Making Market Research Easy - Enhancing Industry Partnerships

SLIDE 1 Making Market Research Easy Enhancing Industry Partnerships:

Good morning. Thank you for that introduction. And thank you all for giving me this opportunity today to talk about how to make Market Research easy and how GSA can enhance our industry partnerships.
Alright let's get started. So what is MRAS?

MRAS delivers market research services to federal, state, and local agencies throughout their acquisition process. We help agencies understand their markets and how their needs fit by using tools like RFIs to build data sets that drive better results. Our goal? To make market research simple and effective for everyone involved.

SLIDE 2 Agenda:

Today I will be speaking with you about Market Research in the Acquisition Process, GSA's Market Research as a Service, or MRAS program, and how, as an industry partner, to successfully respond to Requests for Information or RFIs, to make market research more effective for our customers and to help build industry partnerships.

Today I will be discussing:

- Market Research As a Service (MRAS) Overview
- MRAS Value Proposition: What's in It for You?
- MRAS RFI and Report
- Best Practices for Completing MRAS RFI Surveys
- How GSA Uses Market Research Results
- Key Tips, Reminders, and Resources

SLIDE 3 Participant Polls

Now it's time for some poll questions. We would just like to get a better idea of who joins our calls so we can ensure we are tailoring our presentation and the Q&A's for our audience. (ask host to launch polls and share results)

1. How much experience do you have in the federal marketplace?
2. Do you currently have any active GSA contracts?
3. Would you be willing to share your contact information with the attendees of today's session? (this question is here so we can share POC info with other vendors and you can perhaps share notes or tips and tricks in navigating the federal marketplace)

SLIDE 4 Why Research

We help agencies start the conversation by giving them tailored data focused on their specific needs. This ensures they have all the information they need to make smart acquisition decisions.

We depend on industry partners like you to respond to RFIs with timely, and relevant information that help customers to understand opportunities and constraints within the marketplace.

SLIDE 5 Market Research

Market research is really the foundation of every sound acquisition. The FAR overhaul strengthened this even further by making it clear that agencies **can't make good decisions** about requirements, contract type, competition, or commercial solutions unless they truly understand what industry can provide.

FAR Part 10 lays out the procedures we use to gather that information, and the update emphasizes doing this research **early**, **regularly**, and **with clear documentation** of how it impacts the strategy.

For acquisitions over the simplified acquisition threshold, or when we're making decisions about commerciality, set-asides, or brand-name or sole-source justifications, market research isn't optional—it's required.

The goal is to understand the marketplace well enough to:

- Identify viable commercial products and services
- Promote competition, including small business participation
- Reduce risk and avoid overly restrictive requirements
- Ensure the acquisition aligns with agency mission and budget

One of the biggest shifts in the overhaul is the push for more meaningful engagement with industry. That means RFIs, capability exchanges, industry days, and open communication, because that's how we get the most accurate picture of what's possible.

So when we talk about market research, we're not just checking a FAR compliance box. We're using industry insight to make smarter, more efficient, and more defensible acquisition decisions.

SLIDE 6 What is Market Research as a Service (MRAS):

What MRAS does and why it matters:

The Market Research as a Service (MRAS) team helps agencies get a clear picture of their markets and how their needs fit within them. Using smart market research tools, like RFIs and advanced survey software, we build data sets that drive better agency outcomes.

MRAS makes the research process faster and clearer by showing agencies the competitive landscape and helping align their needs with GSA contracts and solutions. This means less acquisition time and more targeted opportunities.

For vendors like you, this is great news. MRAS boosts small business visibility and connects you directly with potential customers.

SLIDE 7 MRAS Value Add - What's in it for me?:

G**SA is the link between federal buyers and industry.** We help translate agency needs into opportunities vendors can act on, giving agencies better acquisition strategies and giving industry early insight into upcoming requirements.

Working through GSA brings more transparency. Vendors get direct points of contact—not just at GSA, but also within the customer agency—so communication is clearer and collaboration starts earlier.

Supporting small businesses is central to GSA's mission. Through market research, outreach, data tools, and MRAS surveys, we identify qualified small businesses early and help agencies meet their small business goals.

MRAS isn't limited to one mission area. We support more than 60 agencies across IT, facilities, professional services, and many other domains.

We've issued over 6,265 MRAS RFI surveys. These surveys provide structured, FAR-compliant data that shape acquisition strategies. The volume shows how embedded MRAS is in market research—especially now that it's recognized as a Smart Accelerator and a preferred tool in the FAR overhaul.

MRAS is also a major driver of small business engagement. 82% of MRAS respondents are small businesses. This helps agencies make confident set-aside decisions and shows that industry—especially small firms—sees MRAS as a valuable way to engage early.

SLIDE 8 MRAS Value Add:

Business development and GSA support:

- GSA teams have held over **2,500 face-to-face meetings** and **62K+ customer interactions**, with MRAS playing a key role in closing deals.

- GSA has nearly 100 Customer Service Directors (CSDs) and National Account Managers (NAMs), essentially a sales team for you.
- They actively promote your capabilities as a GSA industry partner in every customer engagement.
- CSDs and NAMs often use MRAS reports to encourage customers to choose GSA solutions (you) over the open market. You're repeatedly presented as a potential source.
- MRAS maintains a library of reports that customers can reference for similar needs.
- MRAS supports 56–66 federal agencies; the chart shows request volume by agency.
- If you already work with these agencies, focus your outreach there — they're our biggest users.

SLIDE 9 MRAS Value Add:

MRAS RFI benefits and exposure tips:

- A key benefit of responding to MRAS RFIs is getting both Agency and GSA POCs — these are legitimate potential leads, without extra effort on your part.
- Leads are based on the NAICS and SINs selected by customers in their market research requests.
- The charts here show our top research categories — mainly professional services and IT, including OASIS and 54151S IT services.
- To increase your exposure: review the SINs and NAICS on your GSA contracts and make sure they fully cover what your company offers. Otherwise, you may miss relevant MRAS RFIs.
- Finally, use the POC info to follow up and strengthen your marketing efforts.

SLIDE 10 MRAS Value Add MRAS Success Story - Navy:

I wanted to share with you a recent success story from one of our customers. The Department of Homeland Security reached out to us looking for assistance with a requirement they had for management, staffing, resources, and support services fo their field offices.. With the help of their local GSA Customer Service Director, they were able to have a RFI customized to their particular requirement. After the MRAS team collected the responses to the RFI, within 2 weeks we were able to deliver to the customer a list of 76 small businesses that could potentially meet their requirement. As a result they were able to award a $3.5 million multi-year contract to a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business.

SLIDE 11 MRAS Available Service Options:

Here is a summary of the types of services we offer. We provide these services at **NO COST** to Federal, State and Local agencies. These agencies can choose to work with us when conducting market research. The MRAS program currently offers 3 different services. The first is more product focused while two are more focused on service type of requirements.

1. The first service is GSA Product Market Research which lets you search up to 20,000 items on GSA Advantage at once. This is market research for products only.
2. The second is Rapid Review, which tells our customers if their requirement fits the scope of an existing GSA acquisition solution in 48-72 hours.
3. And third, is the MRAS RFI/Market Research Report. This targets your market research to the right contractors, the right contracts, and it is consolidated into one report with visuals.

SLIDE 12 The MRAS RFI

In the following slides we will get into how the MRAS program works. As I mentioned before, Market Research as a Service is a free service we offer to our customers. We utilize technology to deliver results in as little as a day, but most of the time in 3 weeks or less. We work with you and the CSD to understand your requirements and build a custom market research approach depending on our customer needs, so that we can engage Industry efficiently. After we collect the data,we organize the results in an easy to read report.

SLIDE 13 The MRAS RFI Process for Customers:

Now that we've covered why we conduct market research, let's look at how we do it—and how GSA is streamlining the process. This is a visualization that explains the MRAS process step by step. The process starts when a customer submits a request for an RFI via our MRAS Service Request form. A Customer Service Director (CSD) reaches out to the customer to help them through the process. The MRAS team creates a draft RFI and customizes it based on the information they provide. Once the customer approves the draft RFI we post it to GSA eBuy on their behalf so we can gather valuable industry data. Once the RFI closes, we gather all the data from the RFI survey and create a market research report based on industry responses and send that to the customer.Throughout the whole process the customer has support from their GSA Customer Service Director (CSD).

SLIDE 14 The MRAS RFI Process for Industry:

This visualization outlines the MRAS RFI process as it relates to our Industry partners. It begins when the customer submits their RFI request through the form as I talked about earlier, triggering the post on eBuy. We post the RFI on eBuy on the customer's behalf and include a link to the RFI survey in that posting. Once you respond via that RFI link, We compile your responses in one consolidated market research report that is shared with the customer.

One thing to remember as we get asked this a lot, we don't filter out responses to the survey out of the report. We include all vendor responses, regardless of how they answer. We don't filter out vendors who provide "No" as a response to any questions. It is up to the customer to evaluate the data we provide and plan their acquisition strategy accordingly. We just provide the unfiltered data.

** One caveat to this is if the industry partner includes non-GSA solutions in the Feedback section. This will be removed prior to the customer agency viewing the report.

SLIDE 15 The MRAS RFI:

When we receive a customer request and begin drafting the RFI in our commercial survey tool, we focus on creating questions that help agencies clearly visualize the marketplace. Our surveys are designed with data visualization in mind so the customer can quickly understand vendor capabilities and identify trends.

Whenever possible, we use simple yes/no questions. We follow a consistent format so vendors know what to expect and can respond efficiently.

We also pre-define common answer choices to streamline responses, such as percentage ranges for subcontracting or ranking options for labor categories. The tool

allows both the MRAS team and the customer to tailor questions as needed, making it easier for vendors to participate and easier for agencies to identify qualified suppliers.

SLIDE 16 How to find MRAS Surveys/RFIs

Alright, I'm about to walk you through some screenshots of a sample MRAS RFI. First up – **where to find them**:

1. All MRAS RFIs are posted on GSA's **eBuy** site—as RFIs to the applicable SINs and contracts the Customer has requested to be researched.
2. You'll only see RFIs if you're a GSA vendor under the relevant SIN/contract—and you'll be **notified by email** when one is posted.

3. There is no special mailing list

Be sure that you respond to the RFI by clicking on the link to the survey. We don't monitor any responses via eBuy itself.

Next – **staying notified**:

- Ensure the email listed for your company in **GSA eLibrary** is up to date—this is where RFI notifications are pulled from.
- After responding to an RFI, you'll get a **confirmation email. Be sure** to check your Spam folder **rfi@research.gsa.gov**.
- If you don't receive confirmation, contact **rfi@research.gsa.gov** to have it resent

Finally – **updating your contact info**:

- The vendor mail addresses we send the RFIs to come from eLibrary, so if yours changes, you can update it through the **Vendor Support Center** at **vendor.support@gsa.gov** or on **vsc.gsa.gov**.

SLIDE 17 Survey Description:

Next, I'm going to walk you through a few screenshots of the actual MRAS RFI surveys and share some quick tips:

1. **Download the full survey via the link** first to see all the questions.
2. **Read the opening requirement description** carefully—this sets the tone.
3. **Watch the due date!** Responses submitted by the deadline are crucial—late replies won't be accepted.
4. **After submission**, you'll get a confirmation email with your responses—check your spam folder. If you miss something, contact **rfi@research.gsa.gov**. As long as the deadline hasn't passed, we can reopen your survey and send a new link.

5. We deliver the final market research report to the customer within a 24 hours usually—speed counts.
6. **Download and review all attachments**, like the PWS or SOW, to ensure you address every part of the request.

Let's switch to the screenshots now and walk through an example survey in detail.

SLIDE 18: Using Socio-economic Designations:

Reminders on socio-economic designations:

- Use the socio-economic designation exactly as listed on your GSA contract. Customers rely on this to set aside opportunities for specific categories.
- If you select an incorrect designation, your company will have a **0% chance** to quote. You won't appear in eBuy for that requirement.
- Finally, don't leave out designations you do hold. Including them can increase your chances of a set-aside and improve your probability of winning.

SLIDE 19 Technical Questions:

- Answer all technical questions accurately, further explanation can be provided in the capabilities statement.
- Keep open ended questions concise and relevant to the requirement. There is usually a character limit of 300.You can always add more detail in your capability statement.

SLIDE 20 Offers

- By selecting "Yes" to this question, your responses will be included in a report to the customer agency
- We also ask if you provide the product commercially. We then summarize this data in the report to the customer.

SLIDE 21 Commercial Products/Services

- We do ask if you provide the product or service commercially.
- DOD had requested we include this question due to required commercial item determinations they have to adhere to prior to the issuance of any solicitation.
- And you can see we also include a link where you can read more about what is considered to be "Commercial" as defined in FAR Part 2

SLIDE 22 SIN NAICs

- Select all GSA Contract types that apply, multiple choices can be selected here. Please note, **Non GSA Contract Holder** information will be filtered out of our reports as we only research markets within GSA Contracts.
- Choose the best NAICs and/or SIN number for the requirement.
- Be sure to use the selected choices whenever possible instead of choosing "other", or typing in a response if available. This helps to avoid discrepancies and redundancies.

SLIDE 23 Feedback:

Provide honest feedback:

- Your feedback is shared with federal partners to help them refine their Statement of Work.
- You can also submit any questions here, and they'll be forwarded to the customer — it's up to them to respond.
- Even if you don't have time for a full RFI response, you can still quickly complete the streamlined survey (using multiple choice, drop-downs, etc.) and note your interest in the feedback section. You can skip open-ended questions if needed.
- Indicating that you plan to subcontract most of the work does **not** automatically disqualify you.
- Remember, this is market research only. All responses are passed directly to the customer, who decides on vendors.
- It's always better to reply with what you can — it helps increase your visibility.

SLIDE 24 Capability Information:

Capability statement section:

- Use this section to expand on your answers and highlight relevant experience, especially from the last 5 years.
- Address any customer questions listed — avoid generic capability statements.
- If you don't have recent experience, note what you do have and when it occurred.
- After the survey closes, you'll get agency POC info by email (about 2 weeks later) for any follow-up questions.
- You'll also receive a confirmation email with a copy of your responses once you submit.

SLIDE 25 Submitting Your Response

Once you click submit, you will receive a follow up email with the GSA and Agency POC so that you can follow up with them regarding the status of the acquisition. By clicking submit you are also agreeing to have the information you provide shared with other government agencies.

SLIDE 26 What Happens Next?:

So what happens after you reply to one of our MRAS RFIs? Well first, you'll get an auto generated email from rfi@research.gsa.gov with a confirmation and a copy of your responses. Then we send a customized Market Research Report that summarizes your responses to the agency's Acquisition Professionals. In these reports we also include any feedback you provided regarding the requirement. Then finally, the Agency and GSA Point of Contact is provided to you if you have further questions regarding the RFI or requirement.

SLIDE 27 Reminders and Tips

Now we'll go through some helpful reminders and tips that you can refer to when filling out the RFI survey and to help you navigate the process.

SLIDE 28 Tips for your Capabilities Statement:

Tips on responding to MRAS RFIs:

- We received many questions about the optional capability statement, so here are some tips.
- You have two ways to include it: add a **Capability Statement URL** in the "Company Information" section, or upload a detailed document at the end of the survey.
- You can only upload **one** attachment, so combine all files into a single document.
- Use this to provide more detail on any technical questions you answered "No" to, or expand on open-ended survey questions.
- And finally most times this document is optional.

SLIDE 29 Reminders - Attachments:

Additional info on common questions:

- Always include attachments and capability statements **directly in your RFI response**. Do **not** email them separately — emailed attachments will not be included in the buyer report.
- We do not forward emailed attachments to customers if they're not part of your original response.
- After you receive customer POC info, you may send any additional attachments directly to them.

SLIDE 30 POC and Questions:

POC information:

- We email Agency POC info to the email you included in your RFI response, about **7–10 business days** after it closes.
- Check your spam folder and remember which email/POC you listed. If you lose it,

you can email us to resend.
- You can also include questions for the Agency POC in the optional feedback section — we share these with the customer.
- Keep in mind, it's up to the Agency to answer questions after the RFI closes.
- We can't provide info on acquisition strategy or RFP dates — please contact the Agency POC directly for that.

SLIDE 31 Extensions and Updates:

Regarding Extensions and updates:

- No extensions will be granted — please submit whatever info you have by the due date.
- To reopen your RFI, provide your business name, email, and the RFI subject from eBuy.
- You'll get a confirmation email with a copy of your responses.
- If you don't receive it, or need to update your responses before the close date, email us at **rfi@research.gsa.gov**.

SLIDE 32 Help Requests:

We are now going to discuss ways you can ask for help if you experience issues with responding to MRAS RFIs.

You can Email rfi@research.gsa.gov OR submit an Industry Help Request Form, which I have provided a link for at the end of the presentation. If you need additional assistance with getting the POC information, to update your responses or if you have trouble accessing the RFI survey.

If you email us just be sure to include your Business Name, Email, Description of the RFI from eBuy and the RFQ number which is super helpful but not mandatory.

SLIDE 33 The MRAS RFI Report

- Now that we've reviewed how to respond to these RFIs let's go over what happens once we collect your responses and how we produce easy to understand reports so decision makers can think about and create acquisition strategies

SLIDE 34 The MRAS RFI Report

- The MRAS RFI Reports provides:
    - A Comprehensive view

    - A Socio-Economic Outlook
    - A Summary of your Feedback
    - Narratives to leverage Acquisition Planning
- Now I'll show you a sample report

SLIDE 35 The Executive Summary

This is a Sample Market Research Report, that Summarizes and includes:

- A description of the requirement
- It provides our recommendation based on the # of responses
- It includes Visualizations based on questions in RFI.
- It shows the number of interested parties and the GSA contracts they hold
- It shows the recommended SINs/NAICs codes
- It includes a breakdown of the business size/socioeconomic status and if the vendor provide the product/service commercially

SLIDE 36 Feedback and Interested Sources

The report summarizes industry feedback to:

- ensure the SOW addresses any concerns and requirements that aren't clearly defined. This helps the customer to create more robust and accurate SOW/PWS.
- The report includes a directory of all the interested sources, including:
- POC information
- Links to websites and capabilities statement, making it easier to keep all documents in one place).

SLIDE 37 Technical Questions Y/N

- We also summarize industry responses to technical questions
- Customers can then easily see how many vendors answered No to each question and identify problems areas.
- Again we don't filter out your responses just because you answered "No" to a particular question.

Slide 38 Technical Questions Multiple Choice

This is a chart showing the responses for the question that asks about how much of the requirement you would subcontract out.

SLIDE 39 Source Data

- We also provide the Source Data or the Raw data so customers can conduct further market research and breakdown the data in different ways.
- As I stated before we provide all the market research data collected via your responses and we don't filter out the data.

SLIDE 40The Results

The results speak for themselves as far as benefits of participating in the program. The benefits of For Industry are that it:

- Provides visibility in front of federal customers as a potential source.
- Gives vendors access to GSA and agency points of contact.
- Responding to RFIs can lead directly to more business — over $76B of researched requirements have been awarded to GSA contract holders.

For Agency Acquisition Professionals it:

- Offers strong data and visuals that can be included in OSDBU reports.
- Supplies narratives that support acquisition planning.
- Delivers a comprehensive view of the marketplace, including likely competition and socio-economic participation.

SLIDE 41 What our customers are Saying:

I wanted to share some quotes from our customers. I'll give you a minute to read them.

Basically we are providing a more innovative approach to market research using our survey software, we have automated a lot of our processes so we can provide data faster and we are always looking for ways to improve through valuable feedback from industry so that we get the most accurate and timely data from our industry partners to provide to our customers.

SLIDE 42 MRAS Training:

Here are our upcoming training dates, I encourage you to register for the next ones.

SLIDE 43 MRAS Resources:

Before I conclude my presentation, Here are some additional MRAS resources:

- If you need help responding to an MRAS RFI we have a help request form you can access here.
- I also included the link to register for our Industry Training.
- If there are any questions about the materials I've reviewed during the presentation or any additional questions please email: rfi@research.gsa.gov.
- You can visit www.Buy.gsa.gov/mras for more information about our program too.

SLIDE 44 Additional Vendor Resources

Here is a list of some additional resources that would be helpful for those vendors on the call today who are not on GSA schedules yet. I also included a link to find your local Apex Accelerator.

SLIDE 45 Thank You & Questions:

This concludes my presentation. Thank you so much for your time and listening today. I hope we can discuss any questions you may have about the material I covered today.