

# VA FSS Newsletter

Your source for VA Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) News and Updates

## VHA Temporary Healthcare Staffing Services Portal

In an effort to improve transparency and collaboration between VA and the contractor community, The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) recently launched an [internet portal](https://www.va.gov/plo/locums/index.asp) to display upcoming facility's requirements for temporary clinical staff. VHA's requirements will be conveniently presented on an interactive map of the United States, providing FSS contract holders under Schedule 621 I Professional & Allied Healthcare Staffing Services with national visibility of all VHA's temporary clinical staffing requirements in one location. Use of this portal is mandatory for VA ordering activities. Most importantly, VA hopes the information shared will allow FSS contractors to forecast demand and prepare to partner with us on future procurements. You can visit the portal at: <https://www.va.gov/plo/locums/index.asp>. Please direct any questions to [HelpDesk.ammhinfss@va.gov](mailto:HelpDesk.ammhinfss@va.gov)

FSS contractors under 621I are provided a means to submit a bi-weekly spreadsheet of their available staffing by labor category, VISN, and State which provides market research information for the requiring activities and contracting officers. This information is intended to accelerate the filling of these positions which are in high demand across the country.

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## Inside FSS

### News from Director Dan Shearer

FY20 will go down in the books as unique. Even with the challenges, FY20 operations were steady with 7,299 actions completed, which is slightly more than the 7,247 total actions completed in FY19. Monthly completed actions were 608 (+13.7%) compared to the 4-year average of 532. Actions within PALT were 89% (+8%) compared to the 4-year average of 81%. FSS expedited product additions for COVID19 tests and added acquisition flexibilities for the Professional and Temporary Healthcare Staffing 621I contracts to enable quicker filling of COVID19 related healthcare positions. FSS fostered new ways of information sharing with the National Association of State Purchasing Officials, FEMA, HHS, DHS, GSA, and others in response to the COVID19 declared national emergency which opened FSS purchasing to state and local governments including tribes and reservations for pandemic support.

Highlights included 9 entry level employees joining FSS, multiple solicitation refresh amendments, implementation of digital/e-signatures, closer working relationships with VHA, participation in several Industry engagements, both in person and virtually, and implementation of integrated data tools. Employee engagement was enhanced through

Team participation in Quarterly Operations Reviews. Our combined efforts with industry made significant reductions in the number of Missing Sales Reports which are down to less than 2%. FSS piloted Annual Contract Reviews which will expand in FY21 to ensure engagement with each contract holder annually to address open issues. We anticipate leaning more on FSS vendors in FY21 to submit follow-on offers and RFMs to exercise options well in advance of contract expiration.

I express my gratefulness to vendors and fellow government employees who have continued to support the mission even during the COVID19 disruption to friends and families, schools, communities, and economies. Please review the information in the newsletter and recommit to working together with FSS to meet the significant healthcare needs of our nation in FY2021.

## What's New with FSS

### Teaming Up to Reduce Improper Payments

Federal agencies including VA are under increased scrutiny to identify and eliminate improper payments under the Improper Payment Elimination and Recovery Act (IPERA). The IPERA law was recently combined with other payment integrity and fraud prevention laws to become the Payment Integrity Information Act (PIIA). The term 'improper payment' means any payment that should not have been made or that was made in an incorrect amount, including an overpayment or underpayment, under a statutory, *contractual*, administrative, or other legally applicable requirements. Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Payment to an ineligible contract recipient such as a falsified "Veteran-owned" business.
2. Payment of an invoice using a business name or DUNS number that does not match the face of the federal contract.
3. A duplicate payment due to a duplicate line item, duplicate invoice or erroneous duplicate payment by the agency.
4. Payment of an invoice that did not apply contract discounts, resulting in a monetary loss to the agency.
5. Payment of an invoice with line items that cannot be matched to contract line items. The resulting payment is not auditable and thus, improper.



More specifically, here are three situations auditors routinely see; therefore, vendor assistance is being sought after to help eliminate.

1. On an order for services, the VA FSS order's line item unit is "month"; however, the vendor invoice unit is "hour" by labor category. This could be overlooked by the COR who approves the invoice anyway, thus resulting in an improper payment. If an overpayment is also found, a collection action will be carried out. In the future, this invoice will be rejected for correction.
2. A VHA BPA has a six percent discount off schedule prices. The vendor invoice reflects the correct FSS schedule line item prices but omits the six percent discount off each line item or the total. This is an improper invoice and must be rejected for correction to avoid over payment, which is improper.
3. An FSS order has line items by item description and CLIN Number. The vendor invoices each line item by the vendor catalogue part/SKU number. Even if a unit price matches, auditors cannot conclude the two items are the same or that what was ordered was delivered because the line item descriptions cannot be matched resulting in an improper payment error.

How can vendors help? Vendors have a critical role to play by verifying that none of these conditions exist on invoices to VA or any Federal agency. Vendors are expected to submit invoices that meet the requirements of the contract, notify the Government when an improper payment is identified, and return credits or cash to the agency whenever improper payments result in unearned monetary gain. However, credits are not a long-term solution to reduce improper payments. Vendors and Federal contracting officers must continue to work together to help ensure that agreed to contracts are written soundly, allow for proper invoicing, and the terms and conditions they contain are adhered to throughout their lives. In doing so, improper payments and unnecessary corrective/administrative actions can be reduced, along with the time it takes for invoices to be accepted and paid.

We appreciate efforts by vendors to review current invoice practices for errors, even those practices that have been routinely paid in the past. Contact the order level contracting officer or the FSS contracting officer for assistance.

## Field Notifications

### Communication and Collaboration

The VA Federal Schedule Supply Program executes and oversees 1,730 multiple award schedule contracts for just under 1M healthcare products, pharmaceuticals and services. It is the federal government's largest medical supply chain partner for the whole of government, supporting \$10B in VA procurements and \$5B in Other Government Agency procurements annually. FSS is recognized as Tier 2 Category Management Spend Under Management (SUM), and its contracts support about 300 contract reporting entities which include several thousand people in the acquisition community.

To improve professional collaboration, FSS is communicating important contracting information once a month to the acquisition community in the form of Field Notifications. These notifications began when FSS awarded contracts for critical COVID19 tests and medications were awarded. In FY21 we expanded the effort, and in November we provided a summary of the contracts awarded in October to the field with links to the Contract Catalog Search Tool, for instance, "one click" access to contract details. This information is anticipated to be distributed the first week of every month. The email reaches requiring activities and contracting offices. The messages will be focused on information that empowers the workforce to research, make decisions, and take action to meet procurement timelines.

The VA acquisition community receives the Field Notifications as direct emails, and we are working our way through the challenge of building a single distribution list for communication to non-VA acquisition community. In the near term, with the assistance of GSA, we are pushing FSS information through GSA to non-VA ordering activities as well.

## Web Wisdom

### Contractor Responsibilities

Where can offerors and contractors find out more information on marketing your schedule contract, recurring contract requirements, and other contract policies and obligations? Information on a wealth of these topics can be found on our [Contractor Responsibilities](#) web page, including such deliverables as SAM registration, VETS 4212 reporting, Small Business Subcontracting Plans, and Insurance Certificates as well as contract terms and conditions like the Minimum Contract Sales Criteria, Price Reductions, Trade Agreements, and Manufacturer Letters of Supply. Find out the who, what, when for recurring requirements along with detailed information regarding applicable regulations, requirements and due dates. Click on any of the topics listed on this web page to increase your knowledge on everything you need to know to be a compliant FSS contractor.



## FSS FAQ:

### Do I get 90 days to report sales and remit IFF after the quarter ends?

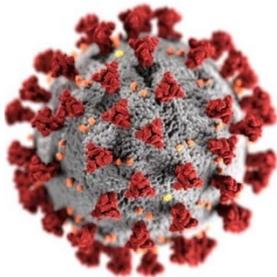
While the [VA Sales Reporting System](#) will permit you to enter sales up to 90 days after the end of the quarter, contract clause 552.238-80 Industrial Funding Fee and Sales Reporting requires you to report contract sales to FSS within 60 calendar days following the completion of each reporting quarter. This includes the requirement to file a report of “zero” sales when lacking any sales for a particular quarter. The clause further outlines that IFF must also be remitted within 60 calendar days after the end of the reporting quarter, with final payment under the contract due within 30 days of physical completion of the last outstanding task or delivery order of the contract. As a reminder, the reporting quarters and due dates are shown below. So, be timely and avoid delinquencies which will subject your contract to cancellation. For more information on this topic, including registration and payment, visit our [IFF & Sales Reports](#) web page.



Quarter	Sales Date Range	Report of Sales & IFF Due
1st	October 1 – December 30	Due starting January 1 <sup>st</sup> ; Delinquent after February 28 <sup>th</sup>
2nd	January 1 – March 31	Due starting April 1 <sup>st</sup> ; Delinquent after May 31 <sup>st</sup>
3rd	April 1 – June 30	Due starting July 1 <sup>st</sup> ; Delinquent after August 31 <sup>st</sup>
4th	July 1 – September 30	Due starting October 1 <sup>st</sup> ; Delinquent after November 30 <sup>th</sup>

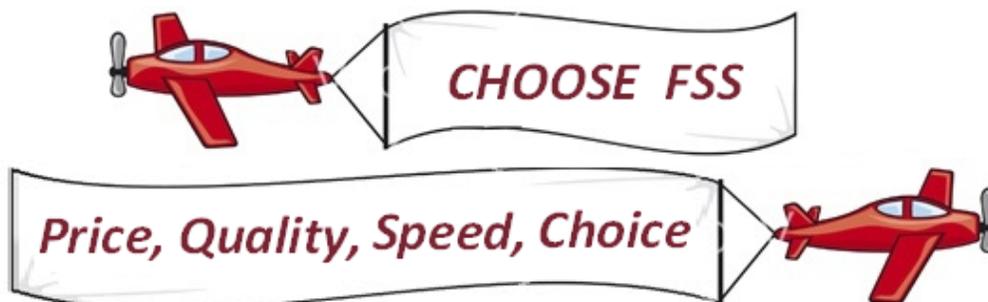
## Around the VA

### Vaccine Deployment for Vets



This month VA announced its [COVID-10 Vaccination Plan for the Veterans Health Administration](#). The vaccine distribution plan includes vaccinations for Veterans, staff, and other federal partners, with high risk populations identified to be given priority in receiving the vaccine. The plan will be executed across the country at [37 sites](#) where VA provides health care to Veterans in the United States, Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories. These sites were chosen due to their ability to properly store vaccines and to vaccinate large numbers of people. Updates will be made to the plan to reflect final Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations and specifications along with any new FDA approved vaccines. Vets looking for more

information on coronavirus-specific concerns can contact their care team, visit their facility web page, or consult the [VA Coronavirus Vaccine FAQs](#) or [COVID Vaccines at VA](#) web pages.



## Training Center

### Solicitation Updates: Policy and Regulation Changes

It has been a busy year for changes in regulations and policy, and we have just issued amendments and mass modifications to all of our schedules to incorporate updates to regulations, special language, and our Small Business Subcontracting Plan template. Below are highlights of significant changes that you should be aware of.

**THRESHOLDS:** Effective August 31, 2020, the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) revised the definitions of the micro-purchase threshold (MPT) and the simplified acquisition threshold (SAT) to reflect the increase of the MPT from \$3,500 to \$10,000 and the increase of the SAT from \$150,000 to \$250,000. Additionally, the threshold identified at FAR 19.702, requiring other-than-small business contractors to submit/maintain a small business subcontracting plan, was raised from \$700,000 to \$750,000, effective October 1, 2020.

**LEASING:** We are now permitting leasing under Schedules 65 II A Medical Equipment and Supply and 65 II C Dental Equipment and Supply. Updates to incorporate leasing include revisions to the Scope of Solicitation and the addition of the following: 1) "General Terms and Conditions Applicable to Leasing", part of Solicitation Document 01, and 2) "Additional Terms and Conditions Applicable to Leasing", part of Vendor Response Document 02.



Leased items may be proposed provided that the following conditions are met: 1) The offeror leases such items commercially in the normal course of business; 2) The proposed lease term does not exceed 60 months; and 3) The offeror must negotiate in good faith a lease agreement at the task order level with such agreement adhering to the parameters set forth in the "General Terms and Conditions Applicable to Leasing". When proposing leased items, the offeror must clearly identify the item as a lease in the Name/Product Description column of the price proposal spreadsheet (Document 03) and must state the period for the lease (e.g. "one year", "15 months", etc.).

**CREDIT CARD ACCEPTANCE:** Contractors are now required to accept the government credit card for any payment amount; however, the charge by the Government cannot exceed the limit of the Government cardholder making the payment. When GSA removed clause 552.232-79 Payment by Credit Card, it effectively removed dollar limits on credit card acceptance by contractors. The remaining solicitation clause FAR 52.232-36 Payment by Third Party requires blanket Contractor acceptance (i.e. without limits) of payments by a third party (e.g. the Governmentwide commercial purchase card) in lieu of payment directly from the Government. Clause I-FSS-600 Contract Price Lists has now been revised to remove credit card acceptance and any defined limits as a negotiated term. FSS contractors who currently have negotiated credit card limits under their contract will be contacted by their assigned Contract Specialist to modify the contract terms to accept the credit card without limits.

**WOSB CERTIFICATION:** The Small Business Administration (SBA) issued a final rule on May 11, 2020, which became effective on July 15, 2020, outlining the new requirements for Women-Owned Small Businesses (WOSBs) and Economically Disadvantaged WOSBs (EDWOSB). Subpart C of [13 CFR Part 127](#) explains how a concern can now be certified as a WOSB or EDWOSB, when a concern may apply, what must be submitted, how applications are processed, etc. Most importantly, it sets forth at §127.200(c) that "A concern must be certified as a WOSB or EDWOSB pursuant to §127.300 in order to be awarded a WOSB or EDWOSB set-aside or sole-source contract". Concerns that do not seek WOSB or EDWOSB set-aside or sole-source contracts may continue to self-certify their status, receive contract awards outside the Program, and count toward an agency's goal for awards to WOSBs. As our VA FSS solicitations do not contain set-asides, there is no change to permitting self-certification under the base level FSS contract. The new certification will apply to WOSB and EDWOSB set-asides at the task order or delivery order level.



## Happy Holidays from VA's Federal Supply Schedule

### REMINDER! IFF/Report of Sales Due



1st quarter FY 2021 sales reports and Industrial Funding Fee (IFF) payments are due starting on January 1, 2021. Sales and IFF not received by February 28, 2021, are considered delinquent, and the contract is subject to cancellation. All VA FSS contractors are required to submit a report via the [VA Sales Reporting System](#) even if no sales occurred under the contract. The 1st quarter covers sales from Oct 1 – Dec 30.

For more information, visit our [Sales Reports & IFF](#) page online. For assistance from our VA Sales Desk, please contact us by e-mail at [FSSSales.AMMHIN@va.gov](mailto:FSSSales.AMMHIN@va.gov).

### Upcoming Training

#### \*February/March 2020

Option to Extend Package  
Submission Best Practices  
- Webinar

\*Date to be announced  
via Constant Contact &  
the [FSS Training Webpage](#)

### Useful Links

[FSS Web Portal](#)  
[VA Schedule Programs](#)  
[FSS Contractors](#)  
[FSS Customers](#)  
[Training](#)  
[Modification Request  
Forms \(RFMs\)](#)  
[Contractor  
Responsibilities](#)  
[Small Business  
Subcontracting](#)  
[Sales Reports & IFF](#)

## Contact Us!

**FSS Contractors Inquiries:** Please contact your assigned Contract Specialist  
**FSS Helpdesk:** Phone (708)786-7737 E-mail: [HelpDesk.ammhinfss@va.gov](mailto:HelpDesk.ammhinfss@va.gov)  
**FSS Small Business Liaison, Micole Stephens:** [Micole.Stephens@va.gov](mailto:Micole.Stephens@va.gov), (708)786-5156  
**IFF/Report of Sales (VA Sales Portal) Inquiries:** [FSSSales.AMMHIN@va.gov](mailto:FSSSales.AMMHIN@va.gov)  
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