

## Federal Acquisition Regulation

27.302

(b) The contracting officer should consult with legal counsel regarding questions under this section.

[61 FR 39212, July 26, 1996]

### Subpart 27.3—Patent Rights Under Government Contracts

#### 27.300 Scope of subpart.

This subpart prescribes policies, procedures, and contract clauses with respect to inventions made in the performance of work under a Government contract or subcontract thereunder if a purpose of the contract or subcontract is the conduct of experimental, developmental, or research work, except to the extent statutory requirements necessitate different agency policies, procedures, and clauses as specified in agency supplemental regulations.

#### 27.301 Definitions.

As used in this subpart—

*Invention* means any invention or discovery that is or may be patentable or otherwise protectable under title 35 of the U.S. Code or any novel variety of plant that is or may be protectable under the Plant Variety Protection Act (7 U.S.C. 2321, *et seq.*).

*Made* when used in relation to any invention, means the conception or first actual reduction to practice of such invention.

*Nonprofit organization* means a domestic university or other institution of higher education or an organization of the type described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (26 U.S.C. 501(c)) and exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. 501(a)), or any nonprofit scientific or educational organization qualified under a State nonprofit organization statute.

*Practical application* means to manufacture, in the case of a composition or product; to practice, in the case of a process or method; or to operate, in the case of a machine or system; and, in each case, under such conditions as to establish that the invention is being utilized and that its benefits are, to the extent permitted by law or Government regulations, available to the public on reasonable terms.

*Small business firm* means a small business concern as defined at 15 U.S.C. 632 and implementing regulations of the Administrator of the Small Business Administration. (For the purpose of this definition, the size standard contained in 13 CFR 121.3–8 for small business contractors and in 13 CFR 121.3–12 for small business subcontractors will be used. See FAR part 19).

*Subject invention* means any invention of the contractor conceived or first actually reduced to practice in the performance of work under a Government contract; *provided*, that in the case of a variety of plant, the date of determination defined in section 41(d) of the Plant Variety Protection Act, 7 U.S.C. 2401(d), must also occur during the period of contract performance.

[49 FR 12974, Mar. 30, 1984, as amended at 54 FR 25063, June 12, 1989 and 55 FR 25525, June 21, 1990; 66 FR 2130, Jan. 10, 2001]

#### 27.302 Policy.

(a) *Introduction.* The policy of this section is based on Chapter 18 of title 35, U.S.C. (Pub. L. 95–517, Pub. L. 98–620, 37 CFR part 401), the Presidential Memorandum on Government Patent Policy to the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies dated February 18, 1983, and Executive Order 12591, which provides that, to the extent permitted by law, the head of each Executive Department and agency shall promote the commercialization, in accord with the Presidential Memorandum, of patentable results of federally funded research by granting to all contractors, regardless of size, the title to patents made in whole or in part with Federal funds, in exchange for royalty-free use by or on behalf of the Government. The objectives of this policy are to use the patent system to promote the utilization of inventions arising from federally supported research or development; to encourage maximum participation of industry in federally supported research and development efforts; to ensure that these inventions are used in a manner to promote free competition and enterprise; to promote the commercialization and public availability of the inventions made in the United States by United States industry and labor; to ensure that the Government obtains sufficient

rights in federally supported inventions to meet the needs of the Government and protect the public against nonuse or unreasonable use of inventions; and, to minimize the costs of administering policies in this area.

(b) *Contractor right to elect title.* Under the policy set forth in paragraph (a) of this section, each contractor may, after disclosure to the Government as required by the patent rights clause included in the contract, elect to retain title to any invention made in the performance of work under the contract. To the extent an agency's statutory requirements necessitate a different policy, or different procedures and/or contract clauses to effectuate the policy set forth in paragraph (a) of this section, such policy, procedures, and clauses shall be contained in or expressly referred to in that agency's supplement to this subpart. In addition, a contract may provide otherwise (1) when the contractor is not located in the United States or does not have a place of business located in the United States or is subject to the control of a foreign-government (see 27.303(c)), (2) in exceptional circumstances when it is determined by the agency that restriction or elimination of the right to retain title in any subject invention will better promote the policy and objectives of Chapter 18 of title 35, U.S.C. and the Presidential Memorandum, (3) when it is determined by a Government authority which is authorized by statute or Executive order to conduct foreign intelligence or counterintelligence activities that the restriction or elimination of the right to retain title to any subject invention is necessary to protect the security of such activities, or (4) when the contract includes the operation of a Government-owned, contractor-operated facility of the Department of Energy primarily dedicated to the Department's naval nuclear propulsion or weapons related programs and all funding agreement limitations under 35 U.S.C. 202(a)(iv) for agreements with small business firms and nonprofit organizations are limited to inventions occurring under the above two programs.

In the case of small business firms and nonprofit organizations, when an agency justifies and exercises the ex-

ception at subparagraph (b)(2) of this section on the basis of national security, the contract shall provide the contractor with the right to elect ownership to any invention made under such contract as provided by the clause at 52.227-11, Patent Rights—Retention by the Contractor (Short Form), if the invention is not classified by the agency within 6 months of the date it is reported to the agency, or within the same time period the Department of Energy (DOE) does not, as authorized by regulation, law or Executive order or implementing regulations thereto, prohibit unauthorized dissemination of the invention. Contracts in support of DOE's naval nuclear propulsion program are exempted from this paragraph. When a contract involves a series of separate task orders, an agency may apply the exceptions at subparagraph (b) (2) or (3) of this section to individual task orders, and it may structure the contract so that modified patent rights clauses will apply to the task order even though the clause at 52.227-11 is applicable to the remainder of the work. In those instances when the Government has the right to acquire title at the time of contracting, the contractor may, nevertheless, request greater rights to an identified invention (see 27.304-1(a)). The right of the contractor to retain title shall, in any event, be subject to the provisions of paragraphs (c) through (g) of this section.

(c) *Government license.* The Government shall have at least a nonexclusive, nontransferable, irrevocable, paid-up license to practice, or have practiced for or on behalf of the United States, any subject invention throughout the world; and may, if provided in the contract (see Alternative I of the applicable patent rights clause), have additional rights to sublicense any foreign government or international organization pursuant to existing treaties or agreements identified in the contract, or to otherwise effectuate such treaties or agreements. In the case of long term contracts, the contract may also provide (see Alternate II) such rights with respect to treaties or agreements to be entered into by the Government after the award of the contract.

(d) *Government right to receive title.* (1) The Government has the right to receive title to any invention if the contract so provides pursuant to a determination made in accordance with subparagraph (b) (1), (2), (3), or (4) of this section. In addition, to the extent provided in the patent rights clause, the Government has the right to receive title to an invention—

(i) If the contractor has not disclosed the invention within the time specified in the clause;

(ii) In any country where the contractor does not elect to retain rights or fails to elect to retain rights to the invention within the time specified in the clause;

(iii) In any country where the contractor has not filed a patent application within the time specified in the clause;

(iv) In any country where the contractor decides not to continue prosecution of a patent application, pay maintenance fees, or defend in a reexamination or opposition proceeding on the patent; and/or

(v) In any country where the contractor no longer desires to retain title.

(2) For the purposes of this paragraph, election or filing in a European Patent Office Region or under the Patent Cooperation Treaty constitutes election or filing in any country covered therein to meet the times specified in the clause, provided that the Government has the right to receive title in those countries not subsequently designated by the contractor.

(e) *Utilization reports.* The Government shall have the right to require periodic reporting on the utilization or efforts at obtaining utilization that are being made by the contractor or its licensees or assignees. Such reporting by small business firms and nonprofit organizations may be required in accordance with instructions as may be issued by the Department of Commerce. Agencies should protect the confidentiality or utilization reports which are marked with restrictions to the extent permitted by 35 U.S.C. 205 or other applicable laws and 37 CFR part 401. Agencies shall not disclose such utilization reports to persons outside the Government without permission of

the contractor. Contractors will continue to provide confidential markings to help prevent inadvertent release outside the agency.

(f) *March-in rights.* (1) With respect to any subject invention in which a contractor has acquired title, contracts provide that the agency shall have the right (unless provided otherwise in accordance with 27.304-1(f)) to require the contractor, an assignee, or exclusive licensee of a subject invention to grant a nonexclusive, partially exclusive, or exclusive license in any field of use to a responsible applicant or applicants, upon terms that are reasonable under the circumstances, and if the contractor, assignee, or exclusive licensee refuses such request, to grant such a license itself, if the agency determines that such action is necessary—

(i) Because the contractor or assignee has not taken, or is not expected to take within a reasonable time, effective steps to achieve practical application of the subject invention in such field of use;

(ii) To alleviate health or safety needs which are not reasonably satisfied by the contractor, assignee, or their licensees;

(iii) To meet requirements for public use specified by Federal regulations and such requirements are not reasonably satisfied by the contractor, assignee, or licensees; or

(iv) Because the agreement required by paragraph (g) below has neither been obtained nor waived, or because a licensee of the exclusive right to use or sell any subject invention in the United States is in breach of its agreement obtained pursuant to paragraph (g) below.

(2) This right of the agency shall be exercised only after the contractor has been provided a reasonable time to present facts and show cause why the proposed agency action should not be taken, and afforded an opportunity to take appropriate action if the contractor wishes to dispute or appeal the proposed action, in accordance with 27.304-1(g).

(g) *Preference for United States industry.* Unless provided otherwise in accordance with 27.304-1(f), contracts provide that no contractor which receives title to any subject invention and no

assignee of any such contractor shall grant to any person the exclusive right to use or sell any subject invention in the United States unless such person agrees that any products embodying the subject invention or produced through the use of the subject invention will be manufactured substantially in the United States. However, in individual cases, the requirement for such an agreement may be waived by the agency upon a showing by the contractor or assignee that reasonable but unsuccessful efforts have been made to grant licenses on similar terms to potential licensees that would be likely to manufacture substantially in the United States or that under the circumstances domestic manufacture is not commercially feasible.

(h) *Small business preference.* (1) Non-profit organization contractors are expected to use efforts that are reasonable under the circumstances to attract small business licensees. They are also expected to give small business firms that meet the standard outlined in the clause at 52.227-11, Patent Rights—Retention by the Contractor (Short Form), a preference over other applicants for licenses. What constitutes reasonable efforts to attract small business licensees will vary with the circumstances and the nature, duration, and expense of efforts needed to bring the invention to the market. Subparagraph (k)(4) of the clause is not intended, for example, to prevent non-profit organizations from providing larger firms with a right of first refusal or other options in inventions that relate to research being supported under long-term or other arrangements with larger companies. Under such circumstances, it would not be reasonable to seek and to give a preference to small business licensees.

(2) Small business firms that believe a nonprofit organization is not meeting its obligations under the clause may report their concerns to the Secretary of Commerce. To the extent deemed appropriate, the Secretary of Commerce will undertake informal investigation of the concern, and, if appropriate, enter into discussions or negotiations with the nonprofit organization to the end of improving its efforts in meeting its obligations under the

clause. However, in no event will the Secretary of Commerce intervene in ongoing negotiations or contractor decisions concerning the licensing of a specific subject invention. All the above investigations, discussions, and negotiations of the Secretary of Commerce will be in coordinations with other interested agencies, including the Small Business Administration; and in the case of a contract for the operation of a Government-owned, contractor-operated research or production facility, the Secretary of Commerce will coordinate with the agency responsible for the facility prior to any discussions or negotiations with the contractor.

(i) *Minimum rights to contractor.* (1) When the Government acquires title to a subject invention, the contractor is normally granted a revocable, non-exclusive, royalty-free license to that invention throughout the world. The contractor's license extends to its domestic subsidiaries and affiliates, if any, within the corporate structure of which the contractor is a part and includes the right to grant sublicenses of the same scope to the extent the contractor was legally obligated to do so at the time the contract was awarded. The license is transferable only with the approval of the contracting officer except when transferred to the successor of that part of the contractor's business to which the invention pertains.

(2) The contractor's domestic license may be revoked or modified to the extent necessary to achieve expeditious practical application of the subject invention pursuant to an application for an exclusive license submitted in accordance with the applicable provisions in the Federal Property Management Regulations and agency licensing regulations. This license will not be revoked in that field of use or the geographical areas in which the contractor has achieved practical application and continues to make the benefits of the invention reasonably accessible to the public. The license in any foreign country may be revoked or modified to the extent the contractor, its licensees, or its domestic subsidiaries or affiliates

have failed to achieve practical application in that country. See the procedures at 27.304-1(e).

(j) *Confidentiality of inventions.* The publication of information disclosing an invention by any party before the filing of a patent application may create a bar to a valid patent. Accordingly, 35 U.S.C. 205 and 37 CFR part 40 provide that Federal agencies are authorized to withhold from disclosure to the public information disclosing any invention in which the Federal Government owns or may own a right, title, or interest (including a nonexclusive license) for a reasonable time in order for a patent application to be filed. Furthermore, Federal agencies shall not be required to release copies of any document which is part of an application for patent filed with the United States Patent and Trademark Office or with any foreign patent office. The Presidential Memorandum on Government Patent Policy specifies that agencies should protect the confidentiality of invention disclosures and patent applications required in performance or in consequence of awards to the extent permitted by 35 U.S.C. 205 or other applicable laws.

[49 FR 12974, Mar. 30, 1984, as amended at 50 FR 1743, Jan. 11, 1985; 50 FR 52429, Dec. 23, 1985; 51 FR 2665, Jan. 17, 1986; 54 FR 25063, June 12, 1989 and 55 FR 25525, June 21, 1990; 62 FR 40237, July 25, 1997]

### 27.303 Contract clauses.

In contracts (and solicitations therefor) for experimental, developmental, or research work (but see 27.304-3 regarding contracts for construction work or architect-engineer services), a patent rights clause shall be inserted as follows:

(a)(1) The contracting officer shall insert the clause at 52.227-11, Patent Rights—Retention by the Contractor (Short Form), if all the following conditions apply:

(i) The contractor is a small business concern or nonprofit organization as defined in 27.301 or, except for contracts of the Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of Energy (DOE), or the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), any other type of contractor.

(ii) No alternative patent rights clause is used in accordance with paragraph (c) or (d) of this section or 27.304-2.

(2) To the extent the information is not required elsewhere in the contract, and unless otherwise specified by agency supplemental regulations, the contracting officer may modify 52.227-11(f) to require the contractor to do one or more of the following:

(i) Provide periodic (but not more frequently than annually) listings of all subject inventions required to be disclosed during the period covered by the report.

(ii) Provide a report prior to the closeout of the contract listing all subject inventions or stating that there were none.

(iii) Provide, upon request, the filing date, serial number and title, a copy of the patent application, and patent number and issue date for any subject invention in any country in which the contractor has applied for patents.

(iv) Furnish the Government an irrevocable power to inspect and make copies of the patent application file when a Federal Government employee is a coinventor.

(3) If the acquisition of patent rights for the benefit of a foreign government is required under a treaty or executive agreement, or if the agency head or a designee determines at the time of contracting that it would be in the national interest to acquire the right to sublicense foreign governments or international organizations pursuant to any existing or future treaty or agreement, the contracting officer shall use the clause at 52.227-11, with its Alternate I. If other rights are necessary to effectuate the treaty or agreement, Alternate I may be appropriately modified. In long term contracts, Alternate II shall be added if necessary to effectuate treaties or agreements to be entered into.

(4) If the contracting officer includes the clause at 52.227-11, Patent Rights—Retention by the Contractor (Short Form), in a contract with a nonprofit organization for the operation of a Government-owned facility, the contracting officer will include Alternate III in lieu of subparagraph (k)(3) of the clause.