



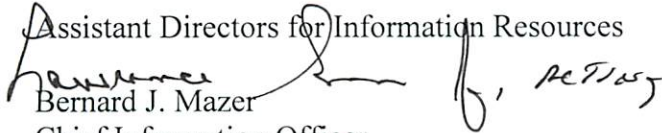
# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240



MAY 2 2012

Memorandum

To: Assistant Directors for Information Resources  
From:   
Bernard J. Mazer  
Chief Information Officer  
Subject: Brand Name Specifications for Information Technology Hardware Procurements

The purpose of this memorandum is to reinforce the need to maintain vendor neutral contract specifications and ensure that the Department of the Interior's (DOI) Bureaus/Offices comply with the requirements in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) regarding the limited use of brand name specifications. As a general rule, contract specifications should emphasize the necessary physical, functional, and performance characteristics of a product, not brand names.

The use of brand name specifications for information technology (IT) procurements in DOI Bureau/Office solicitations has increased significantly in recent years. In some cases, Bureaus/Offices have issued solicitations with specifications for brand name desktop or laptop computers that are associated with a single manufacturer. For your convenience, attached is a FedBid Report, which lists a detailed accounting of orders sole sourced as brand name only acquisitions.

FAR 11.105 specifically states that "agency requirements shall not be written so as to require a particular brand name, product, or feature of a product, peculiar to one manufacturer, thereby precluding consideration of a product manufactured by another company..." An exception to this rule is allowed only if there is a written justification and a "particular brand name, product, or feature is essential to the Government's requirements, and market research indicates other companies' similar products, or products lacking the particular feature, do not meet, or cannot be modified to meet, the agency's needs."

In cases where the use of a brand name associated with a single manufacturer is warranted, FAR currently requires a detailed written justification. In essence, the use of brand name specifications should only be utilized when no other method of specification is available to the procuring Bureau or Office. In the limited event that a brand name specification is utilized, it is essential to provide a description of the salient characteristics that the name brand may have that no other manufacturer can offer.

When procuring IT, rather than simply identifying a specific manufacturer, vendor, or brand by name, the requestor should:

1. State the requirement as “Manufacturer/Vendor/Brand X or equivalent”; or
2. Specify the rationale for limiting the procurement to a specific manufacturer, vendor or brand name product in accordance with FAR 603.2-1 through 603.2-7, per the attached Brand Name Justification template. Note: The Brand Name Justification must be attached to your purchase request or kept with your purchase card documentation.

The current mandatory use Enterprise IT Hardware contract SharePoint site outlines this process, including step-by-step instructions on how to procure through either a Government Purchase Card or Purchase Request. The instructions include a baseline specification for “Windows” systems that are non-brand name specific and are written as “meet” or “exceed”. Access to the site is available at the following link: <https://portal.doi.net/CIO/ERM/HW/default.aspx>

Your assistance in effectively communicating and monitoring this requirement is greatly appreciated.

If you have additional questions, please contact Kym Burns, Enterprise IT Hardware Program Manager at ([kburns@ios.doi.gov](mailto:kburns@ios.doi.gov)).

Attachment 1 – FedBid Report

Attachment 2 – Brand Name Justification Template

cc: Debra Glass, Strategic Sourcing Executive  
Caroline Wallace, Branch Chief, Acquisition Services Directorate  
Kym Burns, Enterprise Hardware Program Manager