

1. Introduction

The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board (FRTIB) is an independent Federal agency established by the Federal Employees' Retirement System Act of 1986 (FERSA). FRTIB administers the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), a retirement savings and investment program for Federal civilian employees and members of the uniformed services. As the largest participant-directed defined contribution plan in the world, the TSP depends on strong governance, innovation, and effective acquisition practices to serve its participants.

FRTIB recognizes that meaningful communication with industry is a critical component of successful acquisition planning and execution. Early and constructive engagement enables the agency to better understand market capabilities, improve requirements, and promote competition and innovation. This Vendor Communication Plan establishes FRTIB's framework for engaging with industry in a manner that is transparent, fair, and consistent with applicable laws and regulations.

2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this Vendor Communication Plan is to define FRTIB's approach to communicating with industry throughout the acquisition lifecycle. The plan promotes early, frequent, and constructive engagement with vendors to improve the quality of requirements, encourage competition, and support effective acquisition outcomes. It establishes clear expectations for how FRTIB interacts with industry, ensuring that communications are conducted in a manner that is transparent, fair, and consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and agency policies. By fostering meaningful dialogue, the plan supports informed decision-making and reduces the risk of real or perceived unfairness in the procurement process.

This plan applies to all communications between FRTIB and industry related to market research, acquisition planning, and procurement activities. It encompasses a range of engagement methods, including requests for information, draft solicitations, industry events, and other exchanges conducted before and during the acquisition process. This plan does not replace or supersede the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) or other governing authorities; rather, it provides overarching principles to ensure vendor communication is conducted in a consistent, ethical, and effective manner across the agency.

3. FRTIB's Commitment to Industry Engagement

FRTIB is committed to fostering a procurement environment that encourages open communication, innovation, and competition. The agency will engage with industry as early as practicable in the acquisition

process, particularly during requirements development and planning, to better understand market capabilities and improve acquisition strategies.

FRTIB is equally committed to transparency and fairness, ensuring all vendors are treated equitably and provided equal access to information. The agency actively works to reduce unnecessary barriers to enhance participation, encourage involvement from all vendors, and promote robust competition. At the same time, FRTIB safeguards procurement-sensitive and proprietary information in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Director provides leadership support for effective industry engagement and reinforce the importance of transparent, ethical vendor communication.

Contracting Officers (COs) are responsible for managing and controlling official communications with vendors, particularly during active procurements, and ensuring compliance with the FAR and procurement integrity requirements. Program offices support market research and participate in vendor engagement activities in coordination with the CO. The Industry Liaison serves as a central point of contact to facilitate communication between FRTIB and industry and to promote consistent outreach practices.

5. Industry Engagement Methods

FRTIB uses a variety of communication methods to engage with industry, depending on the complexity and needs of each acquisition. These methods may include requests for information (RFIs), draft solicitations, industry days, vendor outreach events, one-on-one meetings during market research, pre-solicitation notices, and pre-proposal conferences.

Engagement strategies are tailored to the specific requirement and are determined collaboratively by procurement and program offices. Information shared with industry that could affect the preparation of competitive proposals or quotations is made publicly available through appropriate channels, including (but not limited to) **SAM.gov**, **GSA eBuy**, and FRTIB's procurement website.

6. Communication Prior to Receipt of Proposals or Quotations

FRTIB conducts information exchanges with industry in accordance with the FAR, ensuring that all communications are ethical, transparent, and appropriately documented. During early acquisition phases, the agency may engage vendors to obtain feedback that improves requirements, acquisition strategies, or overall procurement outcomes.

When information provided to one vendor could affect competition, that information will be shared broadly through public channels. Vendors are encouraged to participate in market research activities and provide constructive input to support well-informed acquisition decisions.

7. Information Exchange and Protection

FRTIB distinguishes between public and sensitive information when engaging with industry. Public information generally includes acquisition forecasts, general descriptions of requirements, and information previously released through solicitations or other public documents.

Sensitive or proprietary information includes vendor-specific technical approaches, pricing, trade secrets, and source selection information. FRTIB protects such information in accordance with procurement integrity requirements, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and applicable regulations. When uncertainty arises regarding information sharing, program officials will consult the Contracting Officer and/or the Office of the General Counsel.

8. Reducing Barriers and Promoting Competition

FRTIB recognizes that both Government and industry stakeholders may be cautious about engaging due to concerns related to fairness, protests, or conflicts of interest. However, the FAR provides broad flexibility for appropriate communication, and FRTIB encourages responsible and proactive engagement within those boundaries.

To promote competition and innovation, FRTIB engages industry early, encourages feedback on draft acquisition materials, and avoids unnecessarily restrictive requirements. These efforts help broaden vendor participation, improve acquisition outcomes, and deliver better value to TSP participants.

9. Training and Awareness

FRTIB promotes awareness of this Vendor Communication Plan across the acquisition workforce and program offices to ensure consistent understanding and application of its principles. Training and guidance on effective vendor engagement are provided through internal resources and acquisition forums.

10. Conclusion

This Vendor Communication Plan reflects FRTIB’s commitment to transparent, consistent, and meaningful engagement with industry throughout the acquisition lifecycle. By emphasizing early communication, fairness, competition, and responsible information management, the agency strengthens its ability to deliver effective and innovative procurement solutions.

Through this approach, FRTIB fosters productive relationships with vendors while maintaining the highest standards of integrity and accountability. Effective vendor communication ultimately supports better acquisition outcomes and enhances the services provided to TSP participants.

11. Points of Contact

For additional information regarding vendor engagement or acquisition opportunities, please contact:

FRTIB Industry Liaison

Kim Scott

Kim Scott

FRTIB’s Industry Liaison
Senior Contracting Officer
Office of the Chief Financial Officer
Acquisition Management Division
Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board
77K Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20002
Email: kim.scott@frtib.gov or contracting@frtib.gov

APPROVAL:

Ni'eema Strong

Senior Procurement Executive

Head of Contracting Activity

Ombudsman

Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO)

Acquisition Management Division (AMD)

Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board

77K Street, NE

Washington, D.C. 20002

Email: Nieema.Strong@frtib.gov or contracting@frtib.gov