How to Become a Certified USDA Vendor

Andrea Lang, New Vendor Coordinator
What Do We Buy?

Each year, we purchase over $3 billion in American-grown food. These purchases support American agriculture and feed millions of school children, families, and other qualified individuals through USDA’s nutrition assistance programs and international food aid programs.

AMS purchases over **300 different products** including:

- Beef, pork, turkey, chicken, fish, and **eggs**
- Fruits, vegetables, beans, and tree nuts
- Dairy, grain, and oilseed products, including peanut butter
Get Started: 6 Steps

1. Review **AMS Master Solicitation** - contract clauses, provisions and requirements

2. Review **Product Specifications** to determine what you can supply

3. Get Approved: Review **Qualification Requirements**, Submit Application Package

4. Receive Solicitation and “Sharpen Your Pencil”

5. Submit Offer in WBSCM

6. Get Awarded, Perform, Get Paid
Step 1. Review Master Solicitation

**Resource:** AMS Master Solicitation

**Link:** [https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/solicitations](https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/solicitations)

The Master Solicitation for Commodity Procurements contains things like:

- Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) Clauses & Provisions
  - e.g., [https://sam.gov/content/home](https://sam.gov/content/home), Small Business Subcontracting Plans, Prompt Payment Act

- Ag. Acquisition Regulations (AGAR) Clauses & Provisions
  - e.g., Domestic Origin/Traceability

- AMS Policies
  - Plant Surveys; GHP/GAP; Food Defense Plans/Audits
  - Grading/Inspection/Certification
  - Use of the Web-Based Supply Chain Management (WBSCM) System
  - Transportation and Delivery Requirements
  - Invoicing, etc.
Step 2. Review Product Specifications


Specifications are referred to as “Commodity Specifications” or “Commodity Requirements Documents” or “Technical Requirement Supplements” (All are linked to on the above “Product Specs” page)

• USDA Specifications include things like:
  – Product Descriptions
  – Grades/Standards; Commercial Item Descriptions (CIDS)
  – Harvest/pack season – current production
  – Formulation/Fabrication requirements (fat, sodium, sugar)
  – Packaging/packing/labeling
  – USDA inspection, grading, and/or auditing requirements
  – Review any amendments to the specification
Qualification Requirement Checklist

- **System for Award Management (SAM)** [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov)

### Business Status
- Large Business
- Small Business
- Small Disadvantaged Business
- Women-Owned Business
- Veteran-Owned Business
- Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business
- HUBZone Business
- 8(a) Small Business Development Concern

- **Completed [WBSCM Vendor Registration Form](http://www.sam.gov)**

- **Company Letter** certifying capability to perform

- **Three (3) Letters of Reference** from customers your company sold the same or similar products to

- **Business Type**. Check one:  ◯ Manufacturer  ◯ Non-manufacturer

- **Check one or more as applicable.**  ◯ Grower  ◯ Grower/Packer/Shipper  ◯ Processor  ◯ Distributor/Wholesaler  ◯ Broker

- **Non-manufacturer**. The following requirements apply:
  - Letter from manufacturer/supplier certifying its willingness to provide product that meets the USDA commodity specifications
  - Complaint and Dispute Resolution Proposal

- **Most Recent Audited Financial Statements**

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Found on our New Vendor Qualification Requirements PDF located on our New Vendor Website: [https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/becoming-approved](https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/becoming-approved)
Additional Resources

Convenient Job Aids located on our New Vendor Website:
https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/becoming-approved
**Step 3. Get Approved: New Vendor Application**

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

- System for Award Management Registration ([https://sam.gov/content/home](https://sam.gov/content/home)), in accordance with FAR Part 4.11
  - Notarized Letter
  - SAM HelpDesk: 1-866-606-8220 Option 1
  - Business Status- [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)
  - Help Tab on SAM

- WBSCM Vendor Registration Form
- Company Letter certifying capability to perform
**Step 3. Get Approved: New Vendor Application**

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

- Three (3) Letters of Reference
- Current Audited or Reviewed Financial Statements, in accordance with FAR 9.104-1 (a) and FAR 9.104-3 (a)
  - At a minimum should include: balance sheet, profit and loss statement, statement of cash flows, statement of retained earnings, and any notes to the financial statement
**Step 3. Get Approved: New Vendor Application**

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

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

- ✓ Supplier Letter
- ✓ Complaint and Dispute Resolution Proposal
Step 3. Get Approved: New Vendor Application

- Application sent to Andrea at NewVendor@ams.usda.gov

- Financial Statements are sent to financial officer for review
  - All financials are encrypted
  - Only viewed by myself, financial officer, and approving Senior Contracting Officer (CO)

- Application then sent to AMS CO for approval
  - May require additional information such as: FDA Registration, Food Defense Audit Plan, PDFs of product labels
  - Approval takes 5-10 business days
**Step 3. Get Approved: New Vendor Application**

☑ Please make sure your company has passed the necessary inspections, food defense audits, and plant surveys prior to submitting a bid

☑ Contact information for AMS Auditing Services, AMS Inspection Services, and links to our product specifications, etc. can be found on our New Vendor Qualification Requirement PDF on our New Vendor webpage: [https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/becoming-approved](https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/becoming-approved)

☑ Please review AMS Commodity Procurement Food Specifications and Master Solicitation prior to bidding
Congratulations, you’re approved! Now what???

- Your WBSCM Vendor Registration form will be uploaded
- Receive an email from the WBSCM Support Branch
  - Fill out excel user registration
  - Please review the “WBSCM CVA-Roles and Responsibilities” document
  - Links to WBSCM training on how to submit a bid
  - WBSCM HelpDesk: WBSCMAMSHelpDesk@ams.usda.gov
- Sign up for GovDelivery in order to receive notifications on upcoming solicitations, etc.
- Read over Master Solicitation and Commodity Specifications
Points of Contact

NewVendor@ams.usda.gov

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Questions??