

Section 2.17

Specifications

A specification is a description of a product or service a user seeks to procure along with a description of what a proposer must offer to be considered for an award. Specifications are the primary means of communication between an agency and a vendor.

Specifications control:

- the quality level of the product;
- the amount of competition;
- the suitability of the product or service for the job to be done; and
- the method of evaluation used in making an award and determining the best value proposal for the purchase.

Characteristics of an Effective Specification:

- **SIMPLE:** Avoid unnecessary detail, but provide sufficient information to ensure that requirements will satisfy their intended purpose.
- **CLEAR:** Use terminology that is understandable to the agency and proposers. Use correct spelling and appropriate sentence structure to eliminate confusion. Avoid “legalese” language and jargon whenever possible.
- **ACCURATE:** Use units of measure compatible with industry standards. All quantities and packing requirements should be clearly identified.
- **COMPETITIVE:** Identify at least two commercially available brands, makes, or models (whenever possible) that will satisfy the intended purpose. Avoid unneeded "extras" that could reduce or eliminate competition and increase costs.
- **FLEXIBLE:** Avoid totally inflexible specifications which prevent the acceptance of a proposal that could offer greater performance for fewer dollars. Use approximate values such as dimensions, weight, speed, etc. (whenever possible) if they will satisfy the intended purpose. If approximate dimensions are used, they should be within 10% unless otherwise stated in the solicitation document.

A proposer or contract participant may provide free technical assistance to an agency. A state agency may not accept a proposal or award a contract to a vendor that received compensation from the agency to participate in the preparation of the specifications or request for proposal on which the proposal or contract is based.

Texas Specifications

TPASS has developed [Texas specifications](#) for a number of commodities purchased in volume by the state. These specifications are identified by a specification number and effective or revised date. Copies of Texas specifications are available from the Texas Procurement and Support Services Division and on the Web site. The specifications are listed by class and item and may be downloaded for agency use.

These specifications establish minimum standards of quality, but do not preclude the acceptance or awarding of proposals which offer better quality commodities. In completing a requisition for commodities covered by these specifications, list the specification number and a date as a reference.

Agency Specifications

If no Texas specifications exist for the commodity needed, acceptable specifications covering the agency's needs must be developed. These specifications should provide a clear and accurate description of the requirements for the merchandise or service to be competitively sourced.

Specifications must be clear and understandable to the proposers and permit competition between products of equal quality.

Descriptions may include a statement regarding the qualitative nature of the purchase and should identify minimum and/or maximum essential characteristics and standards to which the purchase must conform if it is to satisfy its intended use. "Performance" requirements should be identified. "Design" or "construction" specifications may be written where minimum mandatory design characteristics are appropriate.

[TPASS Specification Library](#)