

# VA FSS Newsletter

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

## VA FSS Non-Availability Determination for Disposable Medical Nitrile Gloves

In order to address COVID-19 shortages and to maximize pandemic response, VA FSS has made a non-availability determination for disposable medical nitrile gloves which provides an exception to the requirements of the Trade Agreements and Buy American statute clauses. It permits current 65 II A contract holders, on a temporary basis, to offer disposable medical nitrile gloves that are not sourced from the U.S. or a Trade Agreements (TA) designated country using the product addition Request for Modification (RFM) process. Vendors who can provide such gloves but are not 65 II A contract holders are encouraged to partner with current contractors. Existing 65 II A contract holders (approximately 760) were individually e-mailed the specific product addition RFM for this task. Those vendors are viewable online in the [MedSurg Catalog](#) on the NAC's [Contract Catalog Search Tool \(CCST\)](#). Products offered under this exception authority must either meet commercial standards for disposable medical nitrile gloves or meet Health and Human Services' more stringent technical, packaging, labeling, delivery location, and shipping requirements. Please note the following regarding this determination.

- This determination permits disposable medical nitrile gloves sourced from all countries except those listed in FAR subpart 25.7 - Prohibited Sources.
- The temporary authority for ordering is through 5/31/2021; however, there is a process to extend as needed. Note that orders placed during the approved period may have resulting deliveries that occur outside of the specified time frame.
- Orders shall be for as short duration as feasible necessary to ensure an adequate supply is obtained by Federal, State, and Local Governments during the declared national emergency.
- Upon expiration of the authority, all TA non-compliant products will be removed from contract.
- Disposable medical nitrile glove product additions are viewable online in the [MedSurg Catalog](#) on the NAC's [Contract Catalog Search Tool \(CCST\)](#) as well as on [GSA Advantage](#).
- Items meeting Health and Human Services (HHS) technical specifications will be identified as "HHS Compliant" in the product description.

### Inside This Issue

- 1 [VA FSS Non-Availability Determination for Disposable Medical Nitrile Gloves](#)
- 2 [Inside FSS](#): News from the Director
- 2 [What's New with FSS?](#) VA Sales Reporting System: Multi-Factor Authentication
- 3 [FSS FAQ](#): What are the Requirements of a Manufacturer Letter of Supply?
- 4 [FSS Working for You](#): Understanding PALT
- 4 [Did You Know...](#) Submission Timelines Extended for Subcontracting eSRS Reports
- 3 [Web Wisdom](#): VA Facilities Locations
- 5 [Training Center](#): Top Vendor Mistakes with Offer and Option Packages
- 6 [IFF/ROS Reminder](#)
- 6 [Upcoming Training & Events](#)
- 6 [Useful Web Links](#)
- 6 [Contact Us](#)

## Inside FSS

### News from Director Dan Shearer



I want to use this portion of our newsletter to thank the current FSS vendors and prospective vendors for their continued interest in supplying products and services through the FSS program and call attention to an area that needs improvement. The FY20 purchases through FSS continued to be significant and remained steady with \$10B in VA contracting office purchases and \$5B in Other Government Agencies purchases. So far in FY21 the purchases under FSS appear to be down a few percentage points, and perhaps one contributor is vendors who failed to complete sales reporting on time. In Q1, about 88% of FSS vendors reported on time, and I thank those who were timely. However, 12% delinquent is not an acceptable level for the program, and I remind everyone it's a basic contract requirement. Vendors who go delinquent are subject to negative performance reporting which is viewable by other contracting officers in the federal government when input into the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System ([CPARS](#)). It provides insights to other contracting officers about the vendor's reliability in meeting the terms and conditions of the contracts that they signed up for.

Sales reporting is required once a quarter, it should be a routine process. I personally called about 10% of the delinquent vendors to get a feel for the current challenges. There were changes in the system password/log-in process and instances of not hitting "make payment" which led to people erroneously not submitting their sales reports. To address this challenge, GSA has changed the button to read "submit sales". But some of the situations I encountered caused me to reflect on other ways to address this problem. If you are a CEO or manager of an FSS vendor, you are reminded to check periodically on this process, and especially when you replace personnel. Those who perform government contracting, and especially those who do it well, have taken initiative to learn and grow in their profession in ways that are self-driven and largely not documented. Continuity is a recognized challenge as systems change, training materials get out-of-date, and it is rare that anyone develops a concise continuity book for others to follow after they moved on.

If you are unaware of what your government contracts manager is responsible for, or you haven't seen what systems they have to work with, then I encourage you to pull up a chair with them and see for yourself what steps they need to take for Q2 which ended March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and requires Sales Reports to be submitted by May 31, 2021. Based on several interactions with vendors over the past few years I am convinced that FSS vendors value their reputations and will step up in James Bond fashion to the mission they accepted when signing their FSS contract. Let's go for 100% on-time sales reporting in Q2!

## What's New with FSS

### VA Sales Reporting System: Multi-Factor Authentication

In its efforts to modernize systems and make the process of buying and selling goods easier, GSA has made enhancements to the Sales Reporting System. In February, GSA instituted a multi-factor authentication process for logging into the VA Sales Reporting Systems in order to manage contractors' credentials. Under the new process, the login ID is an e-mail address, and users can register multiple contracts under their single account, allowing them to toggle between contracts to report sales without having to login multiple times. Some contractors may be logging into our sales portal under the new process for the first time this quarter. VA FSS sent an e-mail to all contractors with instructions for managing the new login process. To help ease your transition into the new process, see the next page for highlights and tips on setting up your new account, how to log in once your new account is active, and how to manage multiple contracts.

**How to set up your new account:**

- Use the link provided in your new account activation e-mail from GSA
- Create a new password and security question.
- Set up multifactor authentication, choosing Google Authenticator, SMS Authentication, Voice Call Authentication, or E-mail Authentication
- Enter the code you received via your chosen authentication method to verify your account
- Configure any additional authentication methods via the same process

You will then be logged in and able to use the VA Sales Reporting System as you normally would.

**How to login once you've set up your new account:**

- Enter your e-mail and password; a contract number is no longer required for login
- Click "Send me the code" in the authentication window
- Enter the code you receive and click "Verify"

**How to manage multiple contracts:**

- Add additional contracts under the "Profile" section
- Select the contract you want to work on from the drop-down menu
- Switch to another contract by selecting "Switch Contract" from the top menu bar

For any assistance regarding sales reporting in the VA Sales Reporting System, please contact the FSS Sales inbox at [FSSSales.AMMHIN@va.gov](mailto:FSSSales.AMMHIN@va.gov).

## FSS FAQ

### What are the Requirements of a Manufacturer Letter of Supply?

In accordance with clause I-FSS-644 Dealers and Supplier, if you are a dealer/distributor/reseller, you are required to submit a letter of supply from all manufacturers in order to assure the offeror a source of supply sufficient to satisfy the Government's requirements. The following are the required components of an acceptable letter of supply/commitment:

- 1) *Must be on manufacturer's letterhead and addressed to the offeror.*
- 2) *Must be dated within 90 days of the date the SF1449 was signed by the company (for offers) or the date of the modification request (for product additions under existing FSS contracts).*
- 3) *Must not have an expiration date.*
- 4) *Must be signed by an **officer** of the company. Signature must be a digital signature or a scanned copy of a wet-signed document.*
- 5) *Must reference the solicitation number (new offers) or contract number (for existing contracts).*
- 6) *Must contain the phrase that the manufacturer is willing to provide "a source of supply sufficient to satisfy the Government's requirements for the life of the contract".*
- 7) *Must contain the statement that products are U.S.-made or designated country end products as defined in 52.225-5 Trade Agreements.*
- 8) *Must specifically list each category of product and/or brand name(s) to which the letter applies.*



You can access clause I-FSS-644, the required components list, as well as a sample letter template through the [Manufacturer Letter of Supply](#) link on our [Contract Responsibilities](#) web page. The letter template does not indicate a required format; however, it does include recommended language and incorporates all required components of an acceptable letter of supply.

# FSS Working for You

## Understanding PALT

Procurement Acquisition Lead-time or Procurement Administrative Lead-time (PALT) is the number of days it takes to complete a contract action. In 2019 FSS Management reviewed the operations and determined that a significant barrier to maintaining or lowering PALT was the extensive time it takes to train new contracting personnel. FSS received approval to add 10 personnel, and in July 2019 those personnel were hired and represented 13% of the workforce. Today, even with a heavy emphasis on training, they have been responsible for completing 19% of FY21 contract actions which indicates that seasoned FSS employees working with and training our new employees, along with our responsive vendors, are making progress together. The multi-year percentage within PALT goals shows incremental improvement but with some target areas needing attention.

- Total actions completed within PALT have steadily improved from 73% in 2017, 86% in 2018, 88% in 2019, 89% in 2020, and is currently 93% for FY21.
- Offers Awarded within PALT has improved from 28% in 2017, 32% in 2018, 36% in 2019, 47% in 2020, and is currently at 48% in FY21.
- Options Exercised within PALT has declined from 65% in 2017, 57% in 2018, 55% in 2019, and 52% in 2020, and is at 48% for 2021.
- Contract Modifications within PALT has improved from 74% in 2017, 87% in 2018, 87% in 2019, 90% in 2020, and is currently at 95% in FY21.

Options Exercised PALT is the only metric which does not show improvement; however, Options Exercised PALT begins when a vendor submits a Request for Modification (RFM). We believe our cautious approach of encouraging vendors to submit Option Exercise RFMs well in advance leads to higher PALT with no negative impact on mission. However, vendors who are experiencing delays in their Options should feel free to raise their concerns to the team Chief and the FSS Director. FSS continues to innovate internal processes and provide vendor education to speed up the areas of Offers Awarded and Options Exercised. In order to systemically improve organizational effectiveness in those two critical areas, the VA and GSA continue discussions for integrating VA FSS with GSA’s Multiple Award Schedule (MAS) systems modernization effort. If accomplished, this would provide a single, whole-of-government look to MAS programs. The collaboration is of a complex, strategic, long-term nature, and future updates will be provided as feasible. Thank you in advance for everyone’s continued efforts to reduce PALT - the amount of time it takes to complete contract actions.

## Did you Know ...

### Submission Timeline Extended for Subcontracting eSRS Reports

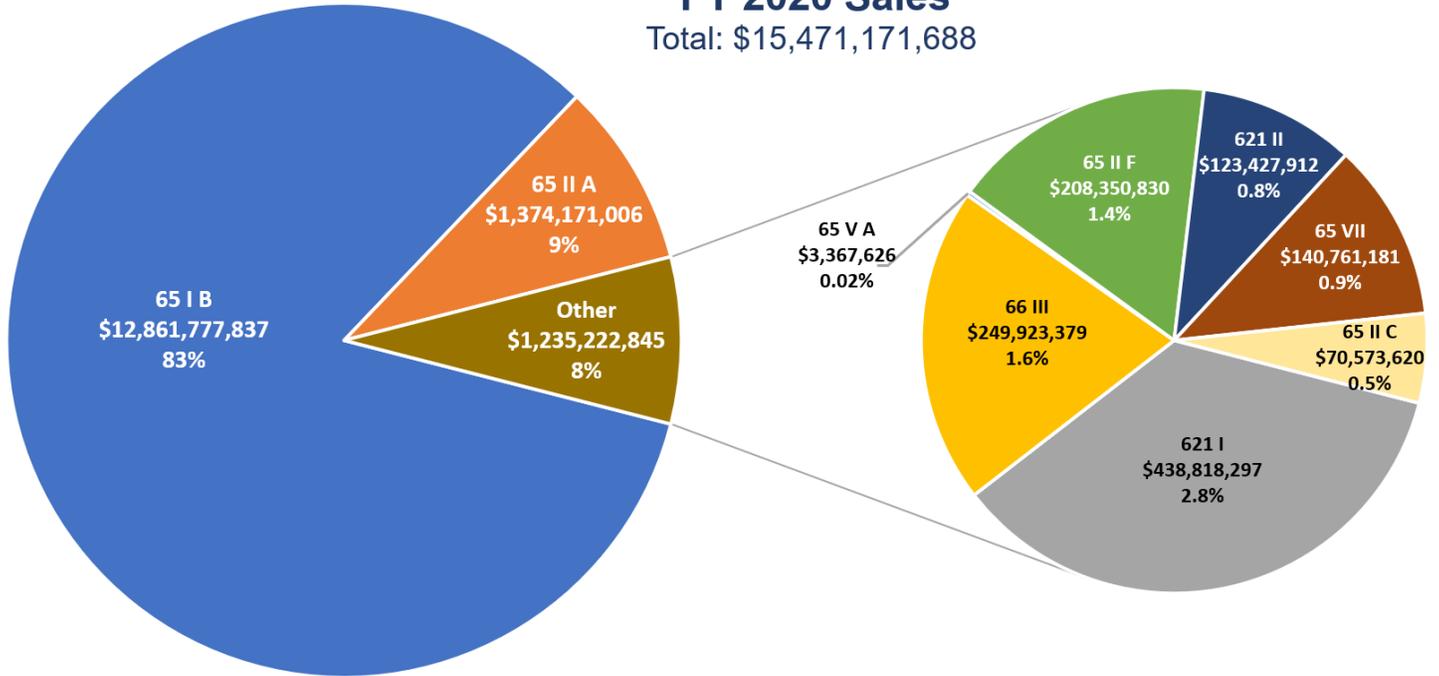
Due to continued challenges associated with the pandemic, the Small Business Administration (SBA) has again extended the due dates for contractors to file subcontracting achievement reports in the Electronic Subcontracting Reporting System (eSRS). Last fiscal year (FY), the SBA extended the due date for the Individual Subcontracting Reports (ISRs) by 30 days and the Subcontract Report (SSR) by 60 days. For FY 2021, the SBA is extending the due dates for the ISRs and SSR by 15 days. See the below chart for these revised submission due dates, including a reminder that all proposed subcontracting plans are due *30 days prior to the expiration of the current plan*.

Requirement	Due Date
<b>Subcontracting Plan</b>	30 days prior to the expiration of the current plan
<b>SSR</b>	<i>Extended to November 14, 2021</i>
<b>ISR*</b>	<i>Extended to May 15, 2021 &amp; November 14, 2021</i>

# Contract Corner

## 2020 Year in Review

**FY 2020 Sales**  
Total: \$15,471,171,688



Schedule	FY 2020 Contracts Awarded	FY 2020 Options Exercised	FY 2020 Executed Modifications
65 I B	80	N/A	3014
65 II A	92	43	2630
65 II C	8	0	170
65 II F	11	11	343
65 V A	0	1	41
65 V II	5	1	93
621 I	38	27	355
621 II	5	1	48
66 III	2	1	60
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>6754</b>

## Web Wisdom

### VA Facilities Locations

As an FSS contract holder, it is important for you to market your contract to eligible Schedule users. During fiscal year 2020, the VA spent over \$10 billion on Schedule supplies and services. With the VA being the biggest user of VA FSS schedule contracts, look no further than the [VA Facilities Locations](#) web page to provide you with information on over 1900 VA facilities for targeting your marketing efforts. You can search for VA locations in a number of ways. Type "VA" in the quick search box on the main web page to get a complete list of current locations, including addresses and phone numbers, as well as dedicated web pages for some locations. You can also search by state either from the interactive map on the main web page or on the [Browse Facilities by State](#) where you can view Veterans Health Administration (VHA) locations. Lastly, you can use the [Find a Facility](#) web page to search based on facility type, service type, and city, state, or postal code. Whatever your product and service offerings are, you can expand your customer base by making full use of the resources this web page has to offer. Our next newsletter will feature more information on marketing your FSS contract.



## Training Center

### Top Vendor Mistakes with Offer and Option Packages

To assist new offerors and existing contractors with providing complete and accurate offer and option packages, we are providing you with a list of the most common mistakes we encounter when screening initially submitted packages.

#### Top Vendor mistakes with offer packages:

- Document 03 - Price Proposal/CSP version was outdated or missing required data
- Signatory Authority Form was unsigned or was not signed by an officer of the company (listed in block 6)
- SF-1449 Form was unsigned, was not signed by an individual properly designated on the Signatory Authority Form, or was not signed within 10 calendar days of proposal submission
- Pathways to Success training certificate is missing, training was not completed within one year of proposal submission, or training was not completed by an individual who is both an officer of the company (listed on the Signatory Authority Form) and an Authorized Negotiator
- Inactive SAM.gov registration

#### Top Vendor mistakes with option packages:

- Package was not signed within 10 calendar days of submission
- Missing the most recently incorporated Signatory Authority Form
- Package did not include a dated Commercial Price List
- Incorrect pricing/CSP spreadsheet was submitted (wrong version)

*(continued on next page)*

- Items listed on the “Awarded Pricing” tab of the pricing/CSP spreadsheet do not match items on contract
- Figure 515.4-2, including requested dates at the top, was incomplete
- All sections of the request form were not filled out
- Firm name/address not congruent with options package, existing contract, SAM, Dun & Bradstreet, etc.

Paying attention to these details as “lessons learned” will help streamline the review process for FSS and will prevent the need for an extended clarification process or proposal/option return.

**REMINDER!**

**IFF/Report of Sales Due**



2nd quarter FY 2021 sales reports and Industrial Funding Fee (IFF) payments are due starting on April 1, 2021. Sales and IFF not received by May 31, 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 Jan 1 – Mar 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**

**\*April/May 2020**

Reporting Sales in the VA Sales Portal

**\*May/June 2020**

Option to Extend Package Submission Best Practices - Webinar

*\*Dates 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)
- Pharm A Chief, Trevor Martin:** [Trevor.Martin@va.gov](mailto:Trevor.Martin@va.gov), (708)786-7708
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