

**General Services
Administration**



**Federal Technology
Service**



**Office of Information
Security**

**Access Certificates
for
Electronic Services**

**Ordering
Guide**

**Task Order Award
Procedures**

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Introduction

The Access Certificates for Electronic Services (ACES) Program Task Order Award Procedures Guide provides an overview of the General Services Administration (GSA) ACES Program Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) Contract, defines the roles and responsibilities of the major participants in the contract award and administration process, and describes the procedures for awarding a task order under the Contract. This document is intended for guidance only. In the event that any statement in this document conflicts with terms and conditions of the Contract, the terms and conditions of the Contract take precedence.

Background

A Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) ensures equitable pricing across different contractors for like services. Orders are placed with the schedule contractor that represents the best value and results in the lowest overall cost alternative to meet the agency's needs.

By offering market competition for each order, MAS contracts provide Contracting Officers (COs) with the flexibility needed to better match the dynamics of the information security (IS) market. The use of MAS contracts results in lower prices, better quality, reduced time from requirements identification to award, and improved industry partner performance in satisfying customer requirements.

ACES Program Management Support

A GSA, Federal Technology Service (FTS) team, experienced in managing all of the details of the contracting process, is available to place orders and provide contract administration and program management for ACES Program projects.

GSA/FTS Office of Information Security (OIS) meets quarterly with the industry partners to discuss administrative matters, technology concepts and approaches, and needed improvements in the ordering process.

Roles & Responsibilities

This section defines the roles and responsibilities of the GSA, client, and industry partners in the ACES contracting and program management processes.

GSA	CLIENT	INDUSTRY PARTNER
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<p>ACES Primary Contracting Officer (PCO)</p> <p>Contracting Officer (CO)</p> <p>ACES Program Manager (PM)</p> <p>Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR)</p>	<p>Client Representative (CR)</p>	<p>Industry Partner Program Manager (PM)</p>
<p><i>ACES Primary Contracting Officer (PCO)</i></p>	<p>The ACES Primary Contracting Officer (PCO) has overall contractual responsibility for the ACES Master Contract. The PCO alone, without delegation, is authorized to take actions on behalf of the Government to modify the Contract terms, conditions, and requirements; exercise option renewals; and terminate the agreement. The PCO may delegate authority to award tasks to Warranted Contracting Officers. The PCO may delegate certain other authorities and responsibilities to Contracting Officer's Technical Representatives (COTRs). The PCO may delegate authority to GSA/FTS COs as well as COs in other Federal agencies on an individual basis to issue task orders under the ACES Contract.</p>	
<p><i>Contracting Officer (CO)</i></p>	<p>GSA/FTS/ OIS COs are delegated responsibility for the administration of task orders issued under the ACES Contract. The CO is authorized to negotiate, amend, issue, or modify task orders; accept or reject deliverables; and delegate COTR authority, as well as other contract administration functions such as resolving payment and performance problems.</p>	
<p><i>ACES Program Manager (PM)</i></p>	<p>The ACES Program Manager (PM) provides centralized technical oversight and management regarding the program to the industry partners, GSA, and its customers.</p>	

*Contracting Officer's
Technical
Representative
(COTR)*

The GSA ACES COTR serves as the focal point for all task activities. The COTR coordinates client activities, performs liaison activities, and serves as the primary point of contact with the ACES industry partners. The COTR provides technical advice and assistance to clients in identifying and defining requirements. The COTR is responsible for tracking industry partner performance including the timeliness and quality of deliverables. The COTR is responsible for performing acceptance of all supplies and services. The COTR may not make commitments/changes to the price, terms, or delivery provisions nor provide supervisory or instructional assistance to industry partner personnel.

*Client Representative
(CR)*

The client representative (CR) is responsible for monitoring technical performance under the task order for the client agency. The CR has no express or apparent authority to either make commitments for the Government or authorize changes to the contract or task order terms and conditions.

Ordering Procedures

The FTS ACES Program provides two aspects for ordering services and products: ACES Infrastructure – Transaction Validation (CLIN 1) and Aces Task Order-Based Ordering (CLINs 2-7).

***CLIN 1—ACES
Infrastructure –
Transaction
Validation***

- Customer agency identifies a Point of Contact
- Agency enters into Relying Party Agreement with OIS for participation in the ACES infrastructure.
- Agency transmits a funding document to OIS.
- OIS provides Certificate Arbitrator Module (CAM) to Agency.
- OIS issues instructions to all ACES Industry Partners concerning Agency participation.
- Industry Partners accept Agency Certificate and enable acceptance of certificate validation requests for that agency.
- OIS accepts billing from Industry Partners for each

agency and consolidates.

- OIS accepts billing from Industry Partners for each agency and consolidates.
- OIS provides consolidated billing to the agency.
- OIS makes payment to Industry Partner on behalf of the agency.

CLINs 2-7 Task Order-Based Ordering

For a 5% fee, a GSA/FTS team experienced in managing all of the details of the contracting process is available to place orders and provide contract administration and program management for FTS ACES program projects.

Upon receipt of a Statement of Work (electronic submissions are encouraged for expediency) and funding, our team will:

- Issue a Request for Quotation (RFQ) to the ACES Program Industry Partners.
- Appoint a technical panel and evaluate proposals from the ACES Industry Partners.
- Award a task order.
- Approve deliverables with the customer's concurrence.
- Make payment to the Industry Partner after deliverables have been accepted.

Other services are available from our team of Government information security professionals on a time and materials basis.

Step-by-Step Procedures for Task Order Issuance

All tasks performed under ACES CLIN's #2-7 are initiated through the award of task orders by a CO to an ACES industry partner. Contracting Officers within GSA/FTS/OIS are authorized to issue, modify, or terminate task orders. GSA can place orders for use on its own behalf or on the behalf of client agencies. The following procedures delineate the 12 steps to successful award of a task order that fully satisfies the client's technical requirements.



Step 1 - Assess Need

When a client identifies a need for Public Key Infrastructure services or products, GSA/OIS and the client assess the client's needs to determine if the planned order is within the scope of the ACES Contract.

1. Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) 8.402 contemplates that GSA may occasionally find it necessary to establish special ordering procedures for individual Federal Supply Schedules or for some Special Item Numbers (SINs) within a Schedule. GSA has established special ordering procedures for IT Professional Services (SIN 132-51) that are priced on schedule at hourly rates. These special ordering procedures which are outlined herein take precedence over the procedures in FAR 8.404.
2. The GSA has determined that the rates for IT professional services contained in the price lists are fair and reasonable. However, the ordering office using this contract is responsible for considering the level of effort and mix of labor proposed to perform a specific task being ordered and for making a determination that the total firm-fixed price or ceiling price is fair and reasonable.



Step 2 - Develop

SOW

A performance-based Statement of Work (SOW) that outlines, at a minimum, the work to be performed, location of work, period of performance, deliverable schedule, applicable standards, acceptance criteria, and any special requirements (i.e., security clearances, travel, special knowledge, etc.) should be prepared.

A Request for Quotation (RFQ) should be prepared which includes the performance-based SOW and requests the industry partners submit either a firm-fixed price or a ceiling price to provide the services outlined in the SOW. A firm-fixed price order shall be requested, unless the ordering office makes a determination that it is not possible at the time of placing the order to estimate accurately the extent or duration of the work or to anticipate cost with any reasonable degree of confidence. When such a determination is made, a labor hour or time-and-materials proposal may be requested. The firm-fixed price shall be based on hourly rates in the schedule contract and shall consider the mix of labor categories and level of effort required to perform the services described in the SOW. The firm-fixed price of the

order should also include any travel costs or other incidental costs related to performance of the services ordered, unless the order provides for reimbursement of travel costs at the rates provided in the Federal Travel or Joint Travel Regulations. A ceiling price must be established for labor hour and time and material orders.

The RFQ may request the industry partners, if necessary or appropriate, submit a project plan for performing similar tasks.

The RFQ shall notify the industry partners what basis will be used for selecting the industry partner to receive the order. The notice shall include the basis for determining whether the industry partners are technically qualified and provide an explanation regarding the intended use of any experience and/or past performance information in determining technical acceptability of response.

Define the Requirement and Performance Standards

In defining the requirement, the client and OIS determine and document, to the maximum extent practicable, in accordance with FAR 11.002, the:

- Functions to be performed.
- Performance required.
- Physical characteristics of deliverables.

When defining requirements for services, agencies, to the maximum extent practicable, are encouraged to consider the use of performance-based work statements with measurable performance standards. A performance-based work statement defines the Government's requirements in terms of objective and measurable outputs. The work statement provides the offeror with answers to five basic questions: what, when, where, how many or how much, and how well. The SOW must accurately reflect the resources required and risks involved.

The performance standards identified in the SOW should clearly express the outputs in clear, concise, commonly used, easily understood, and measurable terms, avoiding detailed procedures that dictate how the work is to be accomplished. Each standard should be necessary, carefully chosen, and not unduly burdensome.

The client and OIS also determine and document the task order type, acceptance criteria for deliverables, and the task order ceiling.

Note: If there are special security requirements, they **MUST** be addressed in the SOW. OIS, the client and the industry partner must coordinate the preparation of DD-254 "DOD Contract Security Classification Specification" documentation.

Determine the Task Order Type

The client and OIS determine whether to issue a time and material task order (T&M) or a firm-fixed price (FFP) task order. If the task order is used to acquire commercial items, the task order must be FFP.

- FFP Tasks – An FFP task includes reasonably well defined requirements for which one or more tangible product(s) exist. This type of task is used whenever feasible. FFP tasks include specific acceptance criteria and exact prices for each deliverable. If rejection of any deliverable affects the delivery schedule, the CO sends a cure, or show cause notice, to the industry partner. Industry Partner invoices are certified for payment upon completion and acceptance of deliverables.
- T&M Tasks –A T&M task is appropriate when performance requirements cannot be precisely defined and uncertainties involved in task order performance do not permit costs to be estimated with sufficient accuracy to use any type of fixed price task order. T&M task orders provide for payment of allowable incurred costs, to the extent prescribed in the order. T&M task orders establish an estimate of total cost for the purpose of obligating funds and estimating a ceiling that the industry partner may not exceed (except at its own risk) without the approval of the CO. The T&M task order permits contracting for efforts that might otherwise present too great a risk to industry partners, but it provides the industry partners only a minimum incentive to control costs.

Determine Acceptance Criteria

The client and OIS identify specific acceptance criteria for deliverables.

Specify Task Order Ceiling

The client and OIS specify, based on the client's budget/funding the task order ceiling.

**Step 3 - Develop IGE**

The client and OIS prepare an independent Government estimate (IGE) to assess the cost of the client's requirement. The IGE is also used to assist in evaluation of the realism and reasonableness of proposed costs. The IGE provides:

- An estimate of the resources—including hours, skill levels, and other direct costs (ODCs)—required to accomplish the requirements of the task.
- An estimate of the total cost of the order (aggregated costs across all deliverables and services).

**Step 4 - Develop****Evaluation Criteria***Determine the Basis for Evaluation*

The Contracting Officer (CO) and the Project Manager review the SOW and IGE and define the evaluation approach.

The CO and Project Manager determine the basis for evaluation: 1) lowest price/technically acceptable, 2) best value where technical is significantly more important than price, approximately equal in importance to price, or significantly less important than price.

The lowest price/technically acceptable approach is appropriate when best value is expected to result from the selection of the technically acceptable proposal with the lowest evaluated price. The task order request shall set forth the evaluation factors and significant sub factors that establish the requirements of acceptability. Further, the task required shall specify that award will be made on the basis of the lowest evaluated price of proposals meeting or exceeding the acceptability standards for the non-price factors. Proposals are evaluated for acceptability but not ranked using the non-price factors. Tradeoffs among price and non-price factors are not permitted.

The best value approach is appropriate when it may be in the best interests of the Government to consider award to other than lowest priced offeror or other than the highest technically rated offeror.

Regardless of the approach selected, each process must be well defined prior to beginning the procurement process.

Establish Evaluation Factors

The CO and the Project Manager select 3-5 evaluation factors considered most important, for example:

- Past Performance – The quality of the offeror's past performance in carrying out similar work.
- Past Experience – The extent of the offeror's experience in carrying out similar work.
- Management Plan – The offeror's plan for managing the project and related contract administration.

Evaluation factors are those criteria deemed by the Government to be the most important factors in consideration of task award. Establishing sound evaluation criteria works to the advantage of all parties involved in the competitive process. Through selection of the evaluation factors, the client identifies the elements most critical to the performance of the technical requirement; the offeror is better able to make a sound business decision to bid or not bid on the technical requirement.

Price may or may not be included as a factor; however, price shall be included in the greatest/best value determination.

Once the factors are identified the CO and Project Manager:

- Specify the relative order of importance of the factors
- Identify sub factors
- Identify weighting factors [optional] for example:
 - Past Performance – 35%
 - Management Plan – 30%
 - Past Experience – 20%
 - Total Price – 15%
- Determine type of ratings and develop definitions for the ratings.

Step 5 - Prepare and release RFQ

Upon receiving the SOW, IGE, and any supporting documentation, the CO prepares the RFQ. In preparing the RFQ, the CO documents: The preferred pricing method (i.e. T&E or FFP)

- Place of performance
- Due date for the proposal
- Evaluation factors and type of evaluation (e.g., Best Value or Lowest Price/Technically Acceptable)
- Options to be included in task orders in accordance with FAR Part 17.2.
- Type of proposal required (oral or written)
- Date for receipt of industry partner's questions and method for submission

Once the RFQ is assembled, the CO releases the RFQ via email to all 27 industry partners. Prior to or shortly after release of the RFQ, the Project Manager identifies three members of the technical evaluation panel (TEP). One of the panelists may be from the client agency, if they choose to nominate one. The other panelists are OIS personnel with technical expertise.

Step 6 - Receive Proposals or Intent to "NO BID"

The industry partner may request clarification of SOW requirements. Such requests may be sent to the Government through electronic means. The CO:

- Answers clarification requests to all industry partners.
- Determines if any revisions to SOW requirements or criteria are required, and, if required.
- Issues an amendment to the RFQ.

Each industry partner responds with a proposal or letter of intent to "NO BID" by the date(s) specified in the RFQ.

 **Step 7 - Evaluate
Proposals**

Once proposals and letters of intent to "no bid" are received and logged, the CO assembles the TEP to review the evaluation methodology.

Individual evaluators score and evaluate in accordance with the evaluation criteria and standards established in the selection plan

- The team convenes to arrive at a consensus rating for each factor and an overall rating for each proposal.
- For Lowest Price/Technical Acceptable procurements, the evaluators assess proposals for acceptability but do not rank them using non-price factors
- For best value procurements, the evaluators assess proposals and rank them using non-price factors
- For best value procurements, the evaluators conduct a best value analysis. If a higher price proposal is selected, the evaluators document the rationale for the contract file.
- The evaluators prepare an award recommendation to the CO.

 **Step 8 - Conduct
Negotiation & Evaluate
Final Proposals**

The CO reviews the recommendation for award and determines if negotiations are necessary. Ideally, in a streamlined acquisition, award is made without negotiations. However, if negotiations are required, the CO:

- Notifies offerors of place and time for discussions,
- Prepares for negotiations, and
- Conducts discussions with all offerors.

Following negotiations, the CO requests Best and Final Offers (BAFOs) and identifies the date for submission. Once BAFOs are received, they are evaluated and a recommendation for award is prepared.

Step 9 - Award Task Order

Following review of the recommendation to award, the CO:

- Verifies that sufficient funds are available before a task order is issued.
- Ensures that DD-254 form is completed, when required.
- Awards to the winning offeror using a GSA Form 300, "Order for Supplies and Services" (or other appropriate form) incorporating the SOW and the final proposal by reference.

Step 10 - Notify Industry Partners and Conduct Debriefings

Following award of the task order, the CO notifies all non-awardees which industry partner is being awarded the task order.

Any non-awardee may direct written or verbal questions to the CO. The CO may discuss with the industry partner why that industry partner was not selected.

Upon industry partner request, the CO will schedule a debriefing. The debriefing should be provided within a reasonable period of time after award.

ACES Services and Products

Contract Line Item 1 - Certificate Validation Services

Agency applications will check the validity of individual and business representative certificates with the ACES industry partner that issued the certificate whenever the agency application requires authentication of the individual or business representative attempting access. The ACES industry partner will return a message to the agency application that contains the validity status of the individual's or business representative's certificate (i.e., valid, invalid, or suspended). Each transaction will bear a standard fee to the requesting agency.

Contract Line Item 2 - Certificate Issuance

Certificate Issuance: ACES industry partners will issue certificates to certificate applicants that choose to participate in ACES and whose identity proofing has been successfully completed by the ACES industry partner, or provided to the ACES industry partner by the Government. Prior to certificate issuance, each applicant must complete Identity Proofing and Registration

Identity Proofing: The ACES industry partners will complete identity proofing of a certificate applicant's credentials, or will be provided with the required identity information

by the Government.

Registration: Registration occurs at (or with) the ACES industry partners, or the registration information is provided to the ACES industry partners by the Government

Contract Line Item 3 - Agency Application Certificate Registration

ACES industry partners will issue ACES certificates to participating Agency Applications whose parent organizations have signed Relying Party Agreements

Contract Line Item 4 - Supplemental PKI Services

Upon request, ACES industry partners will provide PKI-related programming, systems integration, and telecommunications interface support to requesting agencies.

Contract Line Item 5 - Technology Updates

The Government, at its option, may require the incorporation of new algorithms, formats, technologies, mechanisms, and media.

Contract Line Item 6 - Ad Hoc Data Collection, Analysis, and Dissemination

Agencies may purchase and the ACES industry partner is obligated to provide, ad hoc data collection, analysis, and/or dissemination services related to ACES Infrastructure services.

Contract Line Item 7 - Hardware Tokens

The ACES industry partners will provide an optional hardware token for generation of key pairs and storage of the private key. They will also provide component parts of the hardware token.