Welcome to the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System, or CPARS, Overview training. This is Lesson 1, Introduction to CPARS.

In this course, we will discuss the policy behind CPARS, the different CPARS user roles that participate in the evaluation process, and a breakdown of the CPARS workflow process. We will take a look at how to effectively write an evaluation in accordance with the Guidance for CPARS document, with a special emphasis on developing accurate and comprehensive ratings and narratives. Additionally, we will discuss important points of contact and reference material available to you.

What is CPARS? CPARS is an online web application that is used to collect and manage Contractor Performance Assessment Reports, which are also known as contractor evaluations or report cards.

When writing contractor evaluations, our goal is to provide source selection officials with the contractor past performance information that they need in order to make best value contract award decisions. CPARS gives us the tool to build the body of report cards that are retrieved for consideration in source selections. Writing and retrieving those evaluations are required by the Federal Acquisition Regulation, or FAR, and Office of Federal Procurement Policy, or OFPP.

Let’s take a look at where to find the FAR requirements for CPARS.

FAR 42.1502 requires that contractor past performance evaluations be prepared at least annually and at the time the work under the contract or order is completed. These evaluations must be entered into the automated CPARS System.

FAR 42.1503 requires that contractors be evaluated on their performance in the areas of Technical, Cost Control, Schedule, Management, Small Business Subcontracting, Regulatory Compliance and other areas as applicable.

FAR 42.1503 contains the evaluation grading scale and rating definitions, which we will discuss in detail later in this course.

Evaluations are automatically transmitted to the View Performance section of CPARS, where they are retained and used for source selection purposes for 3 years following the completion of the contract or order; six years for Architect-Engineer and Construction contracts.

FAR 15.304 requires that source selection officials consider past performance as an evaluation factor in all competitive acquisitions expected to exceed the simplified acquisition threshold.

Let’s move on to the Federal Guidance for CPARS document.

This document includes the guidance for when and how to complete an evaluation, responsibilities assigned, the CPARS timeline and workflow, frequency and types of reports, administrative information, references, business sector definitions, and instructions for completing evaluations.

The Guidance for CPARS document is available from the main screen of the CPARS home page. There is also a link at the bottom of each page in the CPARS system. Other references available include a user manual for the system.

Let’s move on. As demonstrated by several reviews and audits, much improvement is needed in the area of past performance reporting. Currently, we have contracts that are being awarded and orders being placed that are meeting the dollar threshold requirement for reporting but are not registered in CPARS.

Further, many evaluations are not entered into the system in a timely manner. We also have narratives that include insufficient detail to show that ratings are credible and justified. It is important to improve on the quality of the report cards that we're writing.

Improvement in all of these areas will benefit the source selection process and also improve how government money is spent when awarded to contractors. By taking this class, you will obtain the information you need in order to write thorough and reliable contractor past performance evaluations in a timely manner.

Compliance with past performance reporting requirements is tracked and viewed at the highest levels within government. Specifically, the Office of Management and Budget, or OMB, has set a 100% annual performance reporting target that began in fiscal year 2015.

Let’s take a look at the past performance process.

CPARS is the automated tool that is used to draft the contractor performance evaluation. The evaluation contains ratings and narratives to address the contractor’s performance in accordance with the requirements in the contract. The evaluation is written by government officials such as Program Managers, Contracting Officers, and Contracting Officer’s Representatives. The contractor may also provide comments on the government’s evaluation using the CPARS system. It is important to provide the contractor with an opportunity to comment in order to ensure that both the government and contractor perspectives are available to source selection officials reviewing the report card.

A source selection official may view evaluations from any government agency. Contractor senior management may also view their own company’s performance evaluations under government contracts, but may not view those of any other company.

Let’s take a look at the primary objectives of CPARS.

The past performance evaluations written in CPARS provide a robust library of information that source selection officials can use to assist in making best value contract award decisions. By considering past performance information as part of the source selection, the government is better able to award contracts to proven performers.

Because evaluations are written on an annual basis, the system provides up to date documentation of a contractor’s performance.

Evaluations also serve to motivate good performance under currently active contracts. Contractors take the ratings and narratives they receive on evaluations very seriously as they impact a contractor’s ability to obtain future business.

Therefore, contractors are motivated to perform well under current contracts in order to receive a positive evaluation and thus have a better chance of being awarded more government contracts in the future. In addition, the evaluation provides the contractor with valuable feedback as to whether their performance is meeting contract requirements, thus facilitating government-contractor communication.

However, it is important to note that the evaluation should not be the sole source by which the government communicates this information to the contractor. The government and contractor should communicate regularly throughout the period of performance rather than waiting to identify issues until the evaluation is written at the end of the year. Finally, evaluations may also be used in responsibility determinations of prospective contractors.

Here are some important points to remember. Evaluations are source selection information, and they must be treated in accordance with FAR 2.101, 3.104, and 42.1503. CPARS Evaluations are pre-decisional in nature because they are used to support source selections on an ongoing basis. The only people that can view ratings, narratives, etc. for a specific contract are personnel with a need to know and the contractor who is the subject of the evaluation. In addition, evaluations are not releasable under the Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA. Report cards are retained for three years after contract completion, with the exception of Architect-Engineer and Construction contracts, which remain in the system for six.

For example, let’s say we have a five year contract for services, with an annual reporting requirement. That means we are performing an evaluation every twelve months. At the end of our five year contract, we will have five evaluations entered into the system. Those five will remain in the system for three additional years beyond the contract completion date.

That means our initial evaluation will be in the system for approximately eight years. In addition, it is now permitted to transmit evaluations and associated documentation via email, provided that the email is encrypted if possible and that the email and any attachments are properly marked as source selection sensitive information.

Let’s move on to reporting thresholds. FAR 42.1502 requires past performance evaluations for contracts which exceed the simplified acquisition threshold of $250,000, with the exception of architect-engineer contracts, which have a threshold of greater than or equal to $35,000, and construction contracts, which have a threshold of greater than or equal to $700,000. In addition, all architect-engineer and construction contracts which are terminated for default must be evaluated, regardless of their dollar value.

CPARS uses data from the Federal Procurement Data System, or FPDS, to identify those contracts which require evaluations. Therefore, it is important to ensure that we are using the correct Product or Service Code, or PSC, when entering our contract actions into FPDS so that the proper dollar threshold is applied to our contract in CPARS.

In addition, the government has the option to write an evaluation on contracts lower than the dollar threshold. Now why might we want to do that? Some contracts below the reporting threshold may be for important and critical supplies or services. In such cases, the government may want to ensure that performance is thoroughly documented on these contracts so that these critical items can be purchased from a proven performer in the future.

In addition, as with all contracts, performance against a lower dollar value contract may be extremely poor or extremely good. The government may choose to document these performance extremes in order to ensure that source selection officials can consider this information in future award decisions. Further, lower dollar value contracts are often awarded to a small business.

Documenting these contracts in CPARS will help to establish a past performance track record for the small business which will be relevant as they go on to compete for additional work. The Department of Defense, or DoD, has unique CPARS reporting thresholds due to a class deviation to the FAR. DoD considers the business sector for the majority of the work being performed under the contract when determining the reporting threshold. The business sectors are: Systems, Non-Systems which includes Operations Support, Services, Information Technology, and Ship Repair and Overhaul, Architect-Engineer, and Construction.

Let’s start by discussing Systems. Systems contracts include products that require a significant amount of new engineering development work. Examples include: aircraft, shipbuilding, space, ordnance, ground vehicles, training systems, and sub-systems. The DoD threshold for the Systems business sector is $5,000,000.

Let’s move on to the Non-Systems business sectors. The first Non-Systems business sector is Operations Support. Operations Support includes all hardware and supplies that are not classified as a major system. This includes things like mechanical equipment, electrical equipment, spare parts, and commercial off the shelf type items. The DoD threshold for the Operations Support business sector is $5,000,000.

Next, let’s discuss Services. The second Non-Systems business sector is Services. The Services business sector includes contracts for things such as Professional, Technical, and Management Support, Facilities Services, Repair and Overhaul for items other than ships, and Transportation and Transportation Related Services. The DoD threshold for the Services business sector is $1,000,000. Next, let’s discuss Information Technology.

The third Non-Systems business sector is Information Technology. Information Technology includes items such as software, hardware, and telecommunications. The DoD threshold for the Information Technology business sector is $1,000,000.

The final Non-Systems business sector is Ship Repair and Overhaul, which has a DoD threshold of $500,000.

Next, let’s briefly discuss Science and Technology contracts. Science and Technology contracts include those for basic and applied research as well as advanced technology development.

For non-DoD agencies, reporting on Science and Technology contracts is required if they exceed the simplified acquisition threshold of $250,000.

For DoD contracts funded by program budget accounts 6.1, or basic research, 6.2, or applied research, and 6.3, or advanced technology development, there is no requirement for past performance reporting.

However, Contracting Officers are encouraged to manually register and complete evaluations on these contracts when they exceed the $1,000,000 threshold for services.

Next, let’s discuss the Architect-Engineer business sector. Architect-Engineer contracts are those for professional services such as research, planning, development, design, construction, alteration, or repair of real property that are required to be performed or approved by a licensed architect-engineer. The Federal and DoD threshold for architect-engineer contracts is greater than or equal to $35,000 as well as all terminations for default.

Next, let’s look at the construction business sector. Construction contracts include those for construction, alteration, or repair of real property, such as buildings, bridges, dams, highways, tunnels, sewers, docks, and piers. The Federal and DoD threshold for construction contracts is greater than or equal to $700,000 as well as all terminations for default.

When determining if a contract meets the reporting threshold, we consider the total potential value of that contract, including unexercised options as well as the maximum amount of orders that may be placed against it. If the contract has the potential to meet the reporting threshold due to exercise of option or issuance of orders, then we begin writing evaluations during the first year of contract performance. For example, if we have a base contract plus four options, we consider the total value of the base plus all of the options when determining if the contract meets the reporting threshold.

It is important to note that when writing evaluations, only the prime contractor’s performance is evaluated. The reason for this is privity of contract. The prime contractor has privity between their company and the subcontractor. Because of this, we cannot write a separate evaluation on the subcontractor. We can, however, acknowledge a subcontractor’s efforts on the contract by noting the subcontractor’s name and Unique Entity ID on the prime’s evaluation. This is especially important if the subcontractor is performing 25% or more of the work or performing a critical aspect of the contract. We can also rate the prime contractor’s ability to manage their subcontractor. This would be included under the Management evaluation area.

Now, let’s discuss report types and reporting frequency. It is important to select the right type of report. Evaluations are written on an annual basis throughout the life of the contract. All evaluations written prior to the last year of the contract are called Interim Reports. Thus, if we have a 3 year contract, we write an Interim Report for Year 1, and we write another Interim Report for Year 2. The evaluation covering the last year of contract performance should be marked as a Final Report. For our 3 year contract, the report that we write at the end of Year 3 is called the Final Report. Evaluations covering performance after the contract has been completed are called Addendum Reports. In this example, we have chosen to write an optional Addendum Report 6 months after the contract was completed, or at the 3 and one half year mark. In this example, we have a 5 year contract. We have written an Interim Report for each of Years 1 through 4. We have written a Final Report for the last year of the contract, which is Year 5. Six months after contract completion, we have written an optional Addendum Report. Each year when we write our contractor evaluation, it is important to review the evaluation for overall quality and accuracy at every stage in the workflow process. Now, let’s take a look at each report type in detail. The first Interim evaluation covers the first year of contract performance. If the contract is less than one year in duration, we do not need to write an Interim evaluation. Instead, we would write one evaluation covering the entire period of contract performance and select Final Report. An Interim Report should cover no more than twelve months of contract performance unless approved by the Contracting Officer. However, there are sometimes cases where performance does not begin starting at the date signed due to a protest or a delayed start. In such cases, it is important to note that the evaluation contains blocks for both the contract’s Date Signed and the contract’s Effective Date. The information for these dates is retrieved from FPDS. Therefore, it is important to ensure that these dates are correct in FPDS so that they will be correct in CPARS. Having the correct dates in CPARS will enable the system to accurately calculate when the report card should be started and when it is due. When the contract Effective Date differs from the Date Signed, the first Interim Evaluation would be started twelve months from the Effective Date, as opposed to twelve months from the Date Signed. Let’s further discuss Interim Reports. Interim reports are required every twelve months. We can utilize other reviews such as option exercises, award fee determinations, and program milestone decisions to assist in developing the evaluation. Interim reports are also required if there is a change in program or project management responsibility, or if a contract, Basic Ordering Agreement or BOA, or Blanket Purchase Agreement or BPA, is transferred to a different contracting activity. In addition, an Interim Report should be started prior to transfer of an Assessing Official Representative or Assessing Official in order to document the performance that has occurred to date. Interim reports cover only 12 months of performance unless a longer performance period is approved by the Contracting Officer. Interim reports are not cumulative, we only assess performance occurring after the last evaluation period.

Let’s discuss the Final Report. A Final Report is required upon delivery of the final major end item, completion of the period of performance, the end of the last option period which will be exercised, or contract termination. Any final period of performance greater than 12 months must be approved by the Contracting Officer. The Final Report is not cumulative, we only evaluate performance occurring after the last evaluation period.

Next, we have an optional report called the Addendum Report. Let’s take a look at when we may consider writing an Addendum Report. An Addendum Report may be written to address performance occurring following substantial completion of the contract. An Addendum Report is written following the Final Report. An Addendum Report may address performance in such areas as contract closeout, compliance with warranty requirements, and other administrative requirements. The Addendum Report is written at the government’s discretion.

In some cases, it may be necessary to document the fact that no performance has occurred during an evaluation period, such as when no orders are placed under an indefinite delivery vehicle. In this case, we write an Administrative Report. On an Administrative Report, we rate the Management evaluation area as Satisfactory and add a statement to the Assessing Official narrative to explain why we are issuing the Administrative Report. For example, we may state that the evaluation is purely administrative in nature in order to document the fact that no contractor performance has occurred during the reporting period because no task orders have been issued, and that the rating of Satisfactory has been used to satisfy the CPARS requirement to rate at least one area and does not reflect contractor performance. An Administrative Report is routed through the normal CPARS workflow, including contractor comment and closure by the government.

All evaluations are due within 120 calendar days after the end of the evaluation period. One month prior to the end of each evaluation period, we will receive an automatic email notification with a reminder to begin writing the evaluation. Another reminder will be sent every week until an evaluation is started and saved. The evaluation is due for completion 120 days after the end of the performance year. The due date includes all steps in the process, including the contractor’s comment period. If the 120 day timeframe is exceeded, an email is sent weekly to the government team stating that the evaluation is overdue. These emails will continue until the evaluation has been completed.

Let’s move on to Contract Types. There are two different options for reporting on single agency indefinite delivery contracts, depending upon the nature of the procurement. The first option for reporting is to write a single evaluation that covers performance under all of the orders against that indefinite-delivery contract. This option would be appropriate when the orders are similar in scope. For instance, let’s say we have an indefinite delivery contract with three orders placed against it. Each of the orders is for cars. In this case, it makes sense to write a single evaluation that covers performance for all three orders because they are similar to each other. When we write an evaluation, we should note which orders it covers in the Contract Effort Description block.

The second option is to write a separate evaluation on each order under the single agency indefinite delivery contract. This option would be appropriate when the orders are not similar in scope. For instance, let’s say we have an indefinite delivery contract with one order for cars, one order for boats, and one order for tanks. Since the items being procured on each of the different orders are not similar to each other, it would not make sense to address the various types of work on a single evaluation. Therefore, in this case, we would write a separate evaluation on each individual order.

Here are some helpful hints to assist us in deciding if we should report at the base level or at the order level on our single agency indefinite delivery contracts. It is the decision of the Contracting Officer as to whether we evaluate the base or the individual orders. It is appropriate to evaluate at the base contract level when a single ordering or requiring activity exists. If we report at the base level, then none of the orders should be reported individually. We should record the base contract number in the Contract Number block in CPARS. In addition, we include the delivery or task order numbers and a description of each in the Contract Effort Description. The Assessing Official narrative should address the contractor’s performance on each of the orders. Here’s an important tip to keep in mind. There are times when we may have a number of small orders against our base contract that, when totaled, exceed the CPARS reporting threshold. In this case, we must, at a minimum, write an evaluation at the base contract level when the aggregate value of our orders exceeds the threshold. On a single agency indefinite delivery contract, when it is not appropriate to report on the base contract, we must evaluate all delivery or task orders which meet the reporting threshold individually. In CPARS, we should enter the base contract number in the Contract Number block and the individual delivery or task order number in the Order Number block.

Sometimes, we place orders against another agency’s indefinite delivery vehicle, such as a Federal Supply Schedule or FSS, which are most commonly known as a General Services Administration, or GSA orders, Government-Wide Acquisition Contract or GWAC, or a Multi-Agency Contract or MAC. In this case, it is the responsibility of the Assessing Official at the contracting or requiring activity to complete a separate evaluation on each order which exceeds the reporting threshold. The period of performance in CPARS is based on the Effective Date of the individual order being evaluated.

This screenshot displays how to properly enter an order under an FSS, MAC, or GWAC into CPARS. In the Contract Number block, enter the number for the overall FSS, MAC, or GWAC. In the Order Number block, enter the local order number.

Now, let’s look at contracts and orders written by other agencies, not including FSS, MACs, and GWACs, where the requiring activity and the contracting activity are in separate agencies. In this case, the requiring activity and the contracting activity should come to a written agreement as to which agency is responsible for writing the evaluation and should so specify in the contract or order. The Office of Federal Procurement Policy, or OFPP, has provided the following guidance for cases where the requesting activity, or agency which owns the requirement, is different from the servicing agency, or agency which wrote the contract. Per the OFPP guidance, it is the responsibility of the requesting agency to track, measure, and report contract performance to the contracting officer at the servicing agency. In addition, it is the responsibility of the servicing agency to evaluate the contractor’s performance, taking into account the input from the requesting agency. The servicing agency should also provide the evaluation to the contractor, document performance in the contract file, and input the evaluation into CPARS.

Let’s move on to Basic Ordering Agreements, or BOAs, and Blanket Purchase Agreements, or BPAs. Unlike the indefinite delivery vehicles we just discussed, orders and calls under BOAs and BPAs are considered individually to determine if they meet the reporting threshold. If the order or call exceeds the dollar threshold, we must write an evaluation on that individual order or call. If the individual order or call does not exceed the threshold, then no evaluation is required for that specific order or call. We may ask, why are BOAs and BPAs treated differently from indefinite delivery vehicles? This is because BOAs and BPAs are agreements, not contracts. The basic agreement for a BOA or BPA does not contain the detailed work scope or deliverable requirements necessary to write a thorough contractor performance evaluation. In the case of BOAs and BPAs, the individual order or call placed against the agreement forms the actual contract that requires the contractor to perform. It is the individual order or call which contains the detailed scope and deliverable requirements against which we write our evaluation. Thus, performance is evaluated at the order or call level.

Let’s move on to Joint Ventures. When a Joint Venture is formed, two or more companies come together to form a new company with a Unique Entity ID. When we write the evaluation for a contract placed with a Joint Venture, we write the evaluation on the new company with the Unique Entity ID.

Let’s discuss contracts placed with the AbilityOne program. An evaluation is required for DoD AbilityOne contracts if they meet the reporting threshold. In the case of non-DoD contracts with AbilityOne, no evaluation is required.

While evaluations are still required for contracts under Classified or Special Access Programs, they may not be entered into the CPARS automated information system.

Instead, evaluations for these contracts must be processed outside of the automated system in accordance with the program’s security requirements and procedures. These evaluations should be maintained and distributed in accordance with agency procedures. For questions regarding the processing of evaluations for Classified and Special Access Program contracts, see the program security point of contact. And remember, at no time may classified information be entered into the CPARS automated information system.

Let’s discuss the user roles in CPARS. The Focal Point or Alternate Focal Point assigns the workflow users in CPARS by creating user accounts for each contract or order. In addition, the Focal Point or Alternate Focal Point registers contracts in CPARS, by ensuring that the basic information for each contract or order is entered in the system. The Focal Point or Alternate Focal Point is also available to provide support and assistance as the workflow users navigate through the CPARS process.

Next, let’s discuss the workflow roles that a Focal Point or Alternate Focal Point may assign.

First is the Assessing Official Representative. This is the role that is assigned to a government employee who will be assisting in preparation of the evaluation. The Assessing Official Representative can draft the ratings and narratives on the evaluation, but has no signature authority and may not release the evaluation to the contractor. Once the Assessing Official Representative has drafted the evaluation, they provide it to the Assessing Official for further processing. Not all organizations use an Assessing Official Representative when writing the evaluation, so this role is optional.

Next we have the Assessing Official. This is the role that is assigned to the government employee who has overall responsibility for contracting or execution of the program or project for which performance is being evaluated.

The Assessing Official writes the evaluation ratings and narratives and has authority to sign and release the evaluation to the Contractor Representative. In addition, once the Contractor Representative has provided comments on the evaluation and returned it to the government, the Assessing Official may close the evaluation in CPARS if the contractor concurred with the evaluation. If the Contractor Representative did not concur with the evaluation, the Assessing Official has the option to modify the evaluation, and must forward the evaluation to the Reviewing Official for further processing. The Assessing Official is a required role in the CPARS workflow.

The next role is the Contractor Representative. The Contractor Representative is the contractor employee that has been designated to provide comments on the evaluation. It is recommended that the Contractor Representative be someone who is very familiar with contract performance on a day to day basis. The Contractor Representative may provide comments on the evaluation and may indicate if they concur or do not concur with the ratings and narratives. Once the Contractor Representative has done this, they sign the evaluation and return it to the government Assessing Official. The Contractor Representative is a required role in the CPARS workflow, although the Contractor Representative has the option to decline to provide comments on the evaluation.

The final role in the CPARS workflow is the Reviewing Official. Reviewing Official is the role that is assigned to a government employee who is at least one level above the Assessing Official and who will review all contentious evaluations. In the event that a Contractor Representative does not concur with the evaluation, the Reviewing Official provides an independent review of the evaluation. The Reviewing Official enters comments on the evaluation, signs it, and then closes it. The Reviewing Official is an optional role in the CPARS workflow and is only required in the event that the Contractor Representative disagrees with the evaluation. It is the responsibility of the Assessing Official to provide the names and email addresses of the persons requiring CPARS workflow access to the Focal Point or Alternate Focal Point.

The Assessing Official Representative drafting the evaluation may come from the contracting or requirements community. Typical examples of the Assessing Official Representative include Technical Experts, Contract Specialists, Contracting Officers, Contracting Officer’s Representatives or Alternate Contracting Officer’s Representatives, Task or Order Monitors, Administrative Contracting Officers or Purchasing Agents. It is important to remember that the Assessing Official Representative role may only be filled by a government employee.

The Assessing Official is the person who is responsible for the contracting or execution of the program, project, or order. They write, sign, and send the evaluation to the Contractor Representative. The Assessing Official may come from the contracting or requirements community. Typical examples of the Assessing Official include Contracting Officers, Program Managers, Integrated Product Team or IPT Leads, Performance Evaluators, Quality Assurance Evaluators, Requirements Indicators, Contracting Officer’s Representatives or Alternate Contracting Officer’s Representatives, Technical Team Requirements Personnel, Product or Service End Users, Administrative Contracting Officers and Purchasing Agents. It is important to remember that the Assessing Official role may only be filled by a government employee.

Congratulations! You have completed Lesson 1: Introduction to CPARS! In this lesson, you have learned about the purpose of CPARS, the policy and guidance for when to write evaluations, the steps in the CPARS workflow, and the roles in the CPARS process. You are now ready to move on to Lesson 2: Contract Registration.