



## **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Vendor Communication Plan**

### **I. Agency Commitment**

This Vendor Communication Plan represents NASA's commitment to promote increased dialog and exchanges of information with the vendor community from the earliest identification of a requirement through announcement of the award (see Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) subpart 15.2). NASA's Senior Procurement Executive, along with the NASA Center Procurement Officers are responsible for promoting vendor engagement.

Since its inception, NASA has been closely linked with the private and academic sectors. Historically, NASA has contracted with the private sector for most of its products and services such as research and development services required to meet the Agency's mission and programs. Over eighty percent of the Agency's authorized funding and the resultant direct employment is dispersed widely in the national economy through NASA contracts and grants.

Early, constructive communication and exchange of information with industry, including small businesses and new businesses, will enable NASA do to more with less, improve the health of our aerospace industrial base, and advance the United States' capabilities and systems for space exploration. This is vital for the development of new vendors and partners as NASA focuses on streamlined and innovative acquisition approaches, requirements, specifications, and management processes. NASA is committed to a transparent acquisition process, while at the same time ensuring the protection of vendors' confidential business information and the Agency's source selection sensitive information.

The NASA FAR Supplement (NFS) at [1807.72, Acquisition Forecasting](#), delineates NASA's policy regarding the preparation of an annual acquisition forecast and semiannual update of expected contract opportunities for each fiscal year to alert the public of upcoming NASA procurements. The anticipated acquisitions included in the forecasts, defined in very general terms, are placed on each Center's acquisition forecast where they may be viewed by members of the public, industry, and

Government. The acquisition forecasts for each center are available on the NASA Acquisition Forecast website at <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/office/procurement/forecast/index.html>

## II. Methods to Conduct Vendor Engagement

NASA is continually looking for innovative and cost effective ways to procure its science, aeronautics and space exploration requirements. The Agency continues to promote industry engagement in an effort to remove barriers, enhance innovation, and maximize competition. For complex efforts, NASA may invite industry via a Federal Register meeting notice to confer and exchange ideas on how to make programs more affordable and improve NASA's contracting relationships. Industry representatives meet with NASA officials and submit in writing their ideas on improving affordability of NASA programs. Industry's innovative approaches cover the spectrum in size and role – including prime contractors, subsystem, component, and entrepreneurial commercial providers, as well as non-profit organizations. New ideas are continually being considered as NASA formulates its acquisition strategy for future human spaceflight development programs. Industry feedback is vital to development of the acquisition strategy for future spaceflight programs.

Although communications vary, depending on the size or the purpose for the potential contract; it is crucial that NASA ensures fair and equitable treatment of all vendors. NASA personnel are trained to use readily available, easily accessed sources that provide product and industry data for market research. The following information sources and search techniques are utilized by NASA acquisition personnel:

- Pre-solicitation notices located in the Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOpps) website at <https://www.fbo.gov/>
- Review of acquisition history and exchange of acquisition information, including source lists.
- Qualified products lists and qualified bidders' lists.
- Review of the results of recent market research undertaken to meet similar or identical requirements.
- Contacting industry regarding specific market capabilities. Including obtaining capability packages from all interested small business firms including, Small Disadvantaged, 8(a), Woman-Owned, Economically Disadvantaged Woman-Owned, Veteran-Owned, Service Disabled Veteran-Owned, and Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) businesses for the purposes of determining the appropriate level of competition and small business subcontracting goals.

NASA conducts vendor engagement by—

- Issuing draft requests for proposal (RFP) in accordance with [NFS 1815.201, Exchanges with industry before receipt of proposals](#) for all

competitive acquisitions expected to exceed \$10 million except for Broad Agency Announcements (BAAs), Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) solicitations, and architect-and-engineering services, unless the NASA contracting officer determines in writing that a draft RFP is not beneficial to the acquisition. When a draft RFP is issued, it must specifically request that potential offerors identify unnecessary or inefficient requirements. If the draft RFP contains Government-unique standards, prospective offerors are invited to identify voluntary consensus standards that meet the Government's requirements as alternatives to Government-unique standards (See [FAR 11.101](#)). Comments also are requested on any perceived safety, occupational health, security (including information technology security), environmental, property, quality assurance, export control, and/or other programmatic risk issues associated with performance of the work.

- Planning the acquisition schedule to include adequate time for issuance of the draft RFP, prospective offeror review and comment, and NASA evaluation and disposition of the comments. The RFP may be modified as a result of industry questions and comments provided in response to the draft RFP, in response to Industry Day events, or as a result of NASA's internal reviews.
- In accordance with FAR [15.201](#), NASA often finds it helpful to host a conference or site tour to facilitate the early exchange of information with prospective offerors before receiving proposals. Such events provide a means of exchanging information to improve potential offerors' understanding of the Agency's requirements, enhance the Government's ability to obtain quality supplies/services, and increase efficiency in proposal preparation, evaluation, negotiation, and award.
- A pre-proposal conference to brief prospective offerors may be conducted after a solicitation has been issued, but before proposals are received, in accordance with FAR [15.201](#). NASA contracting officers, in coordination with management and the Source Evaluation Board (SEB), decide, prior to issuance of the RFP, whether a pre-proposal conference is required. Generally, these conferences benefit both the Government and prospective offerors in acquisitions where it is necessary to explain or clarify specifications and requirements. A pre-proposal conference is likely to be most beneficial in situations where there have been major questions about a draft RFP or where the final RFP incorporates significant changes from the draft RFP. In addition, prospective offerors have expressed appreciation for the opportunity to network with other industry representatives.
- In competitive procurements, upon issuance of the final solicitation, a formal blackout period starts. In a blackout period, NASA personnel, other

than the NASA contracting officer; are directed to refrain from formal or informal discussions with industry regarding the procurement. During the blackout period, all questions/inquiries regarding the procurement must be directed to the contracting officer.

- [NFS 1805.303-71](#) establishes that a NASA Headquarters (HQ) public announcement and a NASA Administrator notification are required for award of a contract action that has a total anticipated value, including unexercised options, of \$5 million or greater. A contract action requiring notification to the Administrator and/or a NASA HQ public announcement are not distributed nor is any source outside NASA notified of the award status until the procedures of [NFS 1805.303-72](#) have been completed.

### III. Types of Engagement Events

NASA posts vendor engagement events on FedBizOpps (<https://www.fbo.gov/>). These events include industry days, small business outreach sessions, and pre-solicitation conferences. In addition, NASA posts small business events such as conferences hosted and produced by the Industry Assistance Office and training on FedBizOpps using the Special Notice capability. The purpose of these vendor engagement events is to –

- Obtain feedback from industry on requirements
- Discuss the technical feasibility of a particular requirement;
- Discuss NASA's preliminary evaluation of a particular system;
- Address specific requirements that significantly impact the viability or are major cost drivers to Industry;
- Obtain feedback to determine if requirements in NASA solicitations provide enough detail to design, develop, produce, and operate the articles to be procured; and
- Identify any unnecessary, overly burdensome, and/or overly prescriptive requirements.

In addition to posting vendor engagements on FedBizOpps, NASA may also publicize such events on:

- <https://www.sbir.gov> - Government portal for Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Information
- <http://sbir.gsfc.nasa.gov/> - NASA SBIR/STTR portal
- <http://www.sba.gov/> - US Small Business Administration
- <http://www.grants.gov/> - Grants.gov is the portal for federal grants
- <https://nspires.nasaprs.com/external/> - The NASA web interface for submitting proposals in response to NASA Research Opportunities

Questions regarding this plan or related topics may be directed to the Assistant Administrator for Procurement at [Procurement@hq.nasa.gov](mailto:Procurement@hq.nasa.gov) or (202) 358-2090.