receiving notifications for saved searches, impacting the ability to identify opportunities and causing delays in vendors ability to take action.
- Following a solicitation is difficult, solicitations are listed by a *Beta Record Number* and not the solicitation number. The *Beta Record Number* is meaningless to Industry. Here is an example of the *Beta Record Number* that was posted: e9134d189a8476b71fbb1e78b.
- No ability to transition saved searches from FBO to beta.sam.gov.

#### **Areas for Improvement**

- Log-in process: currently, the site asks if users would like to "Remember this browser"; however, this actually does nothing. It would be helpful if the site allowed users to remain signed-in, especially if it required users to sign back in every 30 days.
- The "Workspace" is not intuitive and does not address what most users are visiting the site to do...search or view solicitations and updates.
- Separate the contract documents; especially for solicitations/RFPs; currently, RFP release documents are listed along with amendments and other modifications.
- A "Search" button is required at the bottom of the Filter Feature; currently it only has "Clear All".

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