

01 - READ ME FIRST

**READ THIS DOCUMENT IN ITS ENTIRETY
PRIOR TO PREPARING AN OFFER.**

**DO NOT RETURN THIS DOCUMENT WITH YOUR
OFFER.**

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Doing Business with the VA

The Department of Veterans Affairs operates a nationwide system of hospitals, clinics, [Veterans Integrated Service Networks \(VISN\)](#), data processing centers, and National Cemeteries, all of which require a broad spectrum of goods and services. These goods and services are purchased on a national, regional, and local level – so no matter how large or small your business, the VA is a potential customer.

The [VA Federal Supply Schedule \(FSS\) Program](#) establishes long-term governmentwide contracts that allow *VA and other government agencies* to acquire a vast array of medical equipment and supplies directly from commercial suppliers.

Is a VA FSS Contract Right for You?

The VA awards contracts to responsible companies offering commercial items at fair and reasonable prices. Contracting Officers determine whether prices are fair and reasonable by comparing the prices/discounts that a company offers the government with the prices/discounts offered to commercial customers; this practice is commonly known as “most favored customer” pricing. In order to make this comparison, the VA requires offerors to furnish commercial pricelists and disclose information regarding their commercial pricing/discounting practices.

Do You Qualify for a VA FSS Contract?

To qualify for a VA FSS contract you should:

1. Be able to demonstrate that your firm is responsible. It is required that your firm be in business for at least *two (2) full years* prior to submitting a proposal for a VA Schedule contract.
2. Have \$150,000 in annual Commercial sales **or** \$25,000 in annual Government sales.
3. Complete the [GSA “Pathway to Success”](#) education seminar. Submit a copy of the certificate of completion with your proposal.
4. Meet all the requirements of the solicitation.
5. Be able to fulfill all contract obligations outlined in the solicitation.

Contact the [VA FSS Help Desk](#) to discuss your firm’s eligibility!

Important Criteria to Consider

Assess Your Competition

It is recommended that you identify and assess your competition prior to submitting a proposal. This task can be completed by reviewing the [Contract Catalog Search Tool](#), [GSA eLibrary](#) or [GSA Advantage](#). These websites contain information regarding the supplies and services that current VA FSS contractors already offer.

Your review of the competition should include: competitor's pricing, delivery times, warranty terms, services, and any other elements that make their offering distinct when compared to your own.

Best Value Determination

Schedule buyers award task/delivery orders to FSS contractors based upon a "best value" determination. In FAR 2.101, best value is defined as the "expected outcome of an acquisition that, in the Government's estimation, provides the greatest overall benefit in response to the requirement."

Factors that may be considered when making a best value determination include (but are not limited to):

- Price
- Special features of the service or supply required for effective performance
- Past performance records
- Quality of the proposed solutions and cost differences
- Trade-in considerations
- Warranty
- Delivery terms
- Expertise of the offeror
- Socioeconomic status

Trade Agreements Act

The [Trade Agreements Act](#) is applicable to all Schedules. Under the terms of this act **ONLY** US-made or designated country end products shall be awarded to responsible VA FSS contractors.

It is your responsibility to verify that all of your offered products are from the US or a [designated country](#). When an item consists of components from various countries and the components are assembled in an additional country, the test to determine country of origin is "substantial transformation" (see [FAR 25.001\(c\)\(2\)](#)). Offerors requiring a determination on substantial transformation can go to the US Customs and Border Protection [Office of Regulations and Rulings](#).

Minimum Sales Criteria

The VA expects all FSS contractors to exceed \$25,000 in sales within the first two years after contract award and \$25,000 each succeeding year in order to retain your VA FSS contract.

You should consider the difficulty you may have in meeting this performance requirement if your company is newly established or has low sales of the services/supplies you want to offer to the Government. If you decide to submit an offer under the VA FSS program, it is suggested that you draft a business plan covering how you intend to meet this performance requirement.

Business Size Determination

The [Small Business Administration](#) (SBA) has established numerical definitions, or “size standards,” for all for-profit industries based upon [NAICS codes](#). Size standards represent the largest size that a business (including its subsidiaries and affiliates) may be in order to be classified as a small business concern.

The following are the NAICS codes and size standards (average number of employees) for this solicitation:

325992 Photographic Film, Paper, Plate, and Chemical Manufacturing / 500 employees

334517 Irradiation Apparatus Manufacturing / 500 employees

If you are a nonmanufacturer (e.g. wholesalers, dealers, and distributors), then the applicable size standard is 500 employees, per FAR 19.102(f).

The submission and maintenance of an acceptable Small Business Subcontracting Plan will be required of any company meeting the following conditions:

- The company is classified as “other than a small business”.
- An FSS contract is established that has an estimated value at or above \$650,000 for a 10 year contract period which includes the base contract and all option periods.

Getting on Schedule

Once you’ve determined that a VA FSS contract is in your company’s best interest you will need to submit an offer for contract award. While not all firms are awarded VA FSS contracts, the VA FSS program is open to all responsible offerors.

To be considered for contract award, you must demonstrate that your firm is responsible and is able to meet all Schedule program requirements, including price reasonableness.

By following the best practices and understanding the review and award processes discussed in this document, vendors will be well equipped to submit a quality offer and negotiate to receive a Schedule contract.

Prior to submitting a proposal, interested companies should:

1. Choose the [Schedule program](#) that best aligns to the supplies and/or services your company wants to offer. Select the appropriate solicitation number to be linked directly to the solicitation files. Download the solicitation, including all corresponding documents, and follow the instructions for completion.
2. Read the entire Schedule solicitation thoroughly and respond to all requirements.
3. Make sure all offered line items fall within the scope of the Schedule solicitation.
4. Make sure the company is financially sound.
5. Be ready to negotiate the company's best offer.

Other helpful hints:

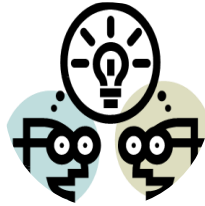
1. Obtain a [Data Universal Numbering System \(DUNS\) Number](#)
2. Register in the [Central Contractor Registration \(CCR\)](#) database. Vendors **must** be registered in CCR prior to the award of the Schedule contract (see [FAR 52.212-4\(t\)](#)).
3. Complete the [Online Representations and Certifications Application \(ORCA\)](#).

Contractors that complete electronic annual representations and certifications via the ORCA website must update as necessary, but at least annually, to ensure they are kept current, accurate, and complete.

4. Submit all required documents including [Manufacturer Letter of Commitment](#) and [proof of insurance](#) as required.
5. Consider submitting a [Dun & Bradstreet Open Ratings report](#) with the initial submission of your offer. This report may help expedite the review and award process. Additional information on this report is available [here](#).

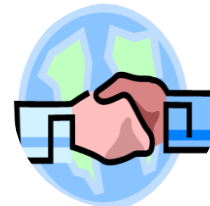
NOTE: There is a \$185 fee (plus any applicable tax) associated with this process.

Best Practices



Submitting a Proposal

- Read the solicitation package in its entirety
- Ensure all information is current, accurate, and complete
- Provide proof of registration requirements*
- Make sure your company meets the minimum requirements of the solicitation
- Use the Solicitation checklist to ensure the completeness of your offer



Proposal Review

- Understand the review process and anticipated timelines
- Provide **timely** and **complete** responses to all requests for information and clarification requests
- **Ask questions!** If you are not sure what information to provide contact the FSS Help Desk or your assigned contracting officer.
- Be ready to negotiate the company's **best offer**

Key Elements of a Successful Offer:

Ensuring these key elements are included in your proposal may expedite the review and award process:

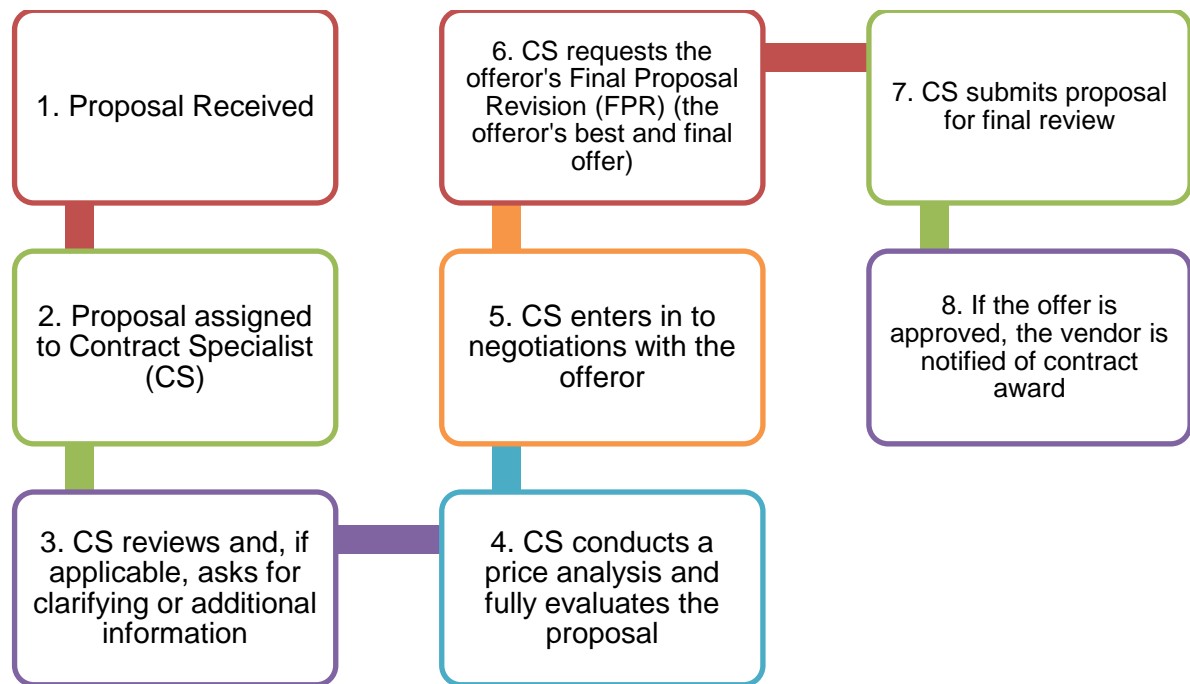
- **Scope** – Are the supplies/services within the scope of the Schedule?
- **Past Performance** – Does your firm meet its commitments and responsibilities?
- **Financial Capability** – Is your firm financially sound?
- **Pricing** – Is your proposed pricing competitive with current market conditions?
- **Subcontracting Plan** – Required if your firm is considered “other than a small business” and if the estimated value of the contract exceeds \$650,000 (including all option periods).
- **Other Regulatory Compliance** – Is your firm debarred? Are all registration requirements complete? See the [Compliance Requirements](#) page for a complete list of all required registrations.

Contact your local [Procurement Technical Assistance Center \(PTAC\)](#) for help in

- Determining your firm’s suitability for contracting
- Proposal preparation
- Securing necessary registrations and socioeconomic registrations
- Researching procurement histories
- Networking
- Identifying bid opportunities
- Contract performance issues
- Preparing for audit

Your regional PTAC offers a wide range of assistance – *most free of charge* – through one-on-one counseling, classes, seminars, and matchmaking events.

Proposal Review & Award Process



Process Time

In general, proposals will be reviewed and, if applicable, awarded **within six (6) months** from the time they are assigned to a Contract Specialist. To further discuss the review process or expected timeframes, please contact your assigned contract specialist or the FSS Help Desk.

Well prepared offers with competitive pricing are easier to evaluate and, therefore, may expedite the award process.

The offer process time can vary depending on:

- The timeliness of your responses to requests for clarification or additional information
- The quality and completeness of the proposal and subsequent clarification responses
- Complexity of the proposal
- Number of line items offered
- Quality assurance reviews

Training

Required Training

Vendors must successfully complete GSA's [Pathway to Success](#) and include a copy of the certificate with their proposal. This seminar is designed to assist prospective Schedule contractors in making an informed business decision as to whether obtaining a GSA Schedule contract is in their best interests.

It is important that the individual whose name appears on the course completion certificate must be listed in the authorized negotiator section of the proposal (found in the Vendor Response Document), and the course must be completed within one year of the date of your proposal (the date listed on the SF 1449).

Recommended Training

The VA FSS Service offers extensive [training presentations](#) detailing the steps involved in getting a VA Schedule contract. These presentations describe:

- How to submit an offer
- How to effectively negotiate your offer
- The post-award contract administration process and reporting requirements
- FSS electronic tools

Additionally, the [FSS Training](#) page offers best practice tip sheets offering information on the various aspects of the VA Schedules program.

GSA offers numerous in-person and virtual training sessions that provide attendees with an in-depth understanding of acquisition vehicles and policies. Visit the [Upcoming Training Session](#) section of GSA Interact, as well as [GSA's YouTube channel](#) and [Schedule podcast](#) offerings! Additional training is offered by the [GSA Vendor Support Center](#).

Additional Information

While the VA provides its Government customers with training in "Using VA Schedules," including information on the benefits of the Schedules Program, the VA does not promote the use of any company's specific Schedule contract. Vendors should be aware that obtaining a VA Schedule contract is **not a guarantee of sales**. Vendors awarded a VA Schedule contract will need to [market](#) their supplies and services to Government customers as they would to commercial customers.

Contact Us

Contact the [FSS Help Desk](#) for additional information on submitting a proposal or on the VA FSS review and award process!

Before Submitting Your Proposal, Did You Remember To...?

- ☐ Read 02-Solicitation Document and 03-Regulations Incorporated by Reference?
- ☐ Complete GSA's [Pathway to Success](#) course and include a copy of your certificate?
- ☐ Register for [Central Contractor Registration \(CCR\)](#) and include a copy of your listing?
- ☐ Submit letters of commitment and/or proof of liability insurance, if applicable?
- ☐ Complete the [Online Representations and Certifications Application \(ORCA\)](#)?
- ☐ Complete and return all applicable exhibits?
 - ☐ 04-Vendor Response Document (REQUIRED)
 - ☐ 05-Commercial Sales Practice Format (REQUIRED)
 - ☐ 06-Proposal Price List Preparation (Domestic) (REQUIRED)
 - ☐ 07-Past Performance Evaluation (NEW FSS offerors only)
 - ☐ 08-Small Business Subcontracting Plan (For large businesses with an offer valued in excess of \$650,000 for a 10 year contract period which includes the base and option periods.
 - ☐ 09-Overseas Delivery (For those proposing overseas delivery)
 - ☐ 10- Proposal Price List Preparation (Overseas) (For those proposing different pricing for overseas delivery)
- ☐ Put completed proposal package in a 3", 3-ring binder and mail to the address on the cover page of 02-Solicitation Document?

Vendor Response Document Checklist

- ☐ Signatory Authority for Offers and Contracts/Company Information
- ☐ SF-1449, Blocks 12, 17a, 17b, 30a, 30b, and 30c
- ☐ Continuation of SF 1449 Blocks 19-21, Schedule of Items
- ☐ ACH Vendor/Misc. Payment Enrollment Form – SF 3881
- ☐ 552.238-78 Scope of Contract (Eligible Ordering Activities)
- ☐ Letters of Commitment per I-FSS-644 (if not the manufacturer)
- ☐ 552.211-78 Commercial Delivery Schedule (Multiple Award Schedule)
- ☐ F-FSS-202-G Delivery Prices
- ☐ F-FSS-244-B Additional Service Charge for Delivery within the Consignee's Premises
- ☐ Minimum Acceptable Order Proposal (52.216-19 Order Limitations)
- ☐ 552.216-73 Ordering Information
- ☐ List of Participating Dealers per 552.216-73 (if applicable)
- ☐ 552.232-82 Contractor's Remittance Address
- ☐ K-FSS-9 Section 8(a) Representation for Multiple Award Schedule Program
- ☐ 52.223-3 Hazardous Material Identification and Material Safety Data (if applicable)
- ☐ C-FSS-411 Fire or Casualty Hazards, or Safety or Health Requirements
- ☐ 52.215-6 Place of Performance
- ☐ K-FSS-1 Authorized Negotiators
- ☐ G-FSS-900C Contact for Contract Administration
- ☐ AS1110 Contact for Sales Administration
- ☐ Supplemental Commercial Practices Information
- ☐ Copy of Warranty & Return Goods Policy (if applicable)
- ☐ Compliance Confirmation
- ☐ 52.209-7 Information Regarding Responsibility Matters
- ☐ American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Program Participation
- ☐ Recovery Purchasing Election
- ☐ AS5001 Med-Surge Prime Vendor Participation
- ☐ Public Health Emergencies Participation Election