

Statement of Work Do's and Don'ts

SOW Do's:

- Clearly specify the requirements in order to permit the Government and the offerors to estimate the probable cost and to permit the offeror to determine the levels of expertise, manpower, and other resources needed to accomplish the task.
- State the specific duties of the contractor in such a way that the contractor knows what is required and can complete all tasks to the satisfaction of the contract administration office.
- Write specifics so that there is no question of whether the contractor is obligated to perform specific tasks.
- Reference only the absolute minimum applicable specifications and standards needed. Invoke only those documents to the extent required to satisfy the existing requirements. (The tailoring of reference document requirements should result in a reduction to the overall costs otherwise incurred if all requirements stated in a document were invoked).
- Separate general information from direction so that background information and suggested procedures are clearly distinguishable from contractor responsibilities.
- Avoid directing how tasks are to be performed and state only the results that are required.

SOW Don'ts:

- Establish a delivery schedule. However, the SOW may include significant milestones for clarity.
- Impose on the contractor a Government format when a contractor format is acceptable.
- Over specify. Specify only what is required and let the contractor establish the best method to fulfill the requirement.
- Invoke in-house management instructions.
- Use the SOW to establish or amend a specification.

Be careful with word usage:

- **Overused words** - When establishing the SOW for professional support services, the words and phrases "support" and "engineering and technical services" are commonly overused. "Support" is an ambiguous term. Specify the specific type of support needed. "Engineering and technical services" encompass a broad area of expertise. The SOW must state the minimal needs, even if it means broadening the work limitations to cover anticipated work tasks. For clarification, the SOW may include some examples of typical work to be done.
- **Ambiguity** - Contractors and inspectors go by the letter of the SOW. For instance, an engineer intended to have a damaged roof edge repaired and repainted. In the SOW, he wrote, "match the roof edge," but did not specify "repaint." The contractors who did the work matched the existing roof edge, but refused to paint it. The inspector agreed with the contractor's interpretation of the SOW since the engineer had not adequately described what was intended. The writer and reviewers of a SOW have a responsibility to ensure that ambiguities do not exist in the final SOW.