



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>

The Master Solicitation for Commodity Procurements contains things like:

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





Step 2. Review Product Specifications

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

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

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

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





Qualification Requirement Checklist

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System for Award Management (SAM) www.sam.gov 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Status. As indicated in SAM, business status is one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed WBSCM Vendor Registration Form 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company Letter- certifying capability to perform 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three (3) Letters of Reference from customers your company sold the same or similar products to 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Type. Check one: <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturer <input type="checkbox"/> Non-manufacturer 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check one or more as applicable. <input type="checkbox"/> Grower <input type="checkbox"/> Grower/Packer/Shipper <input type="checkbox"/> Processor <input type="checkbox"/> Distributor/Wholesaler <input type="checkbox"/> Broker 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-manufacturer. The following requirements apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter from manufacturer/supplier certifying its willingness to provide product that meets the USDA commodity specifications Complaint and Dispute Resolution Proposal 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most Recent Audited Financial Statements 	

Found on our New Vendor Qualification Requirements PDF located on our New Vendor Website:
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food/becoming-approved>





Additional Resources



Agricultural Marketing Service

“USDA FOODS” PURCHASING HOW TO BECOME AN APPROVED VENDOR

Thank you for your interest in becoming an approved vendor with USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the purchasing programs offered by the Commodity Procurement Program (CPP) on behalf of the National School Lunch and other domestic food nutrition assistance and international food aid programs.

As a first step, we ask that you review the list of the products that AMS CPP purchases. The products may be viewed by going to the [Purchase Programs: Solicitations & Awards](#) page of our website, and scrolling down to “Solicitations Schedules”. The Solicitation Schedules also provide an estimated timeframe when we will issue solicitations asking vendors to submit a bid. Please note that AMS CPP only purchases products shown on the list.

In order to participate in the AMS CPP purchase programs, the company must submit the required documentation, which will be reviewed by our Senior Contracting Officer (CO). Your application package will be submitted to the Senior CO once we receive all of the documents listed below

1. **System for Award Management (SAM):** The company must be registered “active” in SAM in order to participate in our program. Please go to <https://sam.gov/portal/SAM#1> to register. Make sure that the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code for the products you are interested in supplying are listed in SAM. The NAICS codes that USDA, AMS CPP uses can be obtained in the AMS Master Solicitation for Commodity Procurement dated April 2017: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/MSCP.pdf>.
 2. **Company letter certifying capability to perform:** We would like your capability statement to be on company letterhead and signed by a principal of the company. Your capability statement should include the products that you provide.
 3. **Three Letters of Reference from Satisfied Customers:** All reference letters should be on letterhead, signed by a company representative and include a phone number and address to verify. The statement must mention the product that was purchased how satisfied your client was with the product(s) or service(s) you sold to them.
 4. **Most Current Financial Statements:** Audited or reviewed financial statements, at a minimum, the statement should include a balance sheet, profit and loss statement, statement of cash flows, statement of retained earnings and any notes to the financial statement.
 5. **WBSCM Vendor Registration Form:** The vendor registration form located on our [website](#).
- If you are a non-manufacturer, you will have to submit two additional items:
6. **Supplier Letter:** This a letter from manufacturer/supplier stating it is willing to provide product that meets the commodity specifications. Please be sure the letter is on your manufacturer’s letterhead, includes the material code and description, and is signed by both you and your supplier.
 7. **Complaint and Dispute Resolution Proposal**

Please send all of the documents listed above to Andrea Lang, Small Business Coordinator, at your earliest convenience. After all documents are received, they will be reviewed by a Senior CO for approval. Approval may take 10 business days.

Questions?
Contact Andrea
Lang at (202) 720-
4237 or
NewVendor@ams.usda.gov

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>), in accordance with FAR Part 4.11
 - ✓ Notarized Letter
 - ✓ SAM HelpDesk: 1-866-606-8220 Option 1
 - ✓ Business Status-www.sba.gov
 - ✓ Help Tab on SAM
- ✓ WBSCM Vendor Registration Form
- ✓ Company Letter certifying capability to perform





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“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





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**“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>

- ✓ 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

Andrea Lang
(202) 720-4237





Questions??

