



Commodity Procurement Program: Become a Qualified Vendor for USDA Food Commodity Purchases

Good Afternoon and thank you for joining us for our webinar on how to become a qualified vendor for the USDA Foods Program. My name is Diana Dau David, and I am one of the two new vendor and small business specialists for Commodity Procurement Program with Agricultural Marketing Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture or USDA. Today my counterpart (Andrea Lang), and I, will be presenting the administrative and technical components of the Commodity Procurement Program new vendor process to become eligible to bid on government contracts for food commodities.

So, let's begin!

Administrative Application

- Review AMS Master Solicitation - contract clauses, provisions, and requirements
- Review Product Specifications to determine what you can supply
- Active SAM Registration
- WBSCM Vendor Registration Form
- Company Letter
- Three Customer References

If non-manufacturer, then you must submit additional items:

- Supplier Letter
- Complaint and Dispute Resolution Proposal



Our new vendor process can be lengthy and may feel overwhelming at times, but we ask that you take the process one step at a time.

Before you even begin your administrative paperwork, we ask that you please review the AMS Master Solicitation and the Product Specifications to ensure you can meet not only CPP's requirements but also government contracting requirements. After reviewing these documents, you can then move onto the administrative paperwork, which begins with Andrea and myself as part of the new vendor team.

Each step of the way, there is someone to assist you—whether that is the new vendor team compiling all the required documentation, the Procurement Analysts doing the initial review of that documentation, the Program Area conducting the audits and inspections, or the WBSCM HelpDesk to help you get set up to bid after being approved.

So please do not be shy or afraid to ask for help.

Review Master Solicitation

Resource: AMS Master Solicitation

Link: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/solicitations>

The Master Solicitation for Commodity Procurements contains things like:

- **Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) Clauses & Provisions**
 - e.g., (<https://sam.gov/content/home>), Small Business Subcontracting Plans, Prompt Payment Act
- **Ag. Acquisition Regulations (AGAR) Clauses & Provisions**
 - e.g., Domestic Origin/Traceability
- **AMS Policies**
 - Plant Surveys; GHP/GAP; Food Defense Plans/Audits
 - Grading/Inspection/Certification
 - Use of the Web-Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) System
 - Transportation and Delivery Requirements
 - Invoicing, etc.

The first step of becoming a vendor: The “AMS Master Solicitation for Commodity Procurements” The Master Solicitation is the main body of every contract awarded by AMS. It details the Federal Acquisition Regulation commonly referred to as FAR and includes clauses and provisions governing federal procurements such as financial capabilities, small business subcontracting, pre-bid certifications, product traceability, and more. This is the contract document, please know what it says and be aware that by submitting an offer to AMS, you are confirming that you meet all the requirements laid out in this Master Solicitation- **please** read it, understand it, and if you have questions, please contact the Contracting Officer to receive clarification.

Review Product Specifications

Resource: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/product-specs>

Specifications are referred to as “Commodity Specifications” or “Commodity Requirements Documents” or “Technical Requirement Supplements”

(All are linked to on the above “Product Specs” page)

- **USDA Specifications include things like:**
 - Product Descriptions
 - Grades/Standards; Commercial Item Descriptions (CIDS)
 - Harvest/pack season – current production
 - Formulation/Fabrication requirements (fat, sodium, sugar)
 - Packaging/packing/labeling
 - USDA inspection, grading, and/or auditing requirements
 - Food Safety Requirements for Suppliers; Good Agricultural Practice/Good Handling Practice Audits
 - Review any amendments to the specification



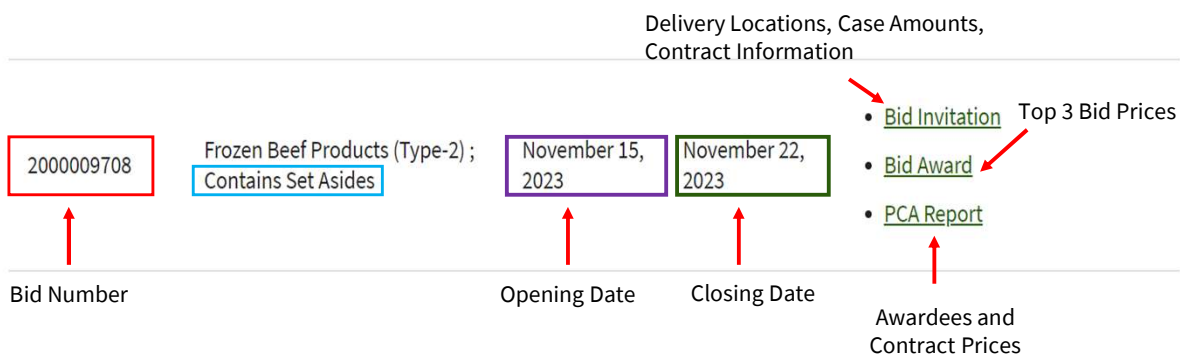
The second Step: Review Product Specifications--As mentioned before, a good way to find out if Commodity Procurement is a good fit for your company is by thoroughly reviewing the USDA Commodity Specifications. These are located on our website. It is critical that you understand the technical requirements before you begin the new vendor process.

The specifications detail technical requirements for the product and production, including raw materials, formulation, packaging and packing, inspection and certification requirements, and much more. These detailed specifications ensure USDA gets the same quality end-product under every contract, regardless of which supplier is awarded. Sometimes, we make changes to our technical requirements for our products. These are called amendments, which we link under the specification. We ask that you please take the time to review any associated amendments included with the product specification.

USDA takes product integrity very seriously, and we expect that our vendors supply product that consistently meet the quality and safety expectations of our customers.

Purchase Program Solicitations and Awards Webpage

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/solicitations>



All of our bid invitations or solicitations can be found on our Purchase Program: Solicitations and Awards website, which can give you a better idea of the **prices, competition, and quantity**, AND you can even see if certain bids contain small business **set asides**.

Typically, a bid is opened for two weeks, although this timeframe does vary, and its important to note that you cannot submit an offer after a bid has closed.

There are three links on the right that that you might notice when looking at these: As you can see on the screenshot, these the bid invitation, the bid award and the PCA report.

The bid invitation document will tell you **delivery locations, case amounts, tendering text or other pertinent information regarding the bid**, as well as the **contact information for the Contract Officer and Contract Specialist**. The Bid Award will show you the top three bids offered for each line item and the PCA Report will have a list of awardees and contract prices.

This is another great resource that you will want to review before determining if your

company would be a good fit into the USDA Foods program.

New Vendor Qualification Requirements Checklist



United States Department of Agriculture

AMS CPP VENDOR QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS CHECKLIST

Company Name:		
UEI:		
Material Code/Product (See Attachment B)		
Contact Person:		
Address:		
Email:		
Phone Number/Fax	PH:	Fax:

I. Administrative Requirements	Received
System for Award Management (SAM): https://sam.gov/content/home	
Small Business designation and certificate (if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/> Small Business <input type="checkbox"/> Woman-owned <input type="checkbox"/> HUBZone <input type="checkbox"/> SDB <input type="checkbox"/> Veteran-owned <input type="checkbox"/> 8(a) <input type="checkbox"/> Service-disabled veteran owned	

While you may not be able to see it well on the slide, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the **updated** "New Vendor Qualifications Requirement" Checklist. This checklist has been revised to include all of the administrative and technical requirements needed to become approved. It also includes two addendums: a list of products and material codes that Commodity Procurement purchases and a Directory for the various program areas you will need to contact to schedule any audits or inspections needed to fulfill the technical requirements.

To receive a copy of the checklist, please email the New Vendor email: NewVendor@usda.gov.

Now that you've reviewed the Master Solicitation, Product Specification, and previous bid invitations; we are going to delve more into the administrative paperwork that needs to be completed.

New Vendor Administrative Application

“Qualifications Requirements for Prospective Contractors”- Responsible Prospective Contractor’s Documentation (FAR 9.104-1 and FAR 9.104-3)

- ✓ System for Award Management Registration (<https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>), in accordance with **FAR Part 4.11**
 - ✓ Notarized Letter
 - ✓ SAM HelpDesk: 1-866-606-8220 Option 1
 - ✓ Business Status-www.sba.gov
 - ✓ Help Tab on SAM
 - ✓ [APEX Accelerators](#), formerly known as Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTACs)

Step 3 focuses on the Administrative paperwork, which begins with the System for Award Management or SAM. SAM is a Federal-government-owned and operated free website. Every vendor who wants to participate in a federal government procurement must be registered in SAM. You can also register your company in SAM as a small business, service-disabled veteran owned small business, HubZone or 8(a). Please note that if you are interested in receiving Small Disadvantaged Business, HUBZone, or 8(a) certifications, you will need to refer separately to the Small Business Administration to complete that process.

While SAM registration is only needed to be done once, you must update or renew your registration annually. There is no fee to register your company into SAM. This system is **free**, so please be aware of similar systems that will charge a hefty fee. If you run into some trouble registering in SAM, there is a Help Tab on SAM’s main page, which features FAQs, User Guides, and Helpful Hints. You can also contact the SAM HelpDesk: 1-866-606-8220. **And select option 1.**

A great contact to help you register your company in SAM are **APEX Accelerators, formerly known as Procurement Technical Assistance Centers or PTACs.**

There are more than 90 APEX Accelerators, assisting businesses in 49 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas, and in regions established by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the U.S. Department of the Interior.

APEX Accelerators provide free counseling and training for vendors that want to do business with the government.

One of the great things about **APEX Accelerators** is their free help with SAM registration, they even have a webpage highlighting their assistance with SAM, general tips, and videos.

PTAC website: [Help for Government Contracting - APTAC - Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers \(aptac-us.org\)](https://www.aaptac.org/)

APEX Accelerators website: [Apex Accelerators](https://www.apexaccelerators.com/)

New Vendor Administrative Application

“Qualifications Requirements for Prospective Contractors”- Responsible Prospective Contractor’s Documentation (FAR 9.104-1 and FAR 9.104-3)

- ✓WBSCM Vendor Registration Form

- ✓Company Letter certifying capability to perform

- ✓Three (3) Letters of Reference

Next in your package is the **WBSCM vendor registration form**, which is needed to create a user-profile and grant access to the WBSCM system once you are approved as a Vendor. Please select only one commodity group on the form as there is a new vendor probationary period where a new vendor is only awarded up to ten truckloads in their first contract.

You must also include a company letter certifying the company’s performance, telling us about your company and what products you are interested in selling to the USDA. Your letter should include a brief history of the company, mention of satisfactory record of integrity, business ethics and list the material code, pack size, and your company’s capacity on the letter. The material and material code can be found on the Commodity Procurement website on the Purchase Programs: Awards and Solicitations webpage. The letter must be signed and on company letterhead. A sample letter can be provided upon request.

We will also need three letters of references from satisfied customers on letterhead, signed with a phone number and address for verification purposes, and a statement mentioning how satisfied your client was with the product(s) or service(s) you sold them. A sample letter can be provided upon request.

After your **administrative paperwork package is received, our new vendor team send it over to the approving Procurement Analyst, who will review your application and determine contractor responsibility.** Vendors must have a Unique Entity Identifier and be active on SAM to conduct this review, which is why it is ESSENTIAL for your company to be successfully registered in SAM.

~~For determining contractor responsibility, the Contracting Officer will pull a Contractor Responsibility Assessment Report or CRA from FedDataCheck. A vendor must have a Unique Entity Identifier and must be active on SAM to pull the CRA report, which is why it is ESSENTIAL for your company to be successfully registered in SAM.~~

An important reminder is that we require the legal company name on every piece of documentation. Your legal company name should match the company name registered with your state. And you can verify your company name by visiting your secretary of state's website.

New Vendor Administrative Application

“Qualifications Requirements for Prospective Contractors”- Responsible Prospective Contractor’s Documentation (FAR 9.104-1 and FAR 9.104-3)

If you are a non-manufacturer, you will also need to provide:

- ✓ Supplier Letter
- ✓ Complaint and Dispute Resolution Proposal

Before becoming approved, your supplier must meet our technical requirements.



If you are a non-manufacturer, we will require some additional information from you. Non-manufacturers that use suppliers or manufacturers must submit a supplier letter. This is a letter from the manufacturer and supplier stating it is willing to provide product that meets the commodity specifications. The letter must be on your supplier’s letterhead and include the material code and description of the product. The letter should be signed by both you, the non-manufacturer, AND your supplier.

Non-manufacturers will also need to submit a Complaint and Dispute Resolution Proposal Agreement. This is an agreement between yourself and your supplier that, should something happen to the product, for example, if we need a replacement or reimbursement, then the proposal will list out what both parties have agreed to do in order to resolve the issue.



Next Team: Program Areas

Technical Requirements Review

Now, that we've gone over the administrative portion of the application, my counterpart, andrea lang, will talk about the technical requirements of the new vendor approval process.

Technical Requirements

- ✓ Please make sure your company has passed the necessary inspections, food defense audits, and plant surveys prior to submitting a bid.
- ✓ Contact information for AMS Auditing Services, AMS Inspection Services, and links to our product specifications, etc. can be found on our New Vendor Qualification Checklist.
- ✓ Remember the vendor must contact the Program Area to schedule audits and inspections.

Once your administrative paperwork has been submitted, you will receive an email from the Procurement Analyst. The email will detail that your paperwork is being reviewed, and you will now need to complete the technical requirements for your commodity.

That same email will include the AMS Auditing and Inspection point of contacts, which are also listed in the New Vendor Checklist.

It is the vendor's responsibility to contact the respective program area to schedule any audits or inspections, and all requirements must be met PRIOR to the bid opening date.

Once you have completed the administrative AND the technical requirements, you will receive an additional email from our Procurement Analyst stating that you are now an approved vendor.



Upload to WBSCM

Next Team: Web Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM)

WBSCM Team Uploads New Vendor WBSCM Registration Form

After you get that full approval, myself or my counterpart will reach out to the WBSCM HelpDesk and ask that your WBSCM Vendor Registration Form be uploaded.

PLEASE READ THIS EMAIL! It is your lifeline into our

system and if the information requested by our WBSCM team is not submitted in a timely manner, it may hold up the process for you to submit bids.

Once your form is uploaded, you will receive another email, this time from the WBSCM HelpDesk, asking for additional information such as other users for your

account and plants to be filled out and submitted which we will discuss in the next few slides.

In the handy email the WBSCM team sends you there is a description on how to sign up for “**GovDelivery**.” Gov Delivery is our emailing list, and by subscribing to our email updates, you will receive information on solicitations, any specification changes we’ve made, and so on. It is the best way to stay up to date on our contracts.

If you have more technical questions or questions on the contract itself, please refer to the appropriate contracting specialist, which can be found on the bid invitation.

If you have any WBSCM questions or need assistance, feel free to contact the WBSCM HelpDesk: WBSCMAMSHelpDesk@usda.gov.

New Vendor Upload

CC: AMS - CVA New Vendor
New Vendor Docs - Reg. Purchase (1).zip
5 MB

Fill out the attached excel spreadsheet and return to the WBSCM HelpDesk to create your Corporate Vendor Administrator or CVA. CVAs will add their plants and shipping points to WBSCM.

1. After logging into WBSCM successfully, the CVA must enter the plants and shipping points (if required). **Once the CVA has entered the vendor plants and/or shipping points, please alert WBSCMAMSHelpDesk@usda.gov so they can be approved within the system.** In the body of the e-mail, please provide the complete name and address of the vendor plants and/or shipping points.
2. Upon approval of the vendor plants and/or shipping points, the CVA must assign users to these entities so that they are available for selection by the user; instructions on how to do this are found in the "WBSCM CVA-Roles-Responsibilities" pdf.

Ensure banking information is correct in SAM.

Take advantage of the WBSCM Training Webpage.

Helpful Tips and Resources

- WBSCM is configured to work with the Chrome browser, we recommend only using Chrome for all WBSCM activities to avoid compatibility issues. Please review the attached 'WBSCM Browser Settings and Helpful Tips' job aid for Chrome-specific settings and other tips



When the WBSCM HelpDesk uploads your registration into WBSCM, the point of contact on your Vendor Registration form is going to get an email from the HelpDesk requesting they complete an excel form to create Corporate Vendor Administrators or CVAs. What are CVAs? CVAs add additional users into WBSCM, assign users roles to the applicable plants and shipping points, and review Plant and Shipping Point Information in WBSCM. The CVA should be the first person that users go to for assistance in WBSCM apart from the WBSCM HelpDesk. Attached to the HelpDesk email, you will find a document which contains information on the roles and responsibilities of a CVA.

The next thing will be to double check your EFT banking information in SAM to ensure it is up to date. SAM is linked up to WBSCM and when you submit an invoice for payment in WBSCM, funds will be transferred through the EFT information that you listed in SAM.

Additionally, you will want to familiarize yourself with WBSCM through the WBSCM Training Webpage. You can email the WBSCM HelpDesk and request access to a live simulation on submitting a bid. Remember you must be an approved vendor and uploaded into WBSCM to request access.

Helpful Tips

- **Email the WBSCM HelpDesk for approval of vendor plants and/or shipping points**
- **Review the New Vendor Documents Folder**
- **Sign up for GovDelivery**
- **WBSCM Webpage:**
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/wbscm>

Sign Up for Updates

Your email address

Sign Up



At the bottom of that handy WBSCM email, you will see a link and a statement that says: If you wish to receive email notifications on upcoming solicitations and other USDA subscriptions, sign up [here!](#) Trust me, you WANT to sign up because this is how you will receive notifications of upcoming bids, awards, specifications, and any CPP news. There are multiple ways to sign up. If you go to the CPP website and scroll to the bottom of the page, you can enter you email address or click on that little red envelope. Please sign up because that's the whole reason you became approved, to bid!

A few more user-friendly tips: When you enter your plants and shipping points into WBSCM, please email the WBSCM HelpDesk for approval.

Be sure to keep the documents attached to the WBSCM email saved and handy for those just in case moments.

Lastly, you can always refer back to the WBSCM

Webpage for training and step by step procedure documents.

You got mail!

COMMODITY PROCUREMENT

Issued Solicitation

The Agricultural Marketing Service has issued 2000009536, 12-3J14-23-B-0562 for the procurement of Frozen Seasonal and Canned Kosher Vegetables:

[View the Bid Invitation](#)

Bids for this procurement are due no later than [August 17th, 3pm CT.](#)

Questions regarding this procurement should be directed to the following contact:

Ashley Train, Ashley.Train@usda.gov

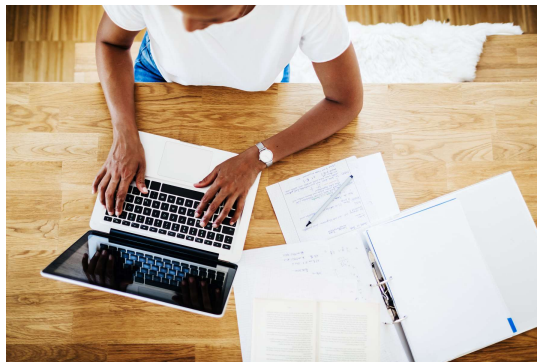


Here is a copy of what an email announcing an open bid invitation would look like. The blue box is a hyperlink that you would click on to view the bid invitation and any other additional documents pertaining to the bid. Right below is a crucial sentence: "Bids for this procurement are due no later than August 17th, 3pm CT." Which means that if you were to try to submit a bid at 3:01 CT on August 17th, you would be ineligible.

Also, if you have any questions on the bid or anything, the contact information for the contract specialist can be found at the bottom.

Recap of New Vendor Process

1. Review documents and tutorials on the website: Master Solicitation, Product Specifications, webinars.
2. Register in SAM.
3. Complete the paperwork.
4. Submit the application to the New Vendor email.



So to recap the new vendor process: Do your homework and review our contract documents, website, and specifications. Register in SAM. Complete the New Vendor Checklist and WBSCM New Vendor Registration Form. Get your company letter written and compile those customer references. Also, if needed, your supplier letters and complaint and dispute resolution proposal. Submit your documents to the New Vendor email.

Application Approval Steps:

1. Administrative Application sent from New Vendor Team to Procurement Analyst (PA) for review.
2. PA sends email to vendor (copies New Vendor Team) stating they are reviewing their application and provides Program Area contacts to begin audits and inspections.
3. Program Area confirms the vendor has passed their audits and/or inspections by sending an email to the approving CO and copying the new vendor email.
4. PA sends an email to the vendor informing them they have been approved, copies the new vendor inbox and the Program Area.
5. New Vendor team sends the WBSCM form to the WBSCM HelpDesk be uploaded.
6. WBSCM HelpDesk uploads the WBSCM Form and sends an email to the vendor requesting they fill out an excel spreadsheet with the Corporate Vendor Administrator and any other users

Once that administrative paperwork has been submitted, the New Vendor Team sends the administrative application to the Procurement Analyst. The Procurement Analyst will conduct an initial review and will send you an email detailing that your paperwork is being reviewed, and you will now need to complete the technical requirements for your commodity.

That same email will include the AMS Auditing and Inspection point of contacts, which are also listed in the New Vendor Checklist.

It is the vendor's responsibility to contact the respective program area to schedule any audits or inspections, and all requirements must be met PRIOR to the bid opening date.

Once you have completed the administrative AND the technical requirements, you will receive an additional email from our Procurement Analyst

stating that you are now an approved vendor.

After you get that full approval, myself or my counterpart will reach out to the WBSCM HelpDesk and ask that your WBSCM Vendor Registration Form be uploaded.

As we mentioned earlier, the new vendor process can be lengthy and may feel overwhelming at times, but we ask that you take the process one step at a time AND remember that our USDA team is here to help you every step of the way.

Points of Contact

NewVendor@usda.gov

Chelsie Prange

New Vendor Specialist Domestic
Purchases: Fruit, Vegetables, and
Tree Nuts

International Purchases: Bulk
Commodities

Nick Kilmarx

New Vendor Specialist Domestic
Purchases: Dairy, Grain, Oilseeds,
Livestock, and Poultry

International Purchases:
Packaged Commodities

If you have any questions on the information presented today, please feel free to contact myself or my counterpart at the New Vendor email, which is:

NewVendor@usda.gov



**Thank for your participation. We
appreciate you!**

I want to thank everyone for attending today. This was a collaborative labor of love and on behalf of the New Vendor Team and CPP, we want to personally thank you for your help in creating this webinar. I hope everyone has a lovely day!