Procurement Advisory No. 96B

Contractor Performance Information and Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) Evaluations

1. PURPOSE

This Procurement Advisory provides guidance concerning the use of the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS). This Advisory supersedes Procurement Advisory No. 96A.

2. REFERENCES

Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR 42.15 – Contractor Performance Information
Agriculture Acquisition Regulation (AGAR) 48 CFR 442.1502. Improving the Use of Contractor Performance Information, dated July 29, 2009
OMB Memorandum M-17-26, Reducing Burden for Federal Agencies by Rescinding and Modifying OMB Memoranda, dated June 15, 2017

3. SUMMARY

Beginning October 1, 2010, CPARS became the single USDA-wide system used to collect, maintain, and disseminate contractor performance evaluations to the Past Performance Information Retrieval System (PPIRS). Use of CPARS as the Government wide evaluation reporting tool for all past performance reporting is required by FAR 42.1502(a). Use of the CPARS is mandatory for USDA.

In accordance with FAR 42.1502, past performance evaluations must be established at least annually and at the time work is completed for contract actions exceeding the simplified acquisition threshold (except construction and architect-engineering actions), including orders placed under indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity contracts (i.e. Federal Supply Schedule contracts, government-wide acquisition contracts or multi-agency contracts), single-agency task order and delivery order contracts (if so required by the Contracting Officer in accordance with FAR 42.1502(d)). Past performance evaluations are required at least annually and at the time work is completed for construction contract actions exceeding $700,000 (and any terminated for default), and for architect and engineer services contract actions exceeding $35,000 (and any terminated for default). Contract actions awarded in accordance with FAR Subpart 8.7 are exempt from past performance requirements.

The Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) issued a memorandum, titled Improving the Use of Contractor Performance Information, dated July 29, 2009, that requires USDA and other agencies to submit their internal procedures for collecting and reporting past performance information. This Procurement Advisory shall serve to establish USDA’s internal procedures.

4. DEFINITION

“Day” means a calendar day.

“Applicable Personnel” means those USDA Acquisition Workforce (AW) members involved with applicable contract actions who are also assigned a role in the CPARS system.

“Assessing Official” (AO) means Contracting Officer (CO). An AO is responsible for evaluating performance and
for validating the proposed ratings and remarks entered by the Assessing Office Representative (AOR). AO’s have “signature” authority and are allowed to forward evaluations to the Contractor Representative for review and comment; AO’s also have authority to close (finalize), modify and/or forward the evaluation to the Reviewing Official (RO) if required.

“Assessing Official Representative” (AOR) means Contract Specialist (CS), or Contracting Officer Representative (COR), if so designated by the CO for an applicable contract action. An AOR has the authority to initiate and update evaluations, but does not have the authority to send the evaluation to the Contractor Representative or to finalize an evaluation.

“Contractor Representative” means the person identified by the Contractor at award to receive/respond to evaluations processed in the CPARS system. The Contractor Representative is responsible for reviewing and commenting on proposed ratings and remarks for all evaluations forward by the AO within 60 days of evaluation issuance.

“Focal Point” is responsible for collection, distribution and control of evaluations; Focal Point access is granted using the Focal Point User Access Request available at https://www.cpars.gov/userforms.htm. Focal Points create User IDs/passwords for a specifically assigned area of responsibility (e.g. contracting activity), and is authorized to register contracts/orders and create/update Access Matrices for each registered action.

“Head of Contracting Activity Designee” (HCAD) are responsible for appointing Contracting Activity CPARS Focal Points.

“Reviewing Official” (RO) means the individual responsible for review at a level above the CO to consider disagreements between the parties regarding the evaluation should any dispute arise. The RO is responsible for ensuring the evaluation is a fair and accurate evaluation of the Contractor’s performance for the specified contract/order and performance period. RO must acknowledge consideration of any significant discrepancies between the AO’s evaluation and Contractor’s remarks. (NOTE: Each contract/order registered in CPARS should include an RO on the Access Matrix; however, an RO need not receive/review any evaluations unless there is a disagreement between the AO and Contractor Representative that cannot be resolved.)

5. PROCEDURES

The following procedures shall be used when submitting contractor information into CPARS. These procedures go into effect at the date of issuance of this advisory. All acquisition personnel shall establish an account in CPARS within 30 days following the receipt of a USDA Contracting Officer’s Warrant, or following designation as CS, or COR.

Individuals shall complete the required CPARS system training as soon as the next existing online class is available after establishing a CPARS account but not later than 60 days after designation as applicable personnel. See Paragraph 5(f) below for additional information pertaining to required CPARS training.

a) RESPONSIBILITIES

1) Head of Contracting Activity Designee Responsibilities

   Overview: The HCAD will designate individual(s) to serve as the CPARS Focal Point (and Alternate Focal Point, if required) for his/her contracting activity. Once individuals receive access into the CPARS, the HCAD will notify the Procurement Policy Division by email at procurement_policy@dm.usda.gov to update the CPARS Focal Point list on the USDA Procurement homepage at: http://www.dm.usda.gov/procurement/toolkit/purchasingtools.htm. The following are responsibilities of the HCAD:

   i. Each HCAD shall ensure his/her contracting personnel complete applicable training within required timelines.
ii. An HCAD may issue additional internal agency procedure on CPARS guidance to program officials and acquisition workforce members as long as it does not conflict with department or federal CPARS policy guidance.

2) **CPARS Agency Contracting Activity Focal Point Responsibilities**

**Overview:** Within the CPARS portal, a Focal Point is responsible for registering AO and AOR users in the system, adding Contract Offices for his/her Organization, registering applicable contract actions and creating Access Matrices thereto, for his/her Organization. The following are responsibilities of the Focal Point(s) within CPARS. The Focal Point(s) shall:

i. Request access/register as Focal Point within **30 days** of appointment at the following website: [https://www.cpars.gov/userforms.htm](https://www.cpars.gov/userforms.htm).

ii. Assign Alternate Activity Focal Point(s) as necessary.

iii. Provide system access to Agency users.

iv. Refer issues to the USDA Office of Procurement & Property Management, Procurement Policy Division (PPD) as necessary by emailing procurement.policy@dm.usda.gov.

v. Register applicable contract actions identified by CO’s as well as those listed on CPARS Auto Registration Report.

vi. Create/update CPARS Contract Action Access Matrices for each applicable contract action upon receipt of CPARS registration request from the CO.

3) **Assessing Official (Contracting Officer) responsibilities**

**Overview:** The AO is responsible for evaluating contractor performance and for validating the proposed ratings and remarks entered by the AOR, if assigned. Within the CPARS portal, the AO has “signature” authority and is allowed to forward assessments to the Contractor Representative for review and comment. The following are responsibilities of the AO within CPARS. The AO shall:

i. Ensure each applicable contract action is registered **within 30 days** after contract award.

ii. Ensure Contract Access Matrix is created via the Agency Focal Point **within 14 days** after registration of the contract, task order or delivery order in CPARS. Required Matrix information shall include at a minimum:

   a. Contract number;
   b. Contractor Representative(s) name(s), email(s), phone(s);
   c. RO name, email, phone;
   d. AOR (i.e. CS, COR/COTR), if assigned, name(s), email(s), phone(s);
   e. AO (i.e. CO) name, email, phone;
   f. Period of performance; and
   g. Contract action award amount.

*NOTE:* It is the AO’s responsibility to request the Access Matrix be updated by the Agency Focal Point should any contact information (i.e. AO, AOR, RO, and Contract Representative) change during the period of performance.

iii. Ensure meaningful communication and feedback on performance is exchanged between the AO, AOR and Contractor Representative throughout contract performance; obtain documentation for contract file and for use in CPARS evaluations.

iv. Ensure an evaluation is initiated in CPARS **within 14 days** of Contract completion (or of annual interim anniversary). If the contract action was properly registered (and an Access
Matrix created) upon award, CPARS will automatically notify the AO and AOR via email when an evaluation is due.

v. Submit the evaluation in CPARS to the Contractor’s point of contact for review/comment within 30 days of Contract completion (or annual interim anniversary).

NOTE: The Contractor shall have 60 days to review and submit comments on any evaluation; however, the evaluation will upload to the Past Performance Information Retrieval System – Report Card (PPIRS-RC) within 14 days following the AO’s signature on the initial evaluation.

vi. Elevate the Contractor Representative do no concur response and comments to the Reviewing Official and respond to comments within 30 days of receipt. Ensure contract file includes documentation of the final rating determination.

vii. Finalize all evaluations in CPARS not later than 120 days after Contract completion (or annual interim anniversary) date.

viii. Review Compliance Assessment Reports, initiate required actions for his/her contract actions, and provide status updates to Agency Focal Point(s) (see Paragraph 6).

4) Assessing Official Representative (Contract Specialist or COR) responsibilities:

Overview: Within the CPARS portal, the AOR initiates and updates performance assessments, but does not have the authority to send the assessment to the Contractor Representative or to finalize an assessment. The following are responsibilities of the AOR within CPARS. The AOR shall:

i. Provide narrative for the ratings and comment sections of the evaluation.

ii. Submit ratings and comments into CPARS for applicable contract actions within 14 days from the date of the email message request generated by the CPARS.

iii. Address Contractor rebuttal comments, if received, as requested by CO.

5) Reviewing Official (One Level Above CO) responsibilities:

Overview: Within the CPARS portal, when there is a disagreement between the AO and Contractor Representative, the RO is the official responsible for ensuring the evaluation is a fair and accurate evaluation of the Contractor’s performance. The following are responsibilities of the RO within CPARS. The AOR shall:

i. Review both parties’ supporting documentation in the event of a disagreement between the AO and the Contractor Representative in the ratings assigned.

ii. Return the evaluation to the AO within the CPARS system if additional detail and/or clarification is required.

iii. Make a final rating determination and enter comments in “Reviewing Official Comments” field in CPARS.

iv. Validate and close all evaluations elevated for RO determination not later than 120 days after Contract completion (or annual interim anniversary) date.

b) FINAL EVALUATION PROCESS

1) Evaluation Initiation, Rating Assessment & Review Process:

i. The AO shall submit a request for the Agency Focal Point(s) to create an Access Matrix for registered contract actions within 14 days of registration.

ii. The AO shall ensure the Agency Focal Point(s) registers all applicable contract actions into CPARS within 30 days of award.
iii. The AOR (or AO if no AOR is assigned) shall initiate a “Final” evaluation in CPARS within 14 days of contract completion upon receipt of system-generated email notification indicating evaluation is due.
iv. The AO shall review evaluation ratings and comments and discuss with the AOR, if needed, for clarification or in the event of discrepancies.
v. The AO shall forward the evaluation to the Contractor in the CPARS portal not later than 30 days after contract completion date.
vi. The system will notify the Contractor via email to review the evaluation information. As a best practice, it shall be the policy of USDA that the AO shall also follow up with an email message or phone call to confirm that the Contractor received the evaluation information.

2) Contractor’s Review & Rebuttal Submission Process:

i. Concurrence:
   A. The Contractor has 60 days to submit comments, rebutting statements, or additional information to the AO.
   B. If no comments are received by 61 days after the date CPARS provided notification to the Contractor that the evaluation was available for review, the evaluation will be locked by the system and no longer available for comment to the Contractor.

   ii. Comments or Rebutting Statements:
       A. If the Contractor provides a rebutting statement prior to Day 61, the AO will discuss the Contractor’s comments with the AOR (if applicable) within 14 days after receipt from the Contractor.
       B. The AO shall notify the AOR of any changes made or information added to the evaluation.
       C. Disagreements in the evaluation between the parties shall be resolved by the AOR at a level above the AO in accordance with FAR 42.1503(d).
       D. The AO shall finalize the evaluation into CPARS within 30 days of receipt of the Contractor’s statements, or not later than 120 days from contract completion (or annual anniversary date for interim evaluations).

   NOTE: The AO must “finalize” the evaluation in the CPARS system or it will remain “Due” (or “Overdue”) in the system.

c) INTERIM ANNUAL EVALUATIONS

In accordance with FAR 42.1502(a), if the performance period of the applicable contract action exceeds one year, interim CPARS assessments shall be prepared at least annually once every 12 months from date of award. Contracting Officers may also initiate other interim evaluations as they determine necessary during the period of performance. The same timeframes and procedures for final evaluations as described above shall be followed for all interim evaluations.

NOTE: The AOR and AO shall utilize the “Interim Evaluation” designation and identify which period of performance the evaluation covers when initiating interim annual evaluations in CPARS.

d) INTERIM CONTRACT OPTION EVALUATIONS

Interim CPARS assessments shall also be prepared no later than 30 days prior to the exercise of any contract or order option. The same timeframes and procedures for final evaluations as described above shall be followed for interim option evaluations.

NOTE: The AOR and AO shall utilize the “Interim Evaluation” designation and identify which period of performance the interim evaluation covers when initiating interim option evaluations in CPARS.
e) **CONTRACT FILE DOCUMENTATION**

Copies of all evaluations (e.g. final and interim evaluations, including evaluations for contract options), as well as rebuttal statements from the Contractor, and any supporting documentation pertaining to one level above reviews and final assessment determinations, shall be maintained in the Contract file. As a best practice, the AO is encouraged to keep copies of all CPARS system-generated email notifications, registration confirmations, and Access Matrix screenshots in the official contract file for documentation of CPARS compliance. The contract file should also contain evidence any reports or requests for performance evaluation sent to/received from the AOR.

f) **APPLICABLE PERSONNEL CPARS PORTAL TRAINING**

In order to maintain a high level of quality in Contractor performance information and evaluations, applicable personnel shall enroll in and complete CPARS online training sessions not later than **60 days** after designation as applicable personnel. Please visit the following website to view the schedule and register for the course(s) that apply to your assigned CPARS role(s): [https://www.cpars.gov/webtrain.htm](https://www.cpars.gov/webtrain.htm). All applicable personnel shall complete at a minimum the CPARS Overview course. Agency Focal Point(s) shall identify and notify all applicable personnel requiring training and shall ensure training is completed. Individuals shall complete the required training as soon as the next existing online class is available after establishing a CPARS account. Agencies shall maintain training completion certifications in an agency file.

6. **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

a) **CPARS Website, Report and Guides:**

i. CPARS Website: [https://www.cpars.gov/](https://www.cpars.gov/)


b) **Non-Disclosure Agreements**

CPARS does not allow for third party contractor personnel to access the system. As such only Government personnel may be designated in the AO, AOR and RO roles within the CPARS portal. Contractor support personnel shall not be permitted to function within these roles or hold CPARS accounts.

7. **CONTACTS**

If you have questions or comments regarding this advisory please contact Curt Brown by telephone at 202.720.0840 or email at Curt.Brown@dm.usda.gov, or send an email message to the OPPM Procurement Policy Division at procurement.policy@dm.usda.gov.

**EXPIRATION DATE:** Effective upon issue date until canceled.

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