

I. Purpose

This Directive establishes a disciplined U.S. Department of Education (ED) wide acquisition planning system for products and services in a manner that fulfills the ED mission and objectives in the most effective, economical, and timely manner. This Directive shall set forth policy and procedures for acquisition planning at the ED level with the process for acquisition planning at the individual contract action level to begin thereafter. Refer to Appendix A - Writing Individual Acquisition Plans for information on requirements for preparing individual contract acquisition plans.

II. Policy

It is the policy of ED to conduct acquisition planning in advance of the fiscal year in which contract awards are required and in concert with the budget formulation process and information technology investment management process. Acquisition planning shall be performed in order to promote and provide for:

- A. Acquiring products and services in a manner that facilitates ED's ability to achieve its mission and objectives in a timely and cost effective manner.
- B. Acquisition of commercial items to the extent that commercial items are available or suitable for ED's needs, or items of a non-developmental nature.
- C. Full and Open competition, or when full and open competition is not required, obtaining competition to the maximum extent practicable in consideration of the products or services to be acquired.
- D. Planning for risk and assessing risk events and risk areas to determine potential impact and its causes.
- E. Developing strategies that will promote the effective use of small business, veteran-owned small business, service-disabled veteran-owned small business, HUBZone small business, small disadvantaged business, and woman-owned small business concerns.
- F. Leveraging economic efficiencies in commodity purchases and strategic sourcing initiatives.
- G. To the extent possible, avoiding excessive end of fiscal year acquisitions by allowing time for managing workload distribution that is reasonable and efficient.
- H. Flexibility in choosing acquisition solutions and ensuring the team will have sufficient lead-time for possible alternative approaches to the acquisition.
- I. Communication to all ED principal offices that impact, or are impacted by the execution of the acquisition plan.

Acquisition planning shall involve the efforts of all ED personnel responsible for the significant aspects of the acquisition process.

III. Authorization

The issuance of internal ED guidance on acquisition is authorized by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 48 CFR. The FAR can be found at [Acquisition Central](#).

IV. Applicability

- A. This Directive applies to all ED principal offices and other boards, commissions, and councils under the management control of ED that sponsor contracts.
- B. This Directive applies to the following contract actions over the simplified acquisition threshold:
 - 1. New Full and Open Competitions;
 - 2. New 8(a) Contracts;
 - 3. New GSA Task/Delivery Orders;
 - 4. New Multiple Award Task Orders (MATO);
 - 5. Other Government-wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) Task Orders;
 - 6. Task/Delivery Order/Work Requests against ED Contracts;
 - 7. Incremental Funding;
 - 8. Option Funding;
 - 9. Change Orders or other Modification Actions; and
 - 10. Interagency Agreements.¹
- C. This Directive shall set forth the coordinative efforts of acquisition planning, project planning, budget formulation, and ED's information technology investment process.

V. Definitions

- A. **Acquisition** – The acquiring by contract, with appropriated funds, of products or services (including construction) by and for the use of the federal government through purchase or lease.
- B. **Acquisition Plan** – As used in this Directive, a written annual plan used by ED to implement the agency strategy for accomplishing annual goals through the effective use of contracts. It includes the development of the overall strategies for managing specific acquisitions, including proposed action milestones for both the Principal Offices and the contracting activity. The written plan developed by ED personnel complies with the format and content requirements as outlined in this Directive. Refer to [Appendix A – Writing Individual Acquisition Plans](#) for information on requirements for preparing individual contract acquisition plans.

¹ This Directive shall apply to interagency agreements subject to ACS Directive OPEPD:1-101, Interagency Agreements. Refer to ACS Directive OPEPD:1-101 for further clearance and approval requirements of individual interagency agreements.

- C. **Acquisition Planning** – As used in this Directive, the process by which the efforts of all ED personnel responsible for the acquisition portfolio of the principal office are coordinated and integrated through a comprehensive written acquisition plan that fulfills ED's need in a timely manner and at a reasonable cost. Refer to Appendix A – Writing Individual Acquisition Plans for information on requirements for acquisition planning at the individual contract action level.
- D. **Budget Process** – Budgeting for a fiscal year is divided into three phases: (1) budget formulation, (2) budget presentation and the congressional process, and (3) budget execution. The federal budget sets forth priorities and levels of spending, ways of financing the spending, and a plan for managing the funds. Since formulating a budget involves choosing among alternatives, a budget is also a very significant statement of policy. ED's and the President's goals and priorities are reflected each year in the budget and supporting legislation that is formulated by the Administration and presented to the public and Congress.
- E. **Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO)** – The individual who is responsible for the acquisition management of a federal agency. This individual shall advise and assist the Secretary and other senior management officials to ensure that the mission of ED is achieved through the management of ED's acquisition activities. The Chief Financial Officer has been delegated the duties of the CAO.
- F. **Contract** – A mutually binding legal relationship obligating the seller to furnish the products or services and the buyer to pay for them. Contracts includes awards and notices of awards; job orders or task letters issued under basic ordering agreements; letter contracts; orders, such as purchase orders, under which a contract becomes effective by written acceptance or performance; and bilateral contract modification. Contracts do not include grants and cooperative agreements (FAR 2.1). *For purposes of this Directive 'contract' and 'acquisition' shall be used interchangeably.*
- G. **Contracts Manager** – Responsible contracting officer/manager within the contracting activity for coordinating acquisition planning with the principal office. The contracts manager shall work with the principal officer or designee to develop all aspects of the acquisition plan. The contracts manager shall concur on the acquisition plan (including modifications and changes) before submitting to the Secretary for approval.
- H. **Contracting Activity** – An element of ED designated by the Secretary and delegated broad authority regarding acquisition functions. For the purposes of this Directive, the contracting activities for ED are OCFO/Contracts and Acquisitions Management (CAM), Federal Student Aid, and all boards, commissions, and councils under the management control of ED that sponsor contracts.
- I. **Information Technology (IT) Project (or Initiative)** – As used in this Directive, an IT project is any new or existing information technology idea, effort, program, system, service or expenditure that pertains to a discrete IT application, technology, or management process. Information technology, as defined in the Clinger-Cohen

Act, involves activities and services related to planning, developing, purchasing, configuring, testing, maintaining, enhancing, deploying or retiring any technology for the automatic acquisition, storage, manipulation, management, movement, control, display, switching, interchange, transmission, or reception of data or information. IT projects are subject to ED's IT investment management review process. Cost, schedule, and scope factors in each project are scrutinized using earned value management tools for optimum investment planning and control.

- J. **Interagency Agreement** – A written agreement between agencies for the purpose of establishing the respective responsibilities of each agency in carrying out a project or activity of mutual interest. Agreements may cover the provisions of services, the conditions for joint project support, or the provision of products, services, facilities, equipment, or other assistance in carrying out the functions, either administrative or program, of the agencies that are party to the agreement.
- K. **Performance-Based Organization (PBO)** – A results-driven government program, office, or other discrete management unit that commits to clear objectives, specific measurable goals, customer service standards, and targets for improved performance. Within ED, Federal Student Aid is a PBO (Public Law 105-244, Sec. 141(a)) and is a contracting activity. All references throughout this Directive to the 'PBO' shall imply that Federal Student Aid maintains separate authority to coordinate and manage acquisition planning internal to Federal Student Aid.
- L. **Principal Office** – A major organizational unit of ED (usually headed by an assistant secretary or assistant deputy secretary that has responsibility for administering funds in, or programs benefiting from, a contract. (For purposes of this Directive, this includes the PBO, and all boards, commissions, and councils under the management control of ED.)
- M. **Principal Officer** – An assistant secretary or assistant deputy secretary that has responsibility for a principal office. (For purposes of this Directive, this includes the Chief Operating Officer, PBO, and all heads of boards, commissions, and councils under the management control of ED.)
- N. **Senior Procurement Executive (SPE)** - The individual who is responsible for management direction of the procurement system of ED, including implementation of the unique procurement policies, regulations, and standards of the executive agency. The Director, CAM has been delegated the duties of the SPE.

VI. Responsibilities

A. Secretary of Education

Responsible for approving ED's acquisition plan.

B. Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO) and Senior Procurement Executive (SPE)

1. Responsible for providing acquisition leadership and management to ED's acquisition system.
2. Jointly make acquisition strategic in vision and purpose through management and execution of an efficient acquisition planning system.
3. Advise the Secretary on all matters concerning ED's acquisition plan.
4. The CAO assists the secretary and principal officers on all matters related to acquisition to ensure that ED's mission is achieved.
5. The SPE manages the direction of the acquisition system, including implementation of the unique acquisition policies, regulations, and standards for ED.
6. The SPE coordinates ED's acquisition planning process and provides oversight, ensuring that planning activities are completed and follow established ED and federal acquisition policies and procedures.

C. Principal Officer [or designee(s)]

1. In partnership with the Secretary, the principal officer establishes ED program goals and objectives.
2. Initiates the acquisition planning function within the principal office.
3. Ensures that acquisition goals and objectives are aligned with the program goals and objectives of the principal office.
4. Forms a team consisting of those who will be responsible for significant aspects of the acquisitions, such as contracting, fiscal, legal, and technical personnel.
5. Periodically reviews the written acquisition plan and, if appropriate, revises as necessary.

D. Contracting Activity

1. Responsible for carrying out the duties of the CAO and SPE in implementing the vision of the Federal acquisition system to satisfy its customers by timely delivery of the best value product or service while maintaining the public's trust and fulfilling public objectives.
2. Works in partnership with the principal officer and designees to develop the principal office's acquisition plan.
3. Negotiates changes to the acquisition plan with the principal office, if necessary, to allow as an example, for proper timeframes for any negotiation and the award

of contracts; or for other purposes that will result in an efficient acquisition plan that fulfills the objectives of the principal office and ED.

E. Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)

1. Collaborates with principal offices to ensure an effective and efficient review of IT acquisitions so that such acquisitions align with ED's policies and standards, eliminate redundancies, and are driven by sound business needs and requirements as defined in an approved business case.
2. Manages ED's Information Technology Investment Management (ITIM) process. During this process, ED's senior leadership decide which information technology (IT) initiatives to fund and include in ED's IT portfolio.
3. Ensures that IT projects are successfully integrated with ED's budget, acquisition, and capital investment planning processes.

VII. Requirements

A. ED Acquisition Planning Schedule

1. Preparation of ED's budget begins in May (Phase I: Budget Formulation), when the Secretary sends a letter to the principal officers initiating the process. This is roughly 1-1/2 years before the beginning of the fiscal year of the budget in question. The principal offices begin to make their plans, set their priorities, and develop their budget requests, which are usually submitted to OMB in early September.
2. In concert with the budget formulation process, the Secretary or designee will, by written communication, ask each Principal Office to ***submit acquisition plans for obligations for the upcoming fiscal year (FY) during May/June of the current year.*** As an example, for ED's budgeting process - FY 2008, budget formulation commences May 2006. Acquisition plans will be requested in May/June 2006 for contract requirements that begin in fiscal year FY 2007 and that have fiscal year obligations in FY 2007. It is anticipated that within the context of budget formulation and analysis cycle, principal offices are already making sound decisions on new and existing acquisition initiatives.
3. Principal offices shall submit acquisition plans to the SPE for the Secretary's approval by ***July of the current year.***
4. The SPE or designee shall review each principal office acquisition plan for sufficiency and prepare a complete ED acquisition plan package for the Secretary's approval. (See Section VII.D of this Directive.) It is anticipated that the acquisition plan shall have the Secretary's approval by ***no later than September 30 of the current year.***

B. Preparation of Principal Office Acquisition Plans

1. Principal officers shall make preliminary acquisition decisions on new and existing initiatives and total dollar levels based upon performance goals, objectives and legislative priorities.
2. Contracts managers and the principal officers or designee(s) shall collaborate on developing the content of the acquisition plans.
3. This collaboration shall also involve budget and other affected principal offices wherever applicable; e.g., where principal offices share the same contractor resources.

C. Content of Principal Office Acquisition Plans

Each principal office acquisition plan shall include the following information for each contract requirement estimated over \$100,000 (although a contract action may have been submitted and approved during a prior acquisition planning cycle, if the contract action requires obligation of fiscal year funds for which acquisition planning is performed, that contract action *must* be included on the acquisition plan for identification and approval):

1. Name of Principal Office – Identifier shall be by office acronym (ie., IES, FSA, OESE, etc.).
2. Tracking Number – Unique identifier assigned to each contract requirement. Identifier will be assigned by the contracting activity once acquisition plans are submitted to the contracting activity for review and clearance. The identifier will be used throughout the planning and award phase to identify the contract requirement from the acquisition plan.
3. Title/Description – A title and concise description of the contract requirement. Information should enable the reader (government and industry) to understand the nature of the products or services.
4. Lines of Business – ED is organized into seven (7) major lines of business as shown below. Contract requirements in the acquisition plan must be classified in one of these categories.
 - a. Loans: Loans Integration and System Integration;
 - b. Grants: Grants Modernization (Discretionary & Formula);
 - c. Evaluation: Evidence-based Evaluation;
 - d. Information Dissemination;
 - e. Administration;
 - f. Research; and
 - g. Compliance.

5. Performance Goal(s) – The organizational goals and priorities set by the principal officer and the Secretary. Contract actions in the acquisition plan must be classified under one or more of the principal office performance goal(s).
6. Anticipated Contract Action Type – To be specified as one of the following:
 - a. New Full and Open Competition;
 - b. New 8(a) Contract;
 - c. New GSA Task/Delivery Order;
 - d. New Multiple Award Task Order (MATO);
 - e. Other Government-wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) Task Order;
 - f. Task/Delivery Order/Work Request against ED Contracts;
 - g. Incremental Funding;
 - h. Option Funding;
 - i. Non-competitive contracts;
 - j. Change Order or other Modification Actions; or
 - k. Interagency Agreement.
7. Total Estimated Fiscal Year Obligation – Total dollar levels estimated for each contract action usually based on either proposed budget levels for new initiatives, independent cost estimations, or pre-negotiated pricing under existing contract requirements.
8. Funding Authority – Determined by the statutory authorization and associated appropriation.
9. Estimated Total Contract Value (Inclusive of All Options) – Estimated total cost of the contract award including estimated cost for all optional years.
10. Contract/Task Order Number (If Applicable) – ED assigned contract number if this is a modification to an existing contract or a task order issued under an existing contract. Otherwise, indicate “new”.
11. Contractor’s Name – Vendor name awarded existing contract or task order. Otherwise, indicate “new”.
12. Program Manager (PM) Name – As defined in this Directive, the individual in the principal office with overall supervisory responsibility for monitoring the programmatic or technical aspects of *all contracts within the program*. The PM’s view is more strategic than operational. This individual has overall authority for the contract action planned. The PM is a member of the acquisition team.

For planning purposes, the PM is the individual who has/will have the responsibilities as described above for the contract action planned.
13. Project Manager (PjM) Name – As defined in this Directive, the individual in the principal office who has managing responsibility for the performance outcomes of the contract. The PjM has managing responsibilities for the contract action

planned. The PjM can also be the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR). However, in cases where the PjM and the COR are separate individuals, the PjM does not have delegated authority from the contracting officer to perform in an official capacity unless otherwise specified in the contract terms. The PjM is a member of the acquisition team.

For planning purposes, the PjM is the individual who has/will have the responsibilities as described above for the contract action planned.

14. Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) Name – A COR is the program office representative responsible for monitoring the programmatic or technical aspects of a contract and making recommendations to the contracting officer for necessary contract administration actions. The COR responsible for a particular contract is named in the contract. The COR is designated by, and works directly for, the contracting officer on all matters dealing with the contract(s) to which the COR is designated. The COR is a member of the acquisition team.

For planning purposes, this individual is the designated COR for the contract action planned. For new actions, this individual is to be nominated as the COR or if that determination has not been made at the time the plan is developed, leave this designation blank. The contracting officer will contact the PM or PjM to initiate discussions specific to the contract action.

15. Contracting Officer (CO) Name – A CO is the government's exclusive agent to a contract - the contractor is the other party - and therefore the only person with the authority to enter into, administer, and terminate contracts and make related determinations and findings. Only the CO holds the government warrant. The CO responsible for a particular contract is named in the contract. The CO is a member of the acquisition team.

For planning purposes, this individual is the designated CO for the contract action planned. For new actions, the contracts manager servicing the principal office will assign this individual. Until such time, the name of the contracts manager should be identified.

16. Contract Specialist/Administrator (CS) Name - A CS is the CO's designated representative in the contracting office who acts on behalf of the CO in most of the day-to-day administration of the contract. The CS is a member of the acquisition team.

For planning purposes, this individual is the designated CS for the contract action planned. For new actions, the contracts manager servicing the principal office will assign this individual. Until such time, the name of the contracts manager should be identified.

17. IT Investment Management Business Case Number/Estimated Date to the OCIO – For planned contract actions that are subject to ED's IT investment management (ITIM) process, include either the OCIO-assigned business case number of the

business case for the acquisition; or for IT initiatives not yet approved, indicate the anticipated date for business case submission to the OCIO. Refer to the OCIO IT Clearance Handbook and form for further information on obtaining OCIO IT clearance of contract actions. (Note: The checklists referenced can be found by *clicking* the hyperlink above.) Please note that while the OCIO IT Clearance Handbook mentioned above is not an ACS document and is not official ED policy, ED's IT investment management process is the policy as instituted by ED's Investment Review Board (IRB) and Planning and Investment Review Working Group (PIRWG).

18. Anticipated Date of Statement of Work (SOW)/Procurement Request (PR) to Contracting Activity – In coordination with (19) below, indicate the date principal office anticipates submitting either the SOW or PR to the contract activity for action.
19. Estimated Award Date- In coordination with (18) above, indicate the date the principal office requires contract services to commence or products to be delivered.
20. Recompete Y/N - For new contract actions, indicate if it is a re-competition of an existing contract.
21. Incumbency Y/N – For contract actions under existing contracts, indicate if the contractor for the current contract was also the contractor for the previous contract.

D. Submission of Principal Office Acquisition Plans for Secretary Approval

1. After consultation with the contracts manager, principal offices will forward the acquisition plans to the SPE. The SPE or designee will review the principal office acquisition plans, confer with the contracts manager, and prepare the complete ED package to be sent to the Secretary through the Executive Secretariat.
2. Once the Secretary has approved the acquisition plan, the Executive Secretariat will notify the SPE. The SPE or designee will in turn, notify the principal offices. Once approval has been received, the principal office is not required to provide any further justification or request for approval except as provided in Section VII.E. of this Directive.²

E. Additions and/or Modifications to Approved Acquisition Plans

1. While acquisition planning provides an effective tool in the planning and management of resources, it is possible principal offices may encounter unanticipated additions or changes to the acquisition plans as organization priorities and funding resources change.

² In accordance with the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. APP.), the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) shall submit an acquisition plan to the Secretary for planning purposes; however, the OIG acquisition plan does not require Secretary approval.

2. For any principal office acquisition plan that meets the following changed conditions, principal offices are to follow Section VII.D. of this Directive.
 - a. Additional unplanned contract actions or interagency agreements over \$100,000.
 - b. Changes to contract requirements such that the original approved contract purpose and objectives are redefined by the proposed change. This may or may not impact the estimated award amount.

F. Fiscal Year-End Closing

1. Each fiscal year, the contracting activity will establish deadlines for awarding fiscal year-end obligations. These deadlines will apply to approved acquisition plans where the schedule for the initiation of the contract action(s) within the contracting activity has slipped beyond the planned due dates, or for contract actions meeting the conditions of Section VII.E. of this Directive.
2. If a principal office fails to meet the deadlines established for fiscal year-end closing for the reasons stated in Section VII.F.1. of this Directive, the principal officer or designee must submit a memorandum to the SPE requesting a waiver to the deadlines.³ As an example, if an approved acquisition plan states that a contract requirement is to be initiated to the contracting activity by September 1, and the deadline in the fiscal year-end closing memorandum states August 31, a waiver would not be required. However, if the principal office misses the date in the approved acquisition plan *and* the deadline in the fiscal year-end closing memorandum, a waiver will be required.
3. Upon receiving the SPE waiver for contract actions meeting the conditions of Section VII.E. of this Directive⁴, Section VII.D of this Directive shall be followed to obtain the Secretary's approval.
4. Interagency agreements shall follow the year-end closing deadlines established in the Interagency Agreement Directive.

G. Requests for Secretary Approval of Acquisition Initiatives Beyond the Current and Upcoming Fiscal Year Cycles

1. Acquisition planning is encouraged to begin as soon as a need has been identified. This Directive sets forth policy for acquisition planning in advance of the upcoming fiscal year. However, if during budget formulation or at any time during the year, new acquisition initiatives are recognized and are budgeted for execution beyond the fiscal year of the requested acquisition plans (using the

³ For principal offices with a contracting activity, internal waiver processes for missed year-end closing deadlines shall be separately established, as necessary.

⁴ For principal offices with a contracting activity, internal waiver processes for missed year-end closing deadlines shall be separately established, as necessary.

example in VII.A.2., acquisition initiatives budgeted for obligation in FY 2008), and acquisition planning must start as soon as possible to meet schedule award and delivery dates, the principal office shall notify the contracts manager at the earliest convenience.

2. In this case, notification is given to the Secretary for a preliminary approval in advance of the next ED acquisition planning cycle. This is necessary to ensure that the acquisition has received the Secretary's endorsement and that time and resources expended by the acquisition team are not unduly wasted. The SPE shall be notified of the circumstances and to initiate the request for the Secretary's preliminary approval.
3. During the next ED acquisition planning, the principal office shall be sure to include the contract action in the acquisition plan (in accordance with Section VII. of this Directive) to receive approval for funds obligation.

Appendix A

Appendix A: Writing Individual Acquisition Plans
Procedure for Writing Individual Acquisition Plans**What does this document do?**

This document explains how to write acquisition plans for individual acquisitions, and how to plan for successful contract award and successful delivery of the needed goods and services.

What is the policy on Writing Individual Acquisition Plans?

[Subpart 7.1 of the Federal Acquisition Regulations \(FAR\)](#) mandates acquisition planning and market research for all acquisitions to ensure that program customers receive the needed products or services that meet their needs for quality, timeliness and cost. ED's policy, as described in the ACS Directive on Acquisition Planning, is to plan well in advance and identify all contract actions in coordination with the budget process, the Information Technology investment management process, and all other affected and/or relevant ED offices.

Acquisition planning for straightforward simplified acquisitions up to \$100,000 may be quite simple. More complex and costly acquisitions require greater detail and formality in the planning process, commensurate with the size and complexity of the acquisition. The acquisition team must prepare a written acquisition plan for all acquisitions expected to be over \$100,000 in value, inclusive of all options.

Who must follow the procedures in this document?

This guide is for members of the acquisition team - employees who will have primary responsibilities for a particular acquisition. Other staff may join in the acquisition planning process as needed.

The 3 Basic Steps for Writing Individual Acquisition Plans are shown below.

1. Prepare for and conduct the acquisition planning meeting;
2. Write the Acquisition Plan; and
3. Update and complete the CPSS Procurement Plan.

1. Prepare for and conduct the acquisition planning meeting

As a Contracting Officer (CO), Contract Specialist (CS), or Principal Office point of contact you must:

- a. When the annual Acquisition Plan is circulated and/or at the time you are assigned to the acquisition, Identify the current acquisition from the annual Acquisition Plan approved by the Secretary. (Refer to the Acquisition Planning Directive for information when the contract action is not on the principal office acquisition plan.)
- b. Schedule an acquisition planning meeting with all members of the acquisition team, including all personnel with significant input into the acquisition. Such acquisition team members may include (but are not limited to):
 - Contracting Officer (CO)

Appendix A

- Contract Specialist (CS)
- Principal Office point of contact (this person will generally be appointed as Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) after contract award)
- Program Manager
- Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) representative
- Budget office representative
- [Investment Acquisition Management Team representative](#) (if your procurement requires guidance of the Acquisition or Investment Management Team - [see this page for more information](#))

As an acquisition team member you must:

- c. Prepare for the acquisition planning meeting by researching background documents and information relating to the acquisition such as:
 - [FAR Subpart 1.1](#) which describes the role of the acquisition team and the guiding principles for the Federal Acquisition System
 - Program area the planned acquisition will support
 - Samples of previous requirements documents, and other contract documents, for same or similar work
 - Market research completed for this acquisition or for same or similar previous acquisitions
 - Any draft documents for this acquisition (requirements document, milestone plan, etc)
 - Information on current labor rates
 - A chart of contract types
- d. Conduct acquisition planning meeting. Meeting participants bring to the discussion their individual expertise. They come prepared to discuss issues and details at the planning meeting; however, no individual is expected to come with a firm idea of all the above items. This may be the first time the acquisition team has discussed the requirements. Although this is an initial meeting, it is important because it sets the stage for the rest of the acquisition process. Participants may need to devote up to a day of time and effort to this meeting depending on the complexity of the requirement.

This meeting should cover, at a minimum, all the relevant subjects in [FAR Subpart 7.105, Contents of Written Acquisition Plans](#). The meeting should also include a thorough discussion the program-specific objectives of the acquisition, small business prime contracting and subcontracting opportunities, as well as all other ED and government-wide requirements. These include: [IT investment and acquisition management](#), [IT Security/Information Assurance](#), socioeconomic goals, [Green Purchasing requirements](#), [Section 508 accessibility considerations](#), etc.

- e. The meeting discussions will aid the team in developing an acquisition strategy,

Appendix A

including:

- Type of contract, including feasibility of using a fixed-price contract
- Ways to enhance competition
- Enhancing participation by disadvantaged, women-owned, veteran-owned, service-disabled veteran-owned, HUBZone, and HBCU small business concerns (E.g., use of 8(a) procedures, small business set-asides, evaluation credits, etc.)
- Possible use of a Government-wide agency contract (GWAC) or ED's Multiple Award Task Order Contract (MATO) vehicle
- Coordination with ED Pubs for distribution of ED information products
- Ways to streamline the acquisition, including whether oral presentations could be used in lieu of all or part of written technical proposals
- Use of performance-based service acquisition (PBSA) techniques
- Elements of contract administration
- Accessibility for the disabled/handicapped (meetings, publications, dissemination, software, etc.)
- Data and information technology systems security

Remember to gear your discussion around the specific needs of your acquisition. Be prepared to do the groundwork necessary to build a solicitation. Discussing the seemingly smallest details to the largest aspects of the acquisition is a good practice. The quality that goes into the planning process and the documents produced enhance the likelihood that the acquisition milestones established by the team will be met.

The team justifies the actions and requirements taken during the acquisition process. For example, if incremental funding is planned, the legislative authority (explicit or implied) is noted. The team discusses what the good aspects of any current contract are as well as those needing improvement, change, or elimination. The team asks itself: What can be improved upon from previous experiences with other contracts? What can be done to make the contract more performance based? Will the current team members (e.g. COR, CS) be the persons to follow through on administration?

- f. Finally, the acquisition team should reach agreement on an acquisition milestone plan that is reasonable and flexible so that all parties adhere to it. The acquisition milestone plan is governed by the requirements document and award dates in the Annual Acquisition Plan, and should be structured to ensure that the team can meet these dates. During the planning meeting, team members work out an initial timetable for providing the following milestones:
- Updating and completing the CPSS Milestone Plan
 - Completing the Request for Contract (RFC) package: · Clearances · CPSS Requisition · Certification of availability of funds · Funding including out-year availability · Justifications · Final requirements document · Source selection factors · Technical evaluation criteria · List of potential offerors (source list) · Additional technical and business proposal instructions · Any law authorizing the contract · Independent government cost estimate (IGCE)
 - Contract Review Board (CRB) approval of solicitation
 - Publicizing requirement
 - Releasing solicitation

Appendix A

- Receiving offers
- Convening evaluation panel
- Conducting panel discussions
- Establishing competitive range
- Conducting negotiations
- Closing negotiations and requesting Final Proposal Revisions (FPRs)
- Receiving FPRs
- Evaluating FPRs
- Preparing award documentation
- Requesting Office of the Secretary and CRB approval for award
- Making award (make sure this date matches date on the Annual Acquisition Plan)
- Holding internal acquisition team meeting to discuss contract monitoring plan
- Holding contract kick-off meeting with acquisition team including the contractor

Special Instructions: Make sure to build in the appropriate time to receive all clearances and approvals.

2 Write the Acquisition Plan

As a CS/CO, after the planning meeting and before requesting CRB approval of the solicitation, you must:

- a. Write the acquisition plan. With the assistance of the team, the CO and CS should be able to complete a written acquisition plan that covers all relevant points in [FAR 7.105](#). This plan must become a part of the official contract file. Open issues may be recorded as such and the written acquisition plan may be revised or updated later.

[FAR 7.105](#) lists the following elements for an acquisition plan:

(a) Acquisition background and objectives

- **Statement of need.** Introduce the plan by a brief statement of need. Summarize the technical and contractual history of the acquisition. Discuss feasible acquisition alternatives, the impact of prior acquisitions on those alternatives, and any related in-house effort.
- **Applicable conditions.** State all significant conditions affecting the acquisition, such as— (i) Requirements for compatibility with existing or future systems or programs; and (ii) Any known cost, schedule, and capability or performance constraints.
- **Cost.** Set forth the established cost goals for the acquisition and the rationale supporting them, and discuss related cost concepts to be employed.
- **Capability or performance.** Specify the required capabilities or performance characteristics of the supplies or the performance standards of the services being acquired and state how they are related to the need.
- **Delivery or performance-period requirements.** Describe the basis for establishing delivery or performance-period requirements (see Subpart 11.4). Explain and provide reasons for any urgency if it results in concurrency of

Appendix A

development and production or constitutes justification for not providing for full and open competition.

- **Trade-offs.** Discuss the expected consequences of trade-offs among the various cost, capability or performance, and schedule goals.
 - **Risks.** Discuss technical, cost, and schedule risks and describe what efforts are planned or underway to reduce risk and the consequences of failure to achieve goals. If concurrency of development and production is planned, discuss its effects on cost and schedule risks.
 - **Acquisition streamlining.** If specifically designated by the requiring agency as a program subject to acquisition streamlining, discuss plans and procedures to— (i) Encourage industry participation by using draft solicitations, presolicitation conferences, and other means of stimulating industry involvement during design and development in recommending the most appropriate application and tailoring of contract requirements; (ii) Select and tailor only the necessary and cost-effective requirements; and (iii) State the timeframe for identifying which of those specifications and standards, originally provided for guidance only, shall become mandatory.
- b. FAR [7.105](#) continues with part (b) of the acquisition plan elements:
- (b) **Plan of action—**
- **Sources.** Indicate the prospective sources of supplies or services that can meet the need.
 - **Competition.** Describe how competition will be sought, promoted, and sustained throughout the course of the acquisition. If full and open competition is not contemplated, cite the authority in 6.302 and discuss. Describe how any subcontract competition will be sought, promoted, and sustained throughout the course of the acquisition. Identify any known barriers to increasing subcontract competition and address how to overcome them.
 - **Source-selection procedures.** Discuss the source-selection procedures for the acquisition, including the timing for submission and evaluation of proposals, and the relationship of evaluation factors to the attainment of the acquisition objectives (see [Subpart 15.3](#).)
 - **Acquisition considerations.** (i) For each contract contemplated, discuss contract type selection (see [Part 16](#)); use of multiyear contracting, options, or other special contracting methods (see [Part 17](#)); any special clauses, special solicitation provisions, or FAR deviations required (see [Subpart 1.4](#)); whether sealed bidding or negotiation will be used and why; whether equipment will be acquired by lease or purchase (see [Subpart 7.4](#)) and why; and any other contracting considerations. Provide rationale if a performance-based contract will not be used or if a performance-based contract for services is contemplated on other than a firm fixed price basis (see [37.102\(a\)](#) and [16.505\(a\)\(3\)](#)). (ii) For each order contemplated, discuss— (A) For information technology acquisitions, how the capital planning and investment control requirements of [40 U.S.C. 1422](#) and [OMB Circular A-130](#) will be met (see [7.103\(t\)](#) and [Part 39](#)) and (B) Why this action benefits the Government, such as when— (1) The agency can accomplish its mission more efficiently and effectively; or (2) Ordering through

Appendix A

- an indefinite delivery contract facilitates access to small business concerns.
- **Budgeting and funding.** Include budget estimates, explain how they were derived, and discuss the schedule for obtaining adequate funds at the time they are required ([see Subpart 32.7](#)).
 - **Product or service descriptions.** Explain the choice of product or service description types (including performance-based contracting descriptions) to be used in the acquisition.
 - **Priorities, allocations, and allotments.** When urgency of the requirement dictates a particularly short delivery or performance schedule, certain priorities may apply. If so, specify the method for obtaining and using priorities, allocations, and allotments, and the reasons for them ([see Subpart 11.6](#)).
 - **Contractor versus Government performance.** Address the consideration given to [OMB Circular No.A-76](#) ([see Subpart 7.3](#)).
 - **Inherently governmental functions.** Address the consideration given to [OFPP Policy Letter 92-1](#) ([see Subpart 7.5](#)).
 - **Management information requirements.** Discuss, as appropriate, what management system will be used by the Government to monitor the contractor's effort.
 - **Make or buy.** Discuss any consideration given to make-or-buy programs ([see 15.407-2](#)).
 - **Test and evaluation.** To the extent applicable, describe the test program of the contractor and the Government. Describe the test program for each major phase of a major system acquisition. If concurrency is planned, discuss the extent of testing to be accomplished before production release.
 - **Logistics considerations.** Describe— (i) The assumptions determining contractor or agency support, both initially and over the life of the acquisition, including consideration of contractor or agency maintenance and servicing ([see Subpart 7.3](#)) and distribution of commercial items; (ii) The reliability, maintainability, and quality assurance requirements, including any planned use of warranties ([See Part 46](#)); (iii) The requirements for contractor data (including repurchase data) and data rights, their estimated cost, and the use to be made of the data ([see Part 27](#)); and (iv) Standardization concepts, including the necessity to designate, in accordance with agency procedures, technical equipment as "standard" so that future purchases of the equipment can be made from the same manufacturing source.
 - **Government-furnished property.** Indicate any property to be furnished to contractors, including material and facilities, and discuss any associated considerations, such as its availability or the schedule for its acquisition ([see Part 45](#)).
 - **Government-furnished information.** Discuss any Government information, such as manuals, drawings, and test data, to be provided to prospective offerors and contractors.
 - **Environmental and energy conservation objectives.** Discuss all applicable environmental and energy conservation objectives associated with the acquisition ([see Part 23](#)), the applicability of an environmental assessment or

Appendix A

environmental impact statement ([see 40 CFR 1502](#)), the proposed resolution of environmental issues, and any environmentally-related requirements to be included in solicitations and contracts.

- **Security considerations.** For acquisitions dealing with classified matters, discuss how adequate security will be established, maintained, and monitored ([see Subpart 4.4](#)).
- **Contract administration.** Describe how the contract will be administered. In contracts for services, include how inspection and acceptance corresponding to the work statement's performance criteria will be enforced.
- **Other considerations.** Discuss, as applicable, standardization concepts, the industrial readiness program, the [Defense Production Act](#), [the Occupational Safety and Health Act](#), foreign sales implications, and any other matters germane to the plan not covered elsewhere.
- **Milestones for the acquisition cycle.** Address the steps discussed above and any others as appropriate.
- **Identification of participants in acquisition plan preparation.** List the individuals who participated in preparing the acquisition plan, giving contact information for each.

3 Update and complete the CPSS Procurement Plan

As an acquisition team member, you must update and complete the Procurement Plan in CPSS. The CPSS Procurement Plan serves as a common reference point for the planned acquisition, and should be initiated at the time the Annual Acquisition Plan is created. After writing the individual acquisition plan, the acquisition team may update the CPSS Procurement Plan to reflect agreed-upon milestone dates. CPSS procedures are covered in CPSS training and in the [CPSS manuals](#).

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. *What is acquisition planning?*

"Acquisition planning" for the purposes of this procedure, means the process by which the efforts of all ED personnel responsible for an individual acquisition are coordinated and integrated through a comprehensive plan for fulfilling the agency need in a timely manner and at a reasonable cost. It includes developing the overall strategy for managing the individual acquisition.

2. *What is the acquisition team?*

The people who will work together on an acquisition are the acquisition team. Members of the acquisition team share primary responsibility for the success of the acquisition. At a minimum, the acquisition team consists of the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR), the contracting officer (CO) and the contract specialist (CS). For larger acquisitions, the Program Manager or the COR's supervisor will likely be a member of the team.

3. *What is the CPSS "Procurement Plan"?*

The CPSS "Procurement Plan" is an electronic record of a planned acquisition. It includes a Milestone Plan and establishes a common reference point for the potential acquisition and a

Appendix A

place to collect and attach related documents. The CPSS Procurement Plan may be created as early as desired, even a few years before the acquisition will be needed or even before the nature of the acquisition has been determined. It may be updated later, as desired.

4. *What is a Milestone Plan?*

A Milestone Plan is a schedule of target dates for completing important activities during the life of the acquisition. The Milestone Plan covers both pre-award and post-award activities. You may update the Milestone Plan in CPSS whenever appropriate.

5. *What is a contract schedule?*

As defined in the FAR, the contract schedule is the part of a contract that contains the specific contract requirements (e.g., sections A through H and the statement of work). To avoid further confusion, we no longer use the term "contract schedule" to refer to the timetable of planned dates for completing the acquisition. (That is now called the Milestone Plan.)

6. *What is the "acquisition forecast?"*

Using reports from CPSS and other information, Contracts and Acquisitions Management (CAM) creates a forecast of upcoming contracting opportunities and posts it on the [ED web site](#) for potential offerors. The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization uses this forecast to promote opportunities at small business trade fairs and other events. Including a planned acquisition in the forecast meets North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) requirements and avoids mandatory NAFTA waiting periods that would otherwise apply.

7. *What does "market research" mean?*

Market research is the process of collecting and analyzing information about capabilities within the market to satisfy a potential acquisition need. Market research can help you:

- a. Structure the acquisition so that potential contractors can readily meet ED's requirements at a reasonable price. For example, market research might help you express contract requirements for a database so that a contractor could create and maintain it using inexpensive commercial software.
- b. Determine appropriate labor categories and job titles for the acquisition.
- c. Create a mailing list of potential offerors to receive a copy of the RFP.
- d. Determine what contract vehicles or streamlined acquisition methods are available for the products or services you want to acquire. Possibilities may include a GSA Federal Supply Schedule, an ED task order contract, another agency contract or GWAC, commercial item acquisition or simplified acquisition.

A large part of market research is based on the existing knowledge and experience with the marketplace of the COR and other members of the acquisition team. The internet has become a predominant tool for conducting market research. Market research is covered more thoroughly in [FAR Part 10](#).