

**SUBCHAPTER B—COMPETITION AND ACQUISITION PLANNING
PART 809—CONTRACTOR QUALIFICATIONS**

Subpart 809.1 – Responsible Prospective Contractors

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SUBPART 809.1 – RESPONSIBLE PROSPECTIVE CONTRACTORS

809.104 Standards.

809.104-2 Special standards.

(a) For a pre-award survey prescribed by 809.106-1, a contracting officer must develop special standards of sanitation applicable to the acquisition of subsistence and services prescribed by 809.106-1(a).

(b) An appropriate specialist will assist the contracting officer in developing the special standards under paragraph (a) of this section.

809.106 Pre-award surveys.

809.106-1 Conditions for pre-award surveys.

(a) Except as provided in paragraphs (b) through (e) of this section, a committee under the direction of the contracting officer and composed of representatives of the medical service or using service chiefs or designees appointed by the facility or VISN director will conduct a pre-award on-site evaluation of the plant, personnel, equipment and processes of the prospective contractor for contracts covering the products and services of the following:

- (1) Bakeries.
- (2) Dairies.
- (3) Ice cream plants.
- (4) Laundry and dry cleaning activities.

(b) Before any inspection, the contracting officer will determine whether another VA facility or another Federal agency has recently inspected and approved the plant.

(1) The contracting officer will accept an approved inspection report of another VA facility.

(2) If another Federal agency made a plant inspection not more than 6 months before the proposed VA contract period, the contracting officer may accept an approved inspection report of that other Federal agency as satisfactory evidence that the facilities of the bidder meet the bid requirements.

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(c) VA will not conduct a pre-award on-site evaluation of a dairy plant when VA receives an acceptable bid from a supplier of dairy products designated as No.1 in the Federal Specifications if the following conditions are met:

(1) The supplier has received a pasteurized milk rating of 90 percent or more for the type of product being supplied, on the basis of the U.S. Public Health Service milk ordinance and code.

(2) The rating is current (not over 2 years old) and has been determined by a certified State milk sanitation rating officer in the State of origin or by the Public Health Service. The contractor must maintain the rating of 90 percent or more during the period of the contract.

(3) The solicitation specifications must include the requirements in paragraphs (c)(1) and (2) of this section.

(d) A dairy plant that does not meet paragraph (c) of this section may offer only dairy products designated as No. 2 in the Federal Specifications. VA will make an award to such a firm only after it completes a pre-award on-site evaluation conducted under paragraph (a) of this section.

(e) Before it makes an open market purchase of fresh bakery products (such as pies, cakes, and cookies), VA will inspect and evaluate the plant where these products are produced or prepared under paragraph (a) of this section. VA will make an on-site evaluation at least annually and record the results on VA Form 10-2079, Inspection Report of Bakery.

SUBPART 809.2 – QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENTS

809.201 Definitions.

For the purposes of this subpart:

VA QPL means a VA Qualified Products List, a list of products qualified by the VA under VA specifications, or purchase descriptions, or commercial item descriptions.

VISN QPL means a VISN Qualified Products List, a list of products qualified by a VISN under VA specifications, or purchase descriptions, or commercial item descriptions.

809.202 Policy.

The HCA may sign a justification required by FAR 9.202(a)(1).

809.204 Responsibilities for establishment of a qualification requirement.

(a) Under FAR Subpart 9.2, VA may create VA QPLs for use on individual solicitations or on multiple solicitations issued by one or more VA facilities.

(b) An HCA or designee must support the creation of a VA QPL using one or more of the following justifications:

(1) The time required for testing the product after award would unduly delay product delivery.

(2) The cost of repetitive product testing would be excessive.

(3) Testing the product would require purchasing an expensive or complicated apparatus not commonly available.

(4) It is in the Government's interest to be assured before contract award that the product is satisfactory for its intended use.

(5) Determining acceptability would require providing product performance data to supplement technical requirements in the specification.

(6) Conducting a test would result in substantial or repetitive rejections.

(7) VA cannot economically develop clear, professional specifications for the product performance, balance, design, or construction, and professional judgment is required to determine whether the product is acceptable under VA requirements.

(c) If VA plans to establish a VA QPL for any given product, the contracting officer may limit known suppliers to suppliers whose products are covered by a Federal Supply Schedule contract, as provided at FAR Subpart 8.4.

(d) VA will pay the costs to inspect and test a product sample submitted under this section.

(1) The product supplier must pay for the sample and its transportation to the place of inspecting and testing.

(2) After inspection and testing, VA will return any product sample to the supplier "as is" unless:

(i) The inspection or test destroys the sample; or

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(ii) The supplier authorizes VA to retain or dispose of the sample.

(e) Once VA accepts a product for the VA QPL, VA may review the product for compliance with the applicable specification at any time.

(1) Where there is a variance between a VA specification that was the basis for the VA QPL and the product furnished by the supplier, the supplier must furnish an item that conforms to the VA specification.

(2) If the supplier fails to or is unable to provide a product that conforms to the applicable VA specification, the product will be removed from the VA QPL.

(f) VA's acceptance of a product for listing on the VA QPL does not:

(1) Guarantee that VA will accept the product in any future purchase; or

(2) Constitute a waiver of the specifications as to acceptance, inspection, testing, or other provisions of any future contract involving the product.

809.206 Acquisitions subject to qualification requirements.

809.206-1 General.

The HCA may determine that an emergency exists, as provided in FAR 9.206-1(b).

809.270 Qualified products for convenience/labor-saving foods.

(a) Each VISN Nutrition and Food Service representative is authorized to establish a common VISN QPL for convenience and labor-saving foods for use at medical facilities within the representative's VISN.

(1) The VISN Nutrition and Food Service representative must notify the Director, Nutrition and Food Service, VA Central Office, of the establishment or amendment of any VISN QPL.

(2) To avoid unnecessary duplication within a VISN, for medical facilities using an applicable VISN QPL under paragraph (b) of this section, the VISN Nutrition and Food Service representative must coordinate and consolidate test results and recommendations.

(b) Each medical facility may:

(1) Use its VISN QPL; and

(2) Test food of its choice, provided that the facility submits test results to the VISN Nutrition and Food Service representative.

(c) The VISN representative must provide a copy of each approved VISN QPL to the following:

(1) Each contracting office in the VISN.

(2) The Director, Nutrition and Food Service, VA Central office.

(3) Upon request, the Office of Acquisition and Materiel Management, VA Central Office.

SUBPART 809.4 – DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION, AND INELIGIBILITY

809.400 Scope of subpart.

This subpart supplements provisions of the FAR concerning procedures and related actions for the debarment and suspension of contractors.

809.402 Policy.

(a) When VA receives information that another agency is pursuing a debarment or suspension identical to a VA action against the same contractor, the Debarment and Suspension (D&S) Committee will coordinate prospective action with the appropriate official of the other agency to establish a lead agency.

(b) The D&S Committee will provide the designated lead agency with any information relevant to the action for consideration in the decision-making process.

(c) The D&S Committee will maintain close coordination with the appropriate official through completion of a final debarment or suspension decision.

809.404 Excluded Parties List System.

Acquisition Resources Service, Office of Acquisition and Materiel Management, is responsible for the actions described in FAR 9.404(c).

809.405 Effect of listing.

The authority under FAR 9.405(a), 9.405(d)(2), and 9.405(d)(3) to determine whether to solicit from, evaluate bids or proposals from, or award contracts to contractors whose names appear on the Excluded Parties List System is delegated to the SPE and is further delegated to the DSPE.

809.405-1 Continuation of current contracts.

Authority to make the determinations under FAR 9.405-1 is delegated to the SPE and is further delegated to the DSPE.

809.405-2 Restrictions on subcontracting.

When a subcontract is subject to Government consent, authority to make the written determination required under FAR 9.405-2 consenting to a contractor's use of a subcontractor who is debarred, suspended, or proposed for debarment is delegated to the SPE and is further delegated to the DSPE.

809.406 Debarment.**809.406-1 General.**

(a) As provided in FAR 9.406-1(c), authority to determine whether to continue business dealings between VA and a contractor debarred or proposed for debarment is delegated to the SPE and is further delegated to the DSPE.

(b) For the purposes of FAR 9.406-1, the DSPE is the debarring official under the Federal Management Regulation at 41 CFR 102-117.295.

(c) Additional factors that a debarring official should consider before arriving at a debarment decision include the following:

(1) Whether the contractor had a mechanism, such as a hotline, by which employees could have reported suspected instances of improper conduct, and instructions in place that encouraged employees to make such reports.

(2) Whether the contractor conducted periodic reviews of company business practices, procedures, policies, and internal controls for compliance with standards of conduct and the special requirements of Government contracting.

(3) Whether the contractor conducted internal and external audits as appropriate.

(4) Whether the contractor timely reported to appropriate Government officials any suspected or possible violations of law in connection with Government contracts or any other irregularities in connection with such contracts.

809.406-3 Procedures.

(a) Any individual may submit a recommendation to debar a contractor to the DSPE. The recommendation to debar must be supported with evidence of a cause for debarment listed in FAR 9.406-2. When the DSPE receives a recommendation for debarment, he or she will refer the matter to the D&S Committee. If the reporting individual is a VA employee and the recommendation to debar is based on possible criminal or fraudulent activities, the VA employee must report the circumstances to the VA Office of Inspector General before making a recommendation to the DSPE.

(b) When the D&S Committee finds evidence of a cause for debarment, as listed in FAR 9.406-2, with or without a recommendation, it will conduct a fact-finding and present facts to the debarring official.

(c) If the debarring official finds a basis for proposing a contractor for debarment, the D&S Committee will prepare a notice of proposed debarment under FAR 9.406-3(c) for the signature of the debarring official. The signed notice of proposed debarment will be sent to the last known address of the contractor, the contractor's counsel, or agent for service of process, by certified mail, return receipt requested. In the case of a business, the D&S Committee may send the notice of proposed debarment to any partner, principal, officer, director, owner or co-owner, or joint venture. The D&S Committee concurrently must post notice of proposed debarment to the General Services Administration Excluded Parties List System pending a debarment decision.

(d) If VA does not receive a reply from the contractor within 45 calendar days of sending the notice of proposed debarment, the D&S Committee will prepare a recommendation and refer the case to the debarring official for a decision on whether or not to debar based on the information available.

(e) If VA receives a reply from the contractor within 45 calendar days of sending the notice of proposed debarment, the D&S Committee must consider the information in the reply before the D&S Committee makes its recommendation to the debarring official.

(f) The D&S Committee, upon the request of the contractor proposed for debarment, must, as soon as practicable, allow the contractor an opportunity to appear before the D&S Committee to present information or argument in person

or through a representative. The contractor may supplement the oral presentation with written information and argument. The proceeding will be conducted in an informal manner and without requirement for a transcript. The D&S Committee shall prepare a report of the proceeding for the debarring official.

(g) If the D&S Committee finds that the contractor's submission in opposition to the debarment raises a genuine dispute over facts material to the proposed debarment and the debarment action is not based on a conviction or civil judgment, then the D&S Committee shall submit to the debarring official the information establishing the dispute of material facts. If the debarring official agrees that there is a genuine dispute of material facts, the debarring official shall refer the dispute to a designee for resolution pursuant to 809.470.

(h) If there are no disputes over material facts, the debarment action is based on a conviction or civil judgment, or all disputes over material facts have been resolved pursuant to 809.470, the debarring official will make a decision on the basis of all information available, including findings of facts and oral or written arguments presented or submitted to the D&S Committee by the contractor. The D&S Committee must update the status of the action on the General Services Administration Excluded Parties List System.

809.406-4 Period of debarment.

(a) Except in an unusual circumstance, the period of debarment will not exceed 3 years. The debarring official will base the period of debarment on the circumstances surrounding the cause for debarment.

(b) The DSPE may remove a debarment, amend its scope, or reduce the period of debarment based on a D&S Committee recommendation if:

(1) VA has debarred the contractor;

(2) The action is indicated after the DSPE reviews documentary evidence submitted by or on behalf of the contractor setting forth the appropriate grounds for granting relief. Appropriate grounds include newly discovered material evidence, reversal of a conviction, bona fide change of ownership or management, elimination of the cause for which debarment was imposed, or any other appropriate grounds.

809.407 Suspension.**809.407-1 General.**

(a) As provided in FAR 9.407-1(d), authority to determine whether to continue business dealings between VA and a suspended contractor is delegated to the SPE and is further delegated to the DSPE.

(b) For the purposes of FAR 9.407-1, the DSPE is the suspending official under the Federal Management Regulation at 41 CFR 102-117.295.

809.407-3 Procedures.

(a) Any individual may submit a recommendation to suspend a contractor to the DSPE. The recommendation to suspend must be supported with evidence of a cause for suspension listed in FAR 9.407-2. When the DSPE receives a recommendation for suspension, he or she will refer the matter to the D&S Committee. If the reporting individual is a VA employee and the recommendation to suspend is based on possible criminal or fraudulent activities, the VA employee must report the circumstances to the VA Office of Inspector General before making a recommendation to the DSPE.

(b) When the D&S Committee finds evidence of a cause for suspension, as listed in FAR 9.407-2, with or without a recommendation, it will conduct a fact-finding and present facts and recommendations to the suspending official.

(c) If the suspending official finds a basis for suspending a contractor, the D&S Committee will prepare a notice of suspension under FAR 9.407-3(c) for the signature of the suspending official. The signed notice of suspension will be sent to the last known address of the contractor, the contractor's counsel, or agent for service of process, by certified mail, return receipt requested. In the case of a business, the D&S Committee may send the notice of suspension to any partner, principal, officer, director, owner or co-owner, or joint venture. The D&S Committee concurrently must post notice of suspension to the General Services Administration Excluded Parties List System pending completion of investigation and any ensuing legal proceedings.

(d) If VA receives a reply from the contractor within 45 calendar days of sending the notice of suspension, the D&S Committee must consider the information in the reply before the Committee makes further recommendations to the suspending official. The D&S Committee, upon the request of a suspended contractor, must, as soon as practicable, allow the contractor an opportunity to appear before the D&S Committee to present information or argument in person or through a representative. The contractor may supplement the oral presentation with written information and argument. The proceeding will be

conducted in an informal manner and without requirement for a transcript. The D&S Committee shall prepare a report of the proceeding for the suspending official.

(e) In actions not based on an indictment, if the D&S Committee finds that the contractor's submission in opposition to the suspension raises a genuine dispute over facts material to the suspension, the D&S Committee shall submit to the suspending official the information establishing the dispute of material facts. However, the D&S Committee must first coordinate any further proceeding regarding the facts in dispute with the Department of Justice or with a State prosecuting authority in a case involving a State jurisdiction. VA will take no further action to determine disputed material facts pursuant to this section or 809.470 if the Department of Justice or a State prosecuting authority advises VA that additional proceedings to make such a determination would prejudice Federal or State legal proceedings.

(f) If the suspending official agrees that there is a genuine dispute of material facts, the suspending official shall refer the dispute to the designee for resolution pursuant to 809.470.

809.470 Fact-finding procedures.

The provisions of this section constitute the procedures to be used to resolve genuine disputes of fact pursuant to 809.406-3 and 809.407-3 of this chapter. The DSPE shall appoint a designee to conduct the fact-finding. OGC shall represent VA at any fact-finding hearing and may present witnesses for VA and question any witnesses presented by the contractor. The hearings shall be conducted in Washington, DC. The proceedings before the fact-finder will be limited to a finding of the facts in dispute, as determined by the debarring or suspending official. The fact-finder will establish the date for the fact-finding hearing, normally to be held within 45 working days of the submission of the dispute.

(a) The Government's representative and the contractor will have an opportunity to present evidence relevant to the facts at issue. The contractor may appear in person or through a representative at the fact-finding hearing. The contractor may submit documentary evidence, present witnesses, and confront any person the agency presents.

(b) Witnesses may testify in person. Witnesses will be reminded of the official nature of the proceedings and that any false testimony given is subject to criminal prosecution. Witnesses are subject to cross-examination. Hearsay evidence may be presented and will be given appropriate weight by the fact-finder.

(c) The proceedings shall be transcribed and a copy of the transcript shall be made available at cost to the contractor upon request, unless the contractor and the fact-finder, by mutual agreement, waive the requirement for a transcript.

(d) The fact-finder shall determine the disputed fact(s) by a preponderance of the evidence. As required by FAR 9.406-3(d)(2)(i) and 9.407-3(d)(2)(i), written findings of fact shall be prepared by the fact-finder. A copy of the findings of fact shall be provided to the debarring or suspending official, the Government's representative, and the contractor.

SUBPART 809.5 – ORGANIZATIONAL AND CONSULTANT CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

809.503 Waiver.

The HCA is delegated authority to waive any general rule or procedure of FAR Subpart 9.5. As provided at FAR 9.503, this authority may not be redelegated.

809.504 Contracting officer responsibilities.

(a) A contracting officer must determine whether awarding a contract will result in an actual or potential conflict of interest for the contractor.

(1) The contracting officer will make a conflict of interest determination after reviewing information submitted by offerors, evaluating information gathered under FAR 9.506, and exercising his or her own judgment.

(2) In evaluating possible organizational conflicts of interest, the contracting officer may obtain the advice of legal counsel and the assistance of technical specialists.

(b) If the contracting officer determines that there is no way to avoid or mitigate an organizational conflict of interest arising from a contract award, the contracting officer may disqualify the offeror from award under FAR 9.504(e).

(c) Even if awarding a contract will result in an organizational conflict of interest, the contracting officer may request a waiver from his or her HCA if awarding the contract is in the best interests of the Government.

(1) Before granting a waiver request under this paragraph, the HCA must obtain the concurrence of OGC.

(2) If the HCA grants a waiver request, the contracting officer may set contract terms and conditions to reduce any organizational conflict of interest to the greatest extent possible.

(d) In any solicitation for the services addressed at FAR 9.502, the contracting officer must require that each offeror submits a statement with its offer disclosing all facts relevant to an existing or potential organizational conflict of interest involving the contractor or any subcontractor during the life of the contract (see 809.507-1(b) and 852.209-70).

809.507 Solicitation provisions and contract clause.

809.507-1 Solicitation provisions.

(a) While conflicts of interest may not presently exist, award of certain types of contracts may create potential future organizational conflicts of interest (see FAR 9.508 for examples). If a solicitation may create a potential future organizational conflict of interest, the contracting officer shall insert a provision in the solicitation imposing an appropriate restraint on the contractor's eligibility for award of contracts in the future. Under FAR 9.507-1, the restraint must be appropriate to the nature of the conflict and may exclude the contractor from award of one or more contracts in the future.

(b) The clause at 852.209-70, Organizational conflicts of interest, must be included in any solicitation for the services addressed in FAR 9.502.